Julie Stoian

JulieStoian.com

The inspiring story Julie Stoian shares below is nothing short of powerful. After being dealt traumatic personal and economic problems, she rebounded into the stratosphere with courage and fierce determination. She will share the strategies and expertise of her own Create Your Laptop Life brand to help you and your business reach new heights of success. Her students can immerse in multiple training programs and communities tailored to the specific needs of their future laptop lifestyles.

Caitlin: Well, hey everybody! I'm here with Julie Stoian, and she is a bold and brutally honest digital marketing consultant and tech coach making her mark on the internet through her wildly popular brand, Create Your Laptop Life. Now, Julie has inspired and equipped thousands of up-and-coming business owners, including me, with the skills and strategies they need to build, create, and grow their profitable online businesses. Julie is somebody I personally hired to help me grow my brand, Proofread Anywhere. So we're going to be talking a little bit about that today, in terms of what I actually paid Julie and what her work and her skills are worth to me. Because, again, Work-At-Home School is all about building skills that you can use to generate income, and that's exactly what Julie did through working with me and other bloggers as well. So Julie, welcome. You have a pretty incredible background story, and I really want to dive into all of it today. I want to know who you were before you started working at home and what your life looked like. We all kind of see who you are now, but we don't know who you were then – where many people maybe are right now.

Julie: Yeah. Absolutely. Thanks for having me. I'm so excited about this. Caitlin's my favorite client. So I was a stay-at-home mom for a long time, and I started blogging to kind of just escape the day-to-day home life, and then I started to learn tech. I have a degree in psychology, so I was always really curious about what got people to read and click and all those kinds of things. Eventually, I launched into web design and copywriting and things like this, and I made good money. I made like $1,500 a month, $2,000 a month – it was good money, but it was not "support a family of six in Connecticut" kind of money. So I ended up divorced. I had a big life change and trauma, and I realized I either have to go back to work, or I have to make this little side hustle a full-time hustle. And that's when I really switched over to marketing and digital marketing as a business, and I went from, like I said, about $1,500 a month to about $100,000 a month as a business owner in the course of two years.

Caitlin: In just two years –

Julie: Yeah. It was pretty fast.

Caitlin: So what would you say – and I'm kind of going off script here. I always have a list of questions to ask speakers at Work-At-Home School, and I love going off script because you just never know what the person's going to say and all that. What do you think is the one

thing drove you the most to get from $1,500 a month, which for a lot of people that's all they want to make, right?

Julie: Yeah. Exactly. Yeah. It was great.

Caitlin: That's all they need to make, and that makes them happy. And that's, I think, an amazing goal especially if they're a mom staying at home, and their husbands love their jobs, and they're happy, and they just want to contribute in some way or have something to keep them occupied. I think that's amazing. So what was it that took you from – if you could name one, maybe two or three things, whatever – that took you from the mindset of earning the $1,500 a month to getting to $100,000 a month?

Julie: Yeah. The kind of gnarly part of the story is that when I got divorced, I knew I couldn't afford the school system and the lifestyle that my kids had prior to my divorce. So I had to leave them with their father in that really good school district and go where I could afford, which was like the worst town in the state of Connecticut. So it was just this humbling, knocked you off your feet back at square one, and so the entire time that hustle was driven really about how fast can I get my kids back. That was really my why and what drove me. The thing that really changed for me was this recognition that everybody wants more clients and customers, and I knew if I could serve business owners with what their real problem was – I stopped pitching websites, and I started pitching, "Hey, I'm going to help you get more clients and customers," and really changed my brand and my message and started charging more. It was so scary. I remember I used to charge like $500 for a website. And I remember the first guy. I said, "I'm going to do your marketing for $1,000 a month," and I just thought it was the most money in the whole world. I had to really invest in courses and some coaches and stuff to really switch my mind because I was looking at my services through my own money lens instead of realizing that there were a lot of business owners making really good money that would be happy to pay me $1,000, $2,000, per month and not just a couple hundred here and there.

Caitlin: Yeah. I can definitely relate to that because I am one of those people, and I paid you a lot of money to help me with my marketing. I came to you in – gosh, it was December of 2016 and I said, "Julie, my business BCP Media and my brands and stuff, they're doing about $80,000 a month, and I want to get to regular $100K a month." And turning over stuff in my business to you, so I didn't have to worry about it anymore – because I know how to market, I just don't want to have to do it all. I don't want to have to – it's all the tech, you know? It's just a headache to me and having to learn it all myself and do it all myself didn't make sense to me anymore. I am definitely a fan of outsourcing that kind of stuff, and I am living, walking proof that even somebody of a small blog like ProofreadAnywhere.com, that most people have never even heard of, still has room and the desire. I mean, the demand is there for people with skills, and you had skills that I was willing to pay for. So I think I paid you probably $50,000 or $60,000 at this point with that –

Julie: I think between you and Ben – you guys, I looked – the invoices were around $56,000

between November of 2016 and like June. So in six months, you paid me about $50,000, and so it was good money. I mean, that's a full-time salary for somebody.

Caitlin: Yeah. Yeah. You'd be set for the rest of the year because I know that you – what I love about you is that you're real. I think a lot of people that follow you as well are really just taken by how real and open you are. You're not living in some four-million-dollar house and driving crazy cars. You have a really nice house, but it's just really real. You haven't forgotten where you came from, and I think that a lot of entrepreneurs, they get to the point where, okay, I'm going to charge a boatload of money for my services. I know what they're worth and that's great, but then they forget about what it was like to be starting at rock bottom. So that's a big reason why Work-At-Home School exists is because we want to reach people who aren't thinking big yet like I wasn't. I remember when I first started out, I felt so guilty charging $50 for my first proofreading programs before we had the online course. I felt so guilty. I'm like, nobody's going to want to pay that. But then I switched my mindset to, people will pay it if it allows them to earn a whole lot more than $50, and that's exactly what happened. A lot of my first students are making full-time income as proofreaders now, and basically, you have to switch the mindset from spending to investing. So we talked about how you invested in different skills so you could grow your income, and that's basically all there is to it is investing in yourself to learn skills, so you can serve more people. And I know that you mentioned – well, we can talk about that for a second – how you make that switch in your mindset from, oh my gosh, I've got to make money, to, how can I serve more people? How can I meet more people's needs? So let's talk about that mindset shift a little bit and how making that shift can help you earn more money, versus keeping it all about you and how this client can serve me?

Julie: Yeah. One of the things is I just started hanging out with people that were making a lot more money than me because I realized that if I hung out with them, I would start – it's like the reverse peer-pressure – so that was one thing. And the second thing was, I was driven by value instead of by hours and, for example, with you, I had a certain number of hours. And had I charged you hourly, I would have been penalized for being fast and efficient, whereas instead, I saw what you were doing. I thought, okay, if I can get her $20,000 a month more over the life of her business, then to build this funnel for 20 grand will make itself back in one month. And you ended up making a lot of money on just those two funnels alone. I mean, you cleared a lot of money, so I started to think about the value of what I was bringing to the table instead of just the hours that it took to put in. For those of you who are developing skills, once you have skills – and this is important about outsourcing – is that you are paying me for the skills that I know now, but also for the accumulation of the skills and experience that I had developed over time. I mean, because you can't manufacture that experience even if you do pick up a book on how to build a funnel. You don't have the experience and the background that I have, and so that was where I turned from hourly to value-based pricing, and that's when everything changed.

Caitlin: Yeah. And I have no problem paying $20,000 for a sales funnel. Now, for people who don't know, what is a sales funnel exactly? Because I didn't know until

- to actually selling stuff online what a sales funnel actually was,
and you taught me most of that.

Julie: It's really simple. We all know what websites are, and right now, you build a website, people go to your website, and there are about 55 decisions that they can make. A sales funnel is basically just a bunch of web pages and emails, but they're set up in a path so that instead of going to a website where they land on one page and go to 85 different options – a sales funnel is one page with one option that leads to the second page with one option which leads to the third, and it's in a sequential order. Then, the emails help keep people on the path and all. That's all a sales funnel is. So for someone like you,
Caitlin, who really wanted to get more people into her Proofread Anywhere program, instead of just sending them to her blog, we were going to send traffic directly to one landing page with one option. So we designed that entire funnel to kind of lead people down almost like a yellow brick road, and that's what a sales funnel is. They're in high, high demand. Lots of people want sales funnels because they just convert traffic into customers much more quickly. Russell Brunson, who is the guy that I learned from in terms of how to build these funnels, he says that it's one of the highest paying part-time jobs in the world. And I believe him because in 2016, I made $190,000 just on my services. All the rest of my income came through affiliate marketing and courses and all those other work-at-home things we love to talk about so much. But just services was about $190,000 in 2016.

Caitlin: You have a lot of skills. You have a lot of skills, and it took you – you're a fast learner. You're a fast executor. I can identify with that. I just like to get things done. What do you think about this proliferation, this – I don't even know
how to describe it – all the people out there that think working at home is easy or that it should be no cost way to make money from anywhere or like an easy thing to do, and this mindset of that working at home in your pajamas is a piece of cake? Or on the opposite end of the spectrum, that everybody thinks it's a scam because people think that it's all an MLM – which I don't want to say that all MLMs are a scam, there's a lot of great quality products out there and whatever – but this mindset that work at home is easy, or it's a scam, and that if you have to pay for it, then it's a scam? But most people don't realize that they're not paying to work. They're paying to learn the skills, paying for the education. And many times, it's a lot, lot, lot cheaper than actually going to college for a four-year degree.

Julie: Exactly. I have a program that I help the beginners and most of them, they can start – I mean, I had a couple that made $3,000 their first month, but those are the exceptions to the rules. Most of them can get their first paying client – if you do service work, which is what I specialize in teaching, you can get your first client within couple days to a couple weeks, and you can make a couple hundred dollars. Most of them it takes probably three to six months to start making between – anywhere between $1,500 and about $3,000 a month.

Caitlin: That's not a lot of time.

Julie: That's really not that long. I mean, you have to work hard. You have to hustle, and

you have to commit to it. This was their full-time thing; like, I'm going to study this. And then, I have several clients who went on – they want to do the higher end skills – who have hit $10,000 months within a year. I had probably three or four students just – because I just came up on the year of this program, who just hit their first $10,000 month about a year in the program.

Caitlin: That's crazy. I love hearing that kind of results, and I don't think that three to six months is a lot of time to spend at all considering that most of us spent – well, you can't say most of us, but a lot of us spent four years. For me, it was four-and-a-half years because I took some time to travel and stuff. And that degree didn't teach me anything about what I'm doing now – anything. It was insane. I didn't pay for it, fortunately, because I was on a scholarship, but I would have been really mad if I would have gotten out having paid tens of thousands of dollars for a degree that didn't teach me anything about actually making money.

Julie: That's a really good point because so many people – there are a few people who come into the program, and after 30 days they don't see results. They're like, I want out. And I'm like, do you realize that our education system requires you to pay like $150,000 over four years with absolutely no guarantee of a job, and then you are stuck paying for it for the next 20 years in your student loans? So when you compare that to like – okay, my program, my big program's going to cost you a couple thousand dollars. Most of those people who take that program make it back within six months at most.

Caitlin: At most, yeah. Because the skills are in such high demand. I'm guessing that there are a lot of people that are like, ugh, this seems like such a slog. I need to make money now. And they want to start charging exorbitant prices for the most simple work. I mean, one thing that drives me up the wall is I get pitches all the time from people who want to work for Proofread Anywhere, and they're like, I charge $40 an hour. And I'm like, okay, well what can you do? And they're like, answer emails and – like just the most basic administrative stuff that they don't have skills, but they think they do. And a lot of my proofreaders come in – the students – and they can all tell you. You can talk to any of them. They think they can already proofread, but then they take the course, and they're like, I didn't know what I didn't know until this. So it's like a cyclical thing,
and you don't know what you don't know. And I think we all kind of think because we have degrees – we might not have degrees, but because we have skills and we're able to do things well, that that's what customers want necessarily. So let's talk about that for a minute in terms of like, if you're starting at the very beginning, what kind of mindset should you have as a beginner if you haven't charged for services before? Should you jump straight to crazy pricing?

Julie: Well, I say that $20 to $25 an hour if you're doing VA services. I'm not talking just answering emails, but things like working in WordPress, working on email marketing, making tweaks to funnels, maybe running some Facebook ads, social media – $20 to $25. If you need it to be your full-time gig, that's probably what you need to charge. In terms of

actual skillset, I would say if you have really good skills, like results – where it's like, hey, I built this funnel, and then they made $20,000 – then, if you want to, switch over to packages and to value-based pricing. If you don't have results yet, then you can still charge hourly. The other thing is, I pay my team around $45 an hour, and that's because I'm guaranteeing them lots and lots of hours. So it's kind of like, sure, my assistant could charge me more as package-based, but she's getting the security of a paycheck, and she's also still got the freedom of being a contractor. So I'm only paying her $45 an hour, but still, that's five, six – I think it ends up being somewhere around $5,000 a month or $6,000 a month. I mean, that's a really good income for part-time work.

Caitlin: Yeah, for sure. My assistant and a lot of my team members are on packages as well. Retainers – where they get a certain amount of money for what they're supposed to do, and occasionally they'll have less, occasionally they'll have more. It's like a salary but for freelancers, and they're free – we don't rope them in as employees or whatever because that's illegal, but we basically just give them the guaranteed amount, and we are clear with our expectations on what they're supposed to do. Then, it takes the pressure off. They don't have to constantly be going and looking for work because they're like, okay, I'm going to do this. And then, a lot of times what happens is I can refer them more people. One time, I did that; I referred my first office manager. I referred her to another blogger who was a lot busier than me, and now my office manager works for that person. It all worked out for the best because I was able to bring on a full-time person whereas she was only part-time, and we're still really good friends with – everybody's still good friends. It was not a hostile situation or anything like that.

Julie: Well, but one of the things that I say is like, you've got to know what your values are. When you're first starting, you may not like the hustle of looking for clients. You may not like that responsibility and pressure, so maybe you can be a subcontractor. Now, subcontractors have to charge less because if I hire a subcontractor – so let's say, okay Caitlin, you hire me and I charge you $20,000. And then, I can't get it all done, so I have to hire subcontractors that you don't ever deal with. I just deal with them. They're getting the security of, I'm going to pay them even if you don't pay me. So for that security and for not having to deal with the client and all that kind of headache, they charge less. And that's a great way to get started if you're really new into digital marketing. You look for those, and it's usually $15, $20 an hour. You get work and you learn, and it's kind of a little bit of a safer way to learn.

Caitlin: Yeah. I think that's really smart to consider it learning. A lot of my people are green. I bring people in that are graduates of my proofreading course, most of the time, because they know how the funnel works because they've been through it. They know what people are thinking when they're coming through the funnel, and they know how to answer the questions and whatnot. But they're green, and so I can mold them. And even though I might pay them less than they could theoretically go and make someplace else, they are learning so much. I pay for a lot of training for them. I have people going through copywriting courses of all sorts, and I'm training my person on Facebook ads right now

because Julie can't do them anymore. [laughs] Yeah, that's right, you guys. Julie is too busy to take me as a client now, but that's a good thing. I'm really excited about that. I can't hold it against you, but just something to look forward to. I think that there's – and they know that there's a lot of value in working with somebody who's growing as rapidly as BCP Media is. They get to have their hands on so many different things and do a lot of different things and learn as they go, and they know that that's valuable. A lot of my people are brand new, and we pay them like $13, $14 an hour to answer emails. Then, as they get more experience, we give them more projects, and then we can give them an increase and things like that. And they love it because they just learn so much, and then a lot of them go and start their own blogs and start earning income that way because they see me doing it. So it's just kind of the ripple effects.

Julie: Yeah. One of the things that Create Your Laptop Life focuses on – I mean, we talk about the laptop life just in general whether that's e-comm, affiliate marketing, but my personal specialty is digital marketing because no matter what you decide to do – let's say you decide, I want a service business, or maybe you just want to do a course on knitting. It doesn't matter. You still need to understand digital marketing because you're going to need to get traffic to your course. You're going to need to get a sales funnel up. You're going to want to run ads and all those kinds of things, and those skills are needed regardless of the industry. It's just like online business basics, you know?

Caitlin: Yeah. I remember reading in DotCom Secrets, which is Russell Brunson's first major book about sales funnels, and he was talking about junk mail and how he used to be obsessed with junk mail. And I remember looking in Seventeen Magazine and Teen Magazine, and there would be an ad that says – Get Your Free Report! – on such and such, and you would basically mail in with snail mail to get that free report, and they would send you back the free report with an offer to buy something. And when he helped me make that parallel between what online funnels are, in juxtaposed to these junk mail – and it wasn't all junk mail. It's just the same as with internet. Some's crap and some's really good.

Julie: Yeah. It was just the way we marketed.

Caitlin: Yeah. And now that the whole thing is online – so I had to explain that to my in-laws as well, what exactly Ben and I are now doing creating products and stuff. And it was like, imagine a magazine, but the ad in the magazine is now online on Facebook or something like that. So we talked about subcontractors, and what would you say is – if I wanted to subcontract, or if somebody watching this right now wants to go and subcontract to learn, how do you hook up with people that are looking for stuff like that?

Julie: Yeah. It's one of the reasons why I created the Create Your Laptop Life network. So I was telling Caitlin before we started recording – she's like, so how do you describe the network? I'm like, it's like AAA membership but for work-at-home people. And it's a big, big membership community where there are all kinds of cool perks, weekly Q and A hours, and all this kind of stuff. But one of the biggest perks of it is number one, we have jobs that

come through because I have a pretty good reputation now. So those jobs come in and get people work. But the other thing is all the relationship building. There are lots of people in there who've been at it for a while, for at least a year, and they're like, hey, I need somebody who can do X, Y, and Z. So that's where a lot – because there are people who are naturally good at finding clients, and then there are people who are naturally good at kind of the back-end work. So it's kind of a community where people can network and find those collaborative relationships.

Caitlin: Yeah. I've used your hire form a few times. I actually needed some sales pages made for some eBooks that I sell. For a long time, I just had them all listed on one page, and I'm like, I need somebody to just make some landing pages for these eBooks. So I submitted through the Create Your Laptop Life network hire form, and I got some people that emailed me that day. It's so much easier than going and posting my own ads and not knowing who's a good fit. But if I post it to the Create Your Laptop Life network, then I know that they have skills, or at least I have some assurance that they have skills because they learned with you.

Julie: They're at least investing in their business in some form. I can't guarantee it, but it texts to all the members. If you subscribe to the channel, you'll get a text every time a job comes through. I'm trying to get that form out more and more, and I would say we can get anywhere between two and five jobs a day that come through that form.

Caitlin: Wow. That's cool. I bet – I think that some people probably have their entire bread and butter coming through just watching your Facebook group and the hire form and stuff like that. I love it.

Julie: Exactly. Because all you need is really one client, and that one client can then get you so many more clients. That's one of the things we talk about in the network all the time, is looking for those clients who are really well established in the industry because they can really help grow your network.

Caitlin: Yeah. I mean, that's what I tell the proofreaders as well, especially the ones that go through the court reporting. Doing good work – don't try and go out and get a bajillion clients all at once because you don't know what you're doing yet, or you do –

Julie: Yeah, you're still new.

Caitlin: – know what you're doing, but you don't want to take on too much. Start with one client, and then branch out from there. Ask that client for referrals. Is there somebody else that is looking for this type of work, that kind of thing? And you grow your network slowly. If you take on too much, then you just run the risk of embarrassing yourself because you're not meeting deadlines. You're not able to communicate properly. That's probably the thing that bugs me most, is with any contractor that I work with, where they put me last on their list. They don't return emails. They don't treat me like a client. They treat me like they're doing me a favor. I hate that. And that's, again, back to that mindset of when you're a service

provider, you can't treat the client like you're doing them some kind of favor. When I posted ads in the past for work, and I get – I like to be very specific at what I'm looking for, so I'll make a whole list of this job description or the post description or what I need done, and I will get pitches. And I'll say, this is what I need, and show some personality – I'll even say, show some personality and I'll hire you. And then I get all these pitches. I have a whole folder of them in my email account right now from the last job I posted from within my group. And this is for hiring within Proofread Anywhere, so I like to go to my graduates first. I have a whole folder of people that are like, well, I don't know how to do that, but blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. There's that or they'll kind of take a jab at me. I maybe said something like, I'm not scary, so don't be afraid of me or whatever, and then people are like, well, why would we be afraid of you? Like just kind of being snarky, and I'm like, pfff, I don't like you – delete – you know?

Julie: Well, that's one of the things that is really important is the space is crowded, so giving people the Disney experience. I mean, yes, you're not an employee. You do not have to answer to your client. That is true, but you want to go above and beyond in terms of how you communicate, how you deliver. That's honestly one of the reasons why I scaled so quickly is I thought, you know what? I'm just going to put aside all of my ideas of what they need, of what kind of packages would be good, and instead, I'm just going to say, hey, you need clients and customers. How can we get you those? And I would just do whatever it took. So I did everything, and I charged accordingly. And I did undercharge at first, but you know what? I was so committed to just getting results that that was my goal. And the minute I got results – I remember the first client I did this with. I charged them $5,000 to do basically six months of work. I mean, now, it would cost $50,000 what I did then. I charged $5,000 and they made a 100 grand. That really put me on the map because they were like – now, all of a sudden, I could say, hey, this is what it looks like when you launch to six figures. I could show what I'd done, and from then on, my prices changed. But when you're first starting, you really need to be driven by getting people results, not driven by, well, is this fair? You know, that kind of thing.

Caitlin: Yeah. It's just that whole mindset of not being in it for the money necessarily. You know that by getting results, that you're going to make more money, and it's just like building skills. You want to make more money, have more skills. And the more skills you have, the better results you can get. It's just like an ongoing pattern of rinse and repeat, basically. So I was going to ask you of major mistakes that new virtual assistants make, but I think we just touched on one, where they make it all about the money. Can you think of any other major mistakes that you see, perhaps people that aren't in your network that are making?

Julie: Yeah. There are lots of mistakes. I think one of the things is that people in the virtual assistant world, it's scary to put yourself out there. So they spend a lot of time on their website and their branding and their packages, and they –

Caitlin: Hiding behind it.

Julie: – stay hiding behind it because they don't want to get out there. I actually tell people, no, just go and start. Don't be attached to your packages and your niche and all this kind of stuff. Go find people who need help and help them, and you're going to learn what you like and what you don't, and then you can start to mold. I mean, when I first started, I didn't have packages. It was just – I would literally go into a Facebook group, look for somebody who had a problem. It didn't matter what it was. I'd be like, hey, I can solve that for you. And I said, "I charge $50 an hour, and we can get on Skype, and I can walk you through" what it was. I would make so much money doing that, and it shouldn't really matter what it was. I only made 50 bucks for the hour, but they were so grateful that I just hopped on Skype, solved their problem. Most of it was like WordPress issues. Then I made a package for WordPress maintenance, once I had done that a bunch of times. So I think that's a huge mistake. Just go and find people with problems that you can solve, and you don't have to know the answer to everything. You have to know how to find the answer to everything. So a lot of my work, I had never seen before when I first started it, but I trusted in my ability to learn and acquire new skills as I went because I was selling the gift of time back to some of my earlier customers. Like, okay, I'll build that for you. I don't really know exactly how, but I'm going to go learn it, and so then, I would go pay. I honest-to-God would do this, where I would pay – I'd lose money on the job. But I would take the job, and then I would go hire people to walk me through it on Skype. So, two examples – one was a developer, when I was learning WordPress – and I said, yes, and I paid him double what the guy was paying me just for the chance to learn how to do it. Then I delivered it to the client, and the client was super happy, and now I knew how to do it. So, for me, that was worth it. And for WordPress, I used to call tech support, like Bluehost tech support, and I used to make up problems just so I could ask them questions and learn everything I could learn about servers. It was like this voracious desire for knowledge is what made me so good at what I did because I learned so fast because I saw everything as a new learning opportunity. Those are some ways that you can – but you've got to be willing to do the work.

Caitlin: Yeah. So looking at everything like a new opportunity – so I think a big mistake that I see people make is they see all the stuff they don't know and they're like, well, I don't know how. And so, they don't learn, right? I had that problem where I thought, well, I don't know. When I was starting Proofread Anywhere, I thought, oh, I can't do it because I don't know how to make a website. Like pfff – that's not a good reason not to do it – figure it out! So when I realized that was holding me back, I'm like, well, I can make a website. Look at all these other, you know, some would say morons – like some people that are just completely dumb, making websites. I'm like, I can do it. And really smart people make it, but there's a whole bunch of people that are not really smart making websites. I can figure this out, and so I did. And you're absolutely right regarding feeling like you have to know everything before you get started. I love that strategy of going out and finding the work and then figuring out as you go, even if it means you have to pay somebody to do it for you, so you can learn how to do it.

Julie: Yes.

Caitlin: Brilliant. Brilliant. I love the analogy of don't wait until all your ducks are in a row. I kind of made this up. Don't wait until all your ducks are in a row. Grab one duck and just run because all the other ducks will follow. I love that.

Julie: I paid for help, and I got a network where – there were things that I was never going to learn how to do. I just wasn't, and that was okay because I found that I enjoyed the customer relationship side. So I would start hiring people to do parts that I didn't want to do.

Caitlin: Yeah. That sounds pretty much like what I did. At some point, I'm like, I'm done learning to do all this myself. I know how it works, but I don't know all the tech behind it, and I just don't feel like it's a good use of my time to learn it all when I would much rather – I call it supporting the local economy. I'm like, I'd much rather pay somebody. There are all kinds of people that want to make money and have skills, that it would just make me so much happier to not have to do it. And that they make money and they're happy is like a win-win situation. So, again, looking at it not as spending money but investing in your business and also, investing in somebody else. I love the fact that I pay people every month to do stuff because that's their livelihood or at least part of their livelihood, and they enjoy the work. They're learning, and it's just kind of like, again, that ripple effect of it starts with one thing and then just expands. I think it's the same with –

Julie: Well, when you're scaling at the level that you are and that I am, it doesn't make sense at that point to do it. It makes more sense – you can scale faster. And when you're just getting started, there is – I would say, for anyone who wants to get started as a service provider in the digital marketing industry, you need to expect a year of serious hustle in your own learning and finding clients, and then it will start to get easier, and then you can start to supplement hiring out or kind of branch out into some of these other arenas that are going to help you scale faster.

Caitlin: Yeah. I think that's really wise advice – like doing the time. I don't want to make it sound like we're all in jail when we first start out, but knowing that the people who have scaled all started at that exact same spot. They didn't all start with fully scaled businesses. They started at the very bottom, learning WordPress. I spent a whole day trying to change a color on a menu in a WordPress when I first started out, and that was, at this point, less than about three years ago that I started. But I've learned so much since then, and fortunately, have gotten to a point where I don't have to learn at all anymore because there are people that I'm able to pay to do it, which has been amazing. So I want to kind of go back to my list of questions here. We've talked a lot about things that you've seen that really frustrate clients, and I've talked about some of those, too. I would say that the number one thing is just not paying attention to what the client needs and focusing too much on what you need. You're like, oh, I want that $50 they're offering, so I'm going to go try to get it whether I know what I'm doing or not. And we could go figure it out. But the worst thing ever is when you get a pitch from somebody who is offering you something different than what you need and trying to make that seem like it's okay. What would you say is the number one most

frustrating thing, especially because now you're a client for some people? What would you say, in your experience as hiring service providers, what has frustrated you the most?

Julie: Honestly, I really value speed. It's a value of mine, so when people are prompt to respond and to answer things, that matters a lot to me. And getting to the point matters to me. But these are my particular values. I always tell my students – I said, "Listen, you've got to figure out whether your client cares about quality or speed." Because usually, hopefully, they don't care about both. But if they do, then that's going to be a hard client. But some clients prefer speed. They just need stuff done, and if it's not perfect, it's okay. They just go and they tweak as they go. There are other clients who are absolute perfectionists, and they're willing to wait for perfection. You have got to figure out very quickly which one your client is and deliver that. Because if you try to deliver speed to someone who wants quality, you're going to be fired. And if you try to deliver something that's absolutely perfect to somebody who wants it done and done right away, you're going to be fired. So identifying – for me, speed is important. I am forgiving if it's not absolutely perfect. But if you say it's going to be done in two days, make it done in two days. And I've had clients who don't care if it's seven weeks, they just want it just so. So I have to kind of switch my mindset – be like, okay, well, I'm going to take my time then. That's a really important distinction.

Caitlin: Yeah. So what does a normal day look like for you these days?

Julie: These days? It's completely different. So for everyone that's watching, I am no longer a service provider. When Caitlin made the joke I'm too busy, I've actually transitioned into a coach and a teacher for people who are starting these businesses. So right now, I'm on the phone a lot. In fact, my internet service provider told me that I hit my limit for Wi-Fi. Now, I had no idea there was a limit. He's like, well, most people don't hit a limit. He's like, I don't know what you're doing, but you're going through a terabyte of data a month. And it's because I'm on Zoom for 30, 40 hours a week talking to people.

Caitlin: Oh, wow. I didn't know there was a limit to Wi-Fi, either. That's insane.

Julie: There's a limit. So now, I went looking for a company that doesn't have a limit, but they all have limits around here. So I do a lot of talking on the phone, a lot of coaching. I do a lot of writing. I create content, and basically, help people build their laptop lives.

Caitlin: Yeah. Cool. I mean, that's kind of what Proofread Anywhere does, too. We create iPad lives or laptop lives, depending on what kind of proofreading. What I didn't realize is that it's just like a niche of virtual assisting. So people start with proofreading, and what I've seen happen is a lot of my proofreading students add on transcription. Then they add on editing. Then they add on –

Julie: Blogging, other things.

Caitlin: – they add on virtual assistant services and what. It's just like, again, that ripple

effect of it starts with one skill. So what was your first skill that you started with? We talked about what your day kind of looks like now. What was the first skill that you started with on day one that you feel like, if you didn't learn that skill first, you wouldn't be where you are today?

Julie: So my very, very first skill was writing.

Caitlin: Mmm. So important.

Julie: If you can't write, figure out how to write. Figure out how to like writing because it's everywhere in online business, even with video marketing. So writing was the first. I went on Textbroker.com; I don't even know if it still exists. And it – you know, $5 an article, and so my goal as a stay-at-home mom was $25 a day, is what I needed to make because that would be $125 a week, and that would pay groceries. I'd write five articles a day for $5 each. So that's what I did first, and I wrote so many articles. I learned a lot about SEO writing those articles. It got really old, really fast, and then the second skill that I learned was such a niche skill – I had to transfer a blog from BlogSpot, which is really popular, over to WordPress. I realized there were lots of people who didn't want to do the tech of that because of the SEO.

Caitlin: [raises hand] Yeah.

Julie: Yeah. So I charged $169 to move people's blogs, and then I also made them sign up with my affiliate link for my host, and I got 70 bucks. So it was like $210 per migration, and this is where I started making good money. Then I would upsell and say, hey, do you want a logo? Hey, do you want a new header for your blog? So, blogging, the WordPress, the design, the writing – all the skills you need to set up a blog. In fact, that's one of the first modules in my course. Go set up a blog, and figure out how to write a blog, how to put up a logo. All of those skills really set you up to be able to do everything else.

Caitlin: Yeah. I 100% agree. I think back to day one. It was November 1st , 2014, is when I bought the domain for Proofread Anywhere. And just figuring out all those things once I got the website set up, which took a lot less time than I thought, but it was still a fight. I was on GoDaddy, and I was trying to figure out how it all went together, and I got the website up. In my mind, I'm like, how do you get an actual website on the domain? How do you do that? I finally figured that out, and then I was like, now I've got to figure out the theme. Then I've got to write some blog posts, and then I've got to create some images. So just kind of doing it for yourself. And my first blog posts were horrible. I've taken down most of them because they're just that bad, and just seeing my writing evolve over the years – it's not something that I think people are inherently good at. I think you have to write more to become good at writing and read more, too. I mean, reading more people's blogs, you can see what separates bad blog posts from a good blog post. An example would be – a bad blog post is like big paragraphs, really boring writing, fluff – so, words that don't mean anything, and repetitiveness, and the words just don't pack a punch, and it's hard to read, not enjoyable.

Whereas you read a blog post that just pulls you in, you're like, what is it about those blog posts that pull you in? Is it easy to read? How are they making it easy to read? Then you can kind of mimic those things, and that's really how you come up with your own voice. And I 100% agree, if you cannot write, it makes things so much harder, even pitching clients. I can tell if you don't have good writing skills if somebody pitches me and I'm like, I'm not pulled in by you, right? So I try to make everything I write, even if it's just a basic email, something that just draws people in because it's just so important. And it's not manipulation, it's an art. Writing is an art, and to me it just –

Julie: Oh, yeah. It's the art of communication. I mean, for those of you who haven't started yet, both Caitlin and I are saying – if you are not embarrassed by your first attempts, then you waited too long. Okay. You should be embarrassed by your first attempts, once you're like six months in. We all start there; that's completely normal. It's like when the little chicks hatch. You watch a chick hatch, and you want to just peel the egg for them so they can get out, but it's actually the act of getting out of the egg that makes them strong enough to survive. So the act of wrestling through the immense amount of curse words you're going to use when you start to dive into WordPress is going to be what creates the stamina to withstand everything else.

Caitlin: Yeah. It's just doing the time, man. That's all I can describe it. Looking back on – and then it was in 2014, so it was not long ago at all. I struggled and I struggled and I struggled and I struggled. And it was through that fire – it was like putting my iron into the fire. I was made stronger. Every time I submitted myself to this grind of learning skills – and I think people are just scared of that. They don't want to feel uncomfortable. They don't want to feel like they don't know anything. They don't want to be a beginner, but every expert began as a beginner. So just having that mindset, I think, will push anybody forward to becoming great at something. Your brain is not at capacity. That's definitely one goal with Work-At-Home School is to teach people that there's more out there to learn, and the more you learn, the more money you can make. So I definitely appreciate you coming on and sharing about your journey and your wisdom, especially in terms of becoming a virtual assistant, and then graduating your skills into the way you have done it. You just have an amazing story. And you have four kids, right, or is it five?

Julie: No, four.

Caitlin: Four kids. Maybe it'll be five later. I hope I didn't just jinx anything.

Julie: No, don't.

Caitlin: So, yeah, Julie has four kids, and she has a husband who's from Romania, right?

Julie: Yup.

Caitlin: So a big happy family and she's making it work from home, and your income is

over $100,000 a month now and steadily growing.

Julie: Yeah. That's the revenue of my business. I don't take $100,000 a month.

Caitlin: Right. Right. We have a lot of expenses. I'm at about $240,000 now, and a lot of that is expenses because you've got to invest back in. You've got to spend money to make money.

Julie: Yup. Absolutely.

Caitlin: And I'm okay with that. I guess the last thing I'm going to say is not to be afraid of investing in your business because, if you don't spend it, then it's just going to the taxman, at least 20% to 40% of it. Sometimes, closer to 50%, depending on the revenue, is going to go to the taxman. So if you put it back into your business, you're investing in yourself and not making their paycheck bigger. And they don't make your business any better.

Julie: You know, it's funny. I just met with a financial wealth guy to try to deal with the money – like, what do I do with this money? And he said, "The only two things I will ever invest in are my own business and real estate." Those were the two things that he said. He also has one other thing, life insurance, but he basically was saying you bank on you. Bank on you; invest in yourself. Your business can make – that's the greatest return. Yes, you could go stick it in the stock market, or you could do all that, but if you have a business that's starting to make money, invest it back in your business to make more money. And that's what you and I are both doing. We're both investing back into our business heavily, now.

Caitlin: Yeah. It's not spending; it's investing. Especially, if because of that money you spend, you're able to make more money. So I think there is a mindset for beginners. I had that mindset where I was starting out, like, I don't want to spend. I want to spend as little as possible to build this website, and I was just so afraid that it was going to fail. I think that's also a reason why people tend to hide behind their websites is because they're afraid that they're going to fail. But the fear is not real. And the only way you can really fail at this, at the laptop life or becoming a virtual assistant –

Julie: – is quitting.

Caitlin: – and whatever it is you want to do work from home, is just not starting at all. And just waiting for – and your life's just going to pass you by. This is not a dress rehearsal, and so we have to get real, and also, not take ourselves too seriously. Sometimes, I like to go and watch the Pale Blue Dot video. Whether you're religious or not religious, I think it's something that will ground you and be like, all right, I've got to get over myself and go. What's the worst thing that could happen if my worst fear comes true, which is people laugh at my blog post, or I make a mistake on my website? It's better to make those mistakes now than later, for one. And you're going to learn. There's no such thing as failure, I don't think.

There's only learning, and from every so-called mistake that you make, you're going to learn something. I've certainly made my share of them.

Julie: That's true. And if you fail at first when you don't really have – I just find it funny people – I teach them how to do Facebook Lives and stuff like that and they're like, I'm so afraid that I'm going to look silly. And most of the time, nobody watches those first few. So you're just failing –

Caitlin: Practicing.

Julie: – in private. So I'm not really sure what you're embarrassed about. You know what I mean? They're so afraid. What if nobody reads my blog post? Well, then, nobody read your blog post, so you don't have to be embarrassed. It's so funny; it's a mind game.

Caitlin: Yeah. It's still worth something. It is a mind game, and it's still worth something. I think every step is still worth something. It's just a stepping stone. I mean, I wouldn't be able to do what I'm doing right now if I had tried to start doing what I'm doing right now three years ago. You have to start somewhere, and for me, it started with proofreading. I was a freelance proofreader since 2007, and I just grew from there into a proofreading blogger. Now I have a media company, and now I don't have to proofread itself for money anymore, but I still have to proofread every day. So just because I'm a proofreader doesn't mean I have to only do proofreading. We can branch out, and so it's just all about expanding your mind and what's possible and ripping off the edges or the sides of the box that you might be living in. I was certainly in a box. I told myself I wouldn't be able to make more than a small amount of money per year because I'm like, well, proofreaders can only make up to $40,000, $50,000 a year max. I think the most I made was $47,000, and that's a lot of money for some people. It was more than I was making at my full-time job, but it's still – I was boxing myself in because I was like, oh well, I can't expect much more from myself. Why not? Why was I thinking that? So just ripping – you can see what's outside your box if you're willing to punch through the lid or punch through the side or just poke a hole and look through, and see what's out there.

Julie: Yeah, and see what's possible.

Caitlin: Yeah. I always come back for that little box. So I don't want to take up too much of your time. We are trying to respect everybody's time who's watching this, so I just want to say thanks for joining me and for taking time to share this amazing information with us. You're certainly a testimony to showing where buckling down and learning valuable skills will take you a really long way. You've certainly come very far in not a long time at all. There's just so much to being a virtual assistant, and I think you've raised the bar for a lot of people, and we're all about raising the bar – especially Work-At-Home School. We're busting the myths about working at home being easy or working at home being a scam or working at home – working at home is amazing, but you've got to put in the work for it to be worth it and for it to pay you back. And it will pay you back. I mean, working with Julie

three to six months, making your first $1,500 a month, I think that's totally worth it. So if Julie has inspired you, you're watching this – and I'm sure she has. I'm certainly inspired every time I speak to her, and as soon as I can, I'm going to be flying her down when my new house is done. We're going to be having an event; I can't wait. So you want to dive deep into learning valuable virtual assistant skills, Julie has just the thing for you. Anyone watching the video right now gets a free copy of Julie's The Entrepreneur's Treasure Chest. It's a monster list of 250 deals, freebies, tools, books, and apps that Julie uses in her business, and that you should use, too. There are 250 things on that list, and you can't beat that. You can click the link below to get that massive resource, and beyond that, Julie is also a contributor to the Work-At-Home School, very gracious towards her for that. If you invest in the Committed Curriculum Package, you'll get a year's access to the Create Your Laptop Life network. This is huge, guys. It's just a huge value, worth certainly more than the cost of the Committed Package itself. It contains everything you need to start and succeed in living your laptop lifestyle. The links for that are below. Thanks for tuning in, guys. See you next time.

Julie: Bye.