

Caitlin Pyle: Well, hey, everybody. Welcome back to the Work-At-Home Heroes podcast. I'm your host, Caitlin Pyle, and I'm here today with Katherine Pomerantz. Now, Katherine has been working at home as a bookkeeper. She's a money mentor for creative entrepreneurs. She helps people take the stress out of being a solopreneur and turn the stress into a strategic money savvy, you become a CEO of your own online empire. She started her virtual accounting firm a year ago because too many business owners struggle with money, and it's her mission to demystify accounting and the jargon of big business so you can build a fun fabulous business of your dreams. Welcome Katherine.

Katherine Pomerantz: Hi. Thank you for having me.

Caitlin Pyle: Yeah, yeah. Tell us about yourself. I know the audience is curious. What do you do? What kind of, I mean, we just introduced you as a small business accountant, but what is your life look like right now?

Katherine Pomerantz: I actually run a virtual accounting firm. I work from home and I work with other people who work from home, mostly, because I work a lot with online business owners, and people who are like, bloggers, and podcaster, and life coaches, and the people who really love that suitcase lifestyle. That's my particular area of expertise, my particular niche. Working in that way means that we use a lot of apps, and a lot of tech, and everything is virtual, and it's fantastic because that means that everybody gets business done, and their money is safe and secure, and taken care of, no matter where they are on the go, or how many projects they have running. Accounting is accounting, I guess no matter what you do. I just happen to have found a pretty fun spin on it. I really enjoy it.

Caitlin Pyle: Wow, I can tell in your voice that you really enjoy it. How did you get into it?

Katherine Pomerantz: I'm a bit of a rogue accountant, I guess I should say. I don't actually have any accounting degree. I didn't get a business degree, or a finance degree. I actually started as an actress and as a freelance artist.

Caitlin Pyle: Wow.

Katherine Pomerantz: Everyone is always like, wait, what? But, when you do that you're taught right about a lot art and how to make things beautiful, or how to present yourself well, because I did a lot of theater work and a lot of dance, but you're not taught to operate and act like you are a business. But you are. You are a freelancer, you are a CEO of your own brand and you have to do all of the same things small businesses have to do.

I was always kind of good at that part because I have some small business owners in my family, so without even realizing it, I was raised with the awareness for how to operate like I was my own sales team, and how to talk about money, and how to budget, and how to plan for inconsistent income. All of those things that as a business owner you really have to know how to do, but

nobody trains you how to do it. So I started out by just helping my friends and eventually somebody was like, "Katherine, you are so good at this", right, because if you're not good with money, being good with money is basically magic. To me it was just like, "Well, I've always had a bank account and a budget", that was just something my family did. I was like, "What do you mean, c'mon you can do this!", but they were like, "You should do this as a business".

So, long story short, skip ahead a couple years, I had just gotten married and we had just moved to Oklahoma, and I love it here but there's not a lot to do, frankly. No offense to Oklahoma or any of my Okies, but it's definitely a small town vibe, and I was looking for something to support my family better because my husband decided to go back and get his Ph.D. So he's now a full-time student, I'm like, 'okay we should do something to support your dreams, everyone is telling me I should start my own business, I'm gonna do it'. I started doing bookkeeping because that's pretty easy to get into. That's level one of the accounting industry if you will, and I ended up getting so many happy clients and I ended up helping so many people that very quickly I had people asking me to do more.

In fact, I had two clients in the same week, completely unrelated to each other, in the same week come to me and be like, "We have a problem". "Oh my gosh, I love problems, can I solve it for you, what do you need?". They're like, "We need an accountant". In my head I'm like, 'Perfect, I know so many people, I'll refer you. What's the specific blah blah blah'. And they were all like, "No. Our problem is we don't want anyone but you to touch our money ever again," et cetera et cetera. And they were like, "Oh we can wait, it's not the end of the year yet". "Okay, I'm doing that!".

Within a year of starting my own business I had expanded it enough that I now offer full tech services, and I am well on my way to giving a lot of those fancy credentials that other accountants have.

Caitlin Pyle:

Let me just stop you because I want to talk about some of that. I want to unpack that a little bit. I love what you said about solving problems because that's a major theme on Work-At-Home Heroes, and all the stuff I create is "Hey, that's what business is", it's about helping people solve their problems and then doing that if you can flip the switch to solving other people's problems from solving your own. Your own problems kind of solve themselves naturally, and I think that's the biggest mistake I see people make is they go into making money thinking that's their main problem is "I gotta make money right?" Well, no, that's not how you make money, you make money by solving problems for other people and helping them make money and so

Katherine Pomerantz: Exactly.

Caitlin Pyle:

Yeah, so I love what you had to say about that and I can tell that you're passionate about it and you're making money too, so what is your average income, it's part-time at the moment?

Katherine Pomerantz: Yeah, I'm probably working on it full-time but we still have a...I'm a year old and we're growing as much as you can, but yeah it's still a part-time income. I think right now I'm probably at about twenty five hundred a month, I think?

Caitlin Pyle: Holy cow, that's amazing! For just being a year old?

Katherine Pomerantz: Yeah.

Caitlin Pyle: Just to give you an idea, people listening to this are just starting their journey and so I wanted to interview you because you are about a year out of starting and I want to show and demonstrate to the audience what is possible in a year, like how much can change in a year. So the fact that you went from not having twenty five hundred dollars a month in income to a year later, having twenty five hundred dollars a month in income, that is incredible, so I just want to say congratulations for that. Now I have to ask you how, was there a moment, we talked about how your husband went to school to get his PhD and was there a moment where you were determined, you said this is no more, I'm gonna work for myself and I'm gonna make this happen. Or was it just kind of a gradual passion project or was it just like, 'I gotta do this, I'm gonna do this' type thing?

Katherine Pomerantz: Well, we had started in Oklahoma and we had been there about a year and a half. We knew we had to move regardless for him to start his degree program. We had some savings and I still did a lot of freelance artwork, and I still performed, but it just wasn't enough to support me full-time doing it, and so after a year and a half of looking for a job we're coming up on the two year mark and we're slowly eating away at our savings because we're not going into debt. That's a big thing for me, I don't want to increase our debt. Being a money mentor that's a passion project of mine, and it really did become...We had moved to Oklahoma, had no friends, no connection, we literally just came here so my husband could do this program and it's great, but after a year and a half of that it ate away so much at my sense of self and the fact that no one would hire me. I was like, 'I know how smart I am, I know how hard I work, I know how much I care about people, I'm just gonna hire me. I know I'm a great employee.' So, I definitely did have that moment where I was like, 'You know what, I'm just gonna do this'. It was actually funny, recently I was at an event and I met Kyle Taylor of The Penny Hoarder-

Caitlin Pyle: Yes, I know him, we're good friends-

Katherine Pomerantz: Yeah, I had to go up and thank him because it was an affiliate link in one of his blog posts that was like 'Hey, start a bookkeeping business' and I was like, 'Okay, today's the day, we're doing it' and so I did. So, one year from that it's amazing how much your life can change as you said, it's been a ride. So, I definitely had that moment of-

Caitlin Pyle: I know Kyle Taylor and I know Ben Robinson, just really good people.

Katherine Pomerantz: Oh yes!

Caitlin Pyle: We're very good friends, I actually stayed in Ben's house in Atlanta last December, so-

Katherine Pomerantz: Are you serious?

Caitlin Pyle: -Yeah. Were you confident from the start of your business or did you have any mental or emotional obstacles that got in the way?

Katherine Pomerantz: At the start I didn't and they all came later because I actually had a bunch of people right when I was talking to friends or talking to the friends I had been helping with budgeting and stuff, with just other artists and other actors and designers. I had a bunch of people right from the start that said, "I will hire you". Great. After about three or four months I had started my own "business," but I had zero to show for it, and that was when I realized I needed to reevaluate how I was doing things, and last January I took a big moment and some time to really just revamp and refocus.

Almost immediately I saw the results and that's something I really, really love Ben, and I'm still really active in his own community, and I actually lead a mastermind group of people, all alumni from his program. I'm still very much involved in the bookkeeping world, but Ben and I are very different personality-wise. The way that Ben presents himself is not how I can present myself because he was an accountant for dentists and he's super professional, really personable, but he's very clean cut, I guess, is the best way to describe it. I, coming from a creative background, am not that way. I think a dentist would laugh me out of their office if I was like, "Hey, I can do your taxes". No, lawyers and the classic bookkeeper clientele could never be my clients. We just wouldn't get along.

So that took a lot of time to kind of figure out. I realized about three months in I was doing something wrong, and it took me probably about two months to realize where I needed to go with it. Ben's program got me started because I started talking to business owners and giving out free consults and starting to get started. And from that I learned, 'Oh, these are my people' and that's how I ended up in the online entrepreneur realm and it's been great. Like I said, I've had such massive success so quickly because it's the perfect fit.

Caitlin Pyle: Wow, it definitely sounds like it. So let me ask you about your family and your friends. Was it weird for you to start working at home? Were they excited for you? Were some people skeptical at all?

Katherine Pomerantz: I think my family was really supportive. It's very funny because a lot of people are like, "Oh, I quit my nine to five corporate job to start a business and everyone was freaking out". I went from being an actress to being an accountant, so I think my family was actually relieved.

Caitlin Pyle: I love it.

Katherine Pomerantz: There's a lot more security in what I do now. I know it definitely impressed my in-laws more. No offense to my in-laws, I get along with them really well, but I definitely think they were like, 'Oh good, she actually has a job now'. And so that's been really good. My husband has been ridiculously supportive of me and me doing this. Working from home has had its own challenges for sure, you definitely miss the office feel, and you have to kind of retrain yourself on how to be productive, and stay focused when you don't have a boss, and you work and you play in the same space. And that definitely messes with your head, but my friends and family couldn't possibly be more supportive.

Caitlin Pyle: Well it sounds like you've got a great group of friends, and you touched on something there that I want to highlight, and that was that you have the supportive community, and not everybody has that, but you knew that you wanted to make it happen, and you said that there's a lot more security. That really lit me up because there's so many more people who think that having a corporate job is more secure than learning skills and using skills to earn money, but the real security, I believe, is in your skills, and so I think that you really get that. So what is your typical morning routine look like now that you are the one in charge of your day?

Katherine Pomerantz: I really love Hal Elrod's 'The Miracle Morning'. It's a book and a Facebook group and whole community and movement that he's built. It's been a great system for me, it kind of involves habit stacking, I don't know if you're familiar with it. He kind of says, "Oh you always want to exercise more and you want to meditate and do all these goal things" and he's like, "Just do all of them, like make it one big routine that you do in the morning and you wake up early for it, and it gets you started on the right foot." I totally subscribe to that system, it's great. I'm not his best student, I will confess, I don't do it every day, but that's something that I do, so I do a little bit of reading, a little bit of exercise, a little bit of journaling and writing. I work on a vision board in the morning and do some meditation and stretching and prayer to finish it off. And then I sit down and immediately, while I'm in the head space, tackle the most important thing that I have to do that day.

Caitlin Pyle: Awesome.

Katherine Pomerantz: It's great, if anyone's out there, 'The Miracle Morning', look it up, it's wonderful.

Caitlin Pyle: Great, well, we'll make sure that we link that in the show notes below the recording if you're on the website right now. So, after that awesome routine, when you do it...and I totally understand not doing the same thing every day. I'm not a routine person, and I've not read Hal Elrod's book, but we know each other and we've participated in different launches and stuff together, but I totally respect people that just do what feels right. And so if they wake up and, you know, you don't really feel like you need it or don't want to do it, don't do

it. So after you do your routine, or after you wake up, how do you keep yourself on track and focused for what you need to do for the whole day?

Katherine Pomerantz: I have actually started working with a coach specifically for that. That was probably the hardest thing about working from home and I never expected that. Literally, just working from home it's really hard to get into that good space where, if the house is messy I see that and then I just want to clean my house, rather than work, and you can't do that. I've got clients I've gotta take care of, I've got stuff I've gotta do, I mean that's not an option. And so I've started just planning out ninety days at a time, so I have like little mini years, and focus on just one big project every ninety days, while also doing quiet work. But I also work a lot with time blocking and I set a lot of timers. So I kind of divide my day into hour-and-a-half chunks, and if I don't finish something in the next hour-and-a-half chunk I know it will fit in Tuesday's chunk, or Thursday's chunk. I've got client chunks and marketing chunks and break time chunks, I guess. I like to go out on lunch dates, so that's how I keep myself motivated and organized. It's been really helpful because I definitely am a person, I like to focus on one task at a time and just knock it out, so if my to-do list gets too big, I feel very overwhelmed. It's nice to be like, 'I haven't finished that, but I have a project block free on Wednesday that I hadn't assigned yet I'll finish it then', it just goes there. And discovering that system has been a lifesaver.

Caitlin Pyle: I think it's an excellent system, and I'm sure there's a lot of people out there nodding their heads right now like, 'That's what I need, I need to block out my time'. Not letting your to-do lists get too long is really key too. I have a little bit of a system myself where I make a list but then I pick one or two things from that list that's gonna make that day a win. And I let that be a win, that way I don't feel like a failure if I didn't get to everything on my list. It sounds like a very similar thing. I love working with timers, especially if there's something I'm not motivated to do, I will set a timer and say, 'Okay, you can work on this for an hour, you can do this for an hour,' I'll tell myself, especially if I'm avoiding it or feeling uninspired if I have to write something, and then when the timer's up I allow myself to go do the thing that I really want to do, whether that's watch TV, take a walk, or do a workout or whatever it is. I allow myself to do that, especially if I'm having a really off day, and I know I'm not alone in having off days, we all have them. Do you have any measures in place to make sure your business is growing? Are you happy where you are? What's next for you?

Katherine Pomerantz: I recently have started doing a lot of collaboration projects. My business has grown one hundred percent by referral, which is great, I mean beyond great actually, and so I'm really focused on giving back to the small business owners that have helped me out. Because I have a lot of performance experience and public speaking experience, literally being an actress and being trained in film, I've been working a lot to do things like this and get on podcasts, but also I'm developing a lot of joint webinars and I'm building a lot of trainings for other people's membership courses.

I'm like, "Here, you can have this because I'd rather your audience have good, credible, free information that's interesting and easy to digest", because money and taxes and business entities are overwhelming. Especially when people are starting out, and for entrepreneurs in particular, that's why I love them. They're like me, you know we didn't go to business school, we didn't work this big corporate job, we're just doing this with grit and passion, and it's us. We're gonna make it happen. And a lot of times if you don't have all that experience or all those big credentials to fall back on, you can feel intimidated. I think that is ridiculous, I feel that is total...well I probably shouldn't say that on your podcast. I was gonna swear, but insert your swear of choice, because I agree with that, that is what that is. I'm getting around that by helping people build good resources for other people, so just a lot of collaboration projects and again trying to build my own network and just talk to people more. I'm not really good at the whole social media thing. I'm much more like, "Oh my gosh, can I take you out for lunch, tell me about your life" and that part of me has been really great for building strong relationships with people that I do work with and that just pays back in dividends. That's my whole marketing strategy, if you will, is I just give out as much for free as I possibly can, because if you're a do-it-yourselfer, and a lot of entrepreneurs are, you're gonna do it yourself regardless. You're not gonna pay me to do it. If you're the entrepreneur that is - or busy or you've grown too big and you can't do it yourself anymore, then you're gonna call me, and you've still got that information, and you know how to find me because we were talking. That's my whole marketing plan.

Caitlin Pyle:

You're speaking my language, I think that it really resonates with me because I have this philosophy of what's called a "ripple effect" and you mentioned that your entire business grew from referrals, so it looks like and sounds like to me that you dove a mile deep into the lake, and you created this huge ripple effect because you niched down, and you weren't afraid to, and then it just kind of expanded from there all on its own. I think a big mistake I see people make in the work-at-home world, especially beginners, is they just take a whole bunch of stuff, and they just sprinkle it lightly on top of the lake, they do a little bit here, a little bit there, try to do a little bit of everything, try to get as many clients as possible, but no client ever ends up really happy because they're trying to spread themselves too thin and do too many things, and they don't deeply invest into their business.

And you have a great philosophy, I call it 'The Lost Art of Relationship Building', I think that's also lost in the mindsets of a lot of people trying to start their own business. They go into it thinking that it's about themselves, and so they just want know, 'what are the tactics I can use to just get clients, like how can I get people to pay me for stuff?' and it's 'me, me, me', and I'm like, 'Hashtag barf', I'm not into that crap. And so when I hear you talking about going out and building relationships with people, I'm like, 'yes, this is what people on Work-At-Home Heroes, who are listening and on my Facebook group and everything need to hear, is that you've got to go out and build relationships. I'm really glad that you touched on that, and I can tell you are so full of passion.

I want to know, other than the amazing advice that you've given the audience so far, is there any there advice that you'd want to give someone who is wanting to work at home, listening to this, thinking, 'Oh my gosh, you have such an amazing story going from actress to accounting firm owner in a year', but they're scared to get started even after hearing your story, what would you tell them?

Katherine Pomerantz: I would definitely say that it is impossible to do business alone. That was my biggest mistake when I first started out. I was afraid to approach people and talk to people and learn from people because I had nothing to give back or I felt like a fraud, or I wanted to wait until I had something to show for it. It sort of hit me that I was getting clients accidentally because again, I just go out and I talk to people, and I do a bunch of free stuff, and I'd really focus on those relationships, and that is what turned my business around. I found people that I enjoyed spending time with, I was crazy passionate about what they were doing anyway, and I just found ways to help them.

I mean, I love entrepreneurs, and I love the fact that you're building your own freedom and the fact that you're gonna do that. Because I work with bloggers or podcasters or people who are specifically going out and inspiring other people, I am so passionate about what they do, that I am just like, "Yeah, give me all your stuff you just hate to handle and if the bookkeeping backs up, I'll literally take it off your hands, I'm really good at it. You go do more of you." And everyone I know who's been really successful has found their own version of it, whether it's, "I'm gonna build your website because it's awful and WordPress is a huge learning curve but I got it...you do you," and the more you help your friends and the more you trade services...and don't be afraid to give away for free. And I know everyone's like, "Build your freebie", but literally actually show up and give to other people's communities.

If there is someone I really want to work with or connect with I make sure I go buy their stuff. I go devour their blog, devour their podcasts, learn everything I can about them and start interacting in their Facebook group before I ever approach them with an ask. I just want to make sure I know them and what they are about and make sure one, that I agree with that, like we would actually get along, and then I'm like "I love what you do, here's exactly how I can help you do it better". Whether that's, "Interview me as your tax expert on your podcast, let me build a training for a private membership group, or can we just talk? I feel like we have a lot in common can I just introduce myself?".

Literally things like that, I think actually it was something on "All up in Your Lady Business" was the first time I heard that. "All up in Your Lady Business" podcast, Jaclyn and Jessica, who are the hosts of that podcast, they were talking to each other, they said, "As soon as I stopped trying to do business by myself my business took off". And like I said, you can't do anything by yourself, so don't try it. Ask for help, get involved, really just dig deep and just find something that you're really crazy into and make it as specific as possible.

Mine is taxes. I actually kind of love taxes. I shouldn't say I love taxes. I love that I can do taxes for other people so they don't have to do it. That's my love. And taking over that really pain point is what really spiraled me to super success. That is what I think every new business owner needs to hear. Don't wait until you've made it, you can't make it until somebody pulls you up. So just go out, and find those people you love, and be a really crazy big giver, you have something worthwhile to give, you are a special person, and you have a special gift. Even if you don't know what that is, the more you practice giving you'll figure it out because more people will thank you for doing that one particular thing. All of the sudden, you'll have a business, and you know what you're gonna market, I swear that sounds sort of "Woo woo", but I swear that works.

Caitlin Pyle:

No, it absolutely does work, and it is all about getting to know people, I mean you've gotta go out, and you've gotta ask them. You've gotta provide value, and see what they're struggling with, maybe just ask them a question. I've got an article up on influenza right now that's called 'The Universal Truth of Making Money,' and we talk about that as well, it's like the lost art of asking people questions. Ask them what they're struggling with, and we give people the challenge all the time of just going out on your Facebook page and asking people what they need help with. Nobody thinks to do that but that's exactly how you put out feelers, that's exactly how you get an idea of what people in your specific niche are struggling with, or just in your local network what people are struggling with.

I've had people say, "I've got some great feedback, I know what I want to focus on, I see a lot of people need help just organizing their filing cabinets or organizing their garage or something and I can start there". And sometimes you can't be picky especially if the skills are little bit lacking at this time, you can't be picky. If people say I need help organizing a garage, and they live next door to you, and you need money, now are you gonna sit there and say, "No, that's really not my thing". I mean, I understand if you are injured you wouldn't want to be moving around boxes and stuff like that, but I mean if you really need money, and somebody has a problem, and wants you to solve it, and is willing to pay you for that, then swallow your pride, and help people. It's so much about getting out and helping people and collaborating, and I always like to say the future of business is collaboration, and the future is not later, the future is now. So, Katherine, where can people reach you?

Katherine Pomerantz: You can find me at Bookkeepingartist.com, that's my firm. I'm also on Facebook at 'The Bookkeeping Artist', so any and either of those places, I'm always online.

Caitlin Pyle:

Excellent. Well, I thank you so much for your time, and I am very intrigued by your passion, and I'm very inspired by the passion that you have for helping people, and I hope that it comes through on this episode, and that people are soaking it up like a sponge, so thank you so much for being here.

Katherine Pomerantz: Thank you, Caitlin. This was fun.

Caitlin Pyle: Well, thank you for listening. Links are in the show notes as usual. Please join our Work-At-Home Heroes Facebook community if you haven't already, and if you are finding value in this podcast, it would mean a ton to us at Work-At-Home Heroes if you'd leave us a review. Thanks again and have a great day.