

Caitlin Pyle: Hey, everybody. Welcome back to the Work-At-Home Heroes podcast. I'm your host, Caitlin Pyle, and I'm here with Crystal Kordalchuk, CEO of Virtually Untangled. Now, Crystal specializes in graphic design, website design, creative writing, and virtual assistance. She really enjoys her field of expertise and loves working with people, self-described as colorful and a conscientious individual who thrives on creativity, organization, and deadlines. She's quick, accurate, and has a keen eye for detail. Crystal, I'm so happy to have you here on the podcast. Thanks so much for joining us.

Crystal Kordalchuk: Hi, Caitlin. It's great to be here.

Caitlin Pyle: Yeah, yeah, so I want to know some more details. Where are you calling in from today?

Crystal Kordalchuk: I am from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. It is absolutely freezing here, and we have a lot of snow already.

Caitlin Pyle: Whew, well, I'm excited to talk to somebody from Canada. I personally get a lot of emails. Before we started recording, I was telling you about somebody who had emailed me today about being concerned about they were wanting to hop on board one of my proofreading courses and were just so concerned they couldn't find clients locally in Canada. And I was like, Why are you worried about finding clients locally when you're in Canada? When you work on the internet, you can literally work anywhere, with anybody anywhere, so that's what we're going to be talking about with you today because you work with clients from all over the place. So tell us more about that. Tell us about yourself. Start by telling us what your life looked like before you started working at home.

Crystal Kordalchuk: Well, I've been doing graphic design my entire life, put myself through school. I worked three jobs, didn't have time for a lot of socializing like everybody else in my class. There was 52 of us, and I was the only one paying for my schooling all by myself. It was a

bit of a tough go, but I was determined to make a better life for myself than I had when I was younger. I just resigned from my full-time position at a local school division here.

Caitlin Pyle: Congratulations.

Crystal Kordalchuk: Thank you. I thought I was going to throw up. I'm one of those people that's very organized, and I always have to have a plan and know where I'm going, and I felt like I just didn't know where I was going anymore. And I was so unhappy there that I was actually making myself sick due to the type of atmosphere that I was working in, and I just decided that it was time to take my part-time graphic design gig after work and make it full time and see what happened. And honestly, I have never been happier.

Caitlin Pyle: Wow, and that's really what it's all about. I think people go into it thinking they've got to make money, but why do they want to make money? And it's for the happiness and the freedom that comes as a result of generating income that you can use as a tool to create that freedom for yourself, and then from there, you just naturally cultivate happiness and solving your own problems. It's amazing. Tell us then about your company now. What do you do? You're a virtual assistant in graphic design. Tell us more about your work.

Crystal Kordalchuk: Okay, well, my previous company that I did part time used to be called Design Smash, and it was a lot of just people that I knew wanted help with graphic design or local companies, but it's a really cutthroat industry because a lot of people want everything for nothing, which, when you have the expertise in something, it has to be shown with some kind of value. So then I decided to do a whole rewrite of my company: new name, new logo, new colors, new everything. I basically deleted everything I had on myself online and started from scratch. I think it took me about eight weeks, and then I launched on June 2, so I'm the type of company that I want to partner with people on a virtual level.

That way, it saves them on employee costs, on space if they don't have it, sick time, vacation time, all those kinds of things. I want to be able to help them organize, build, manage, and maintain their business goals with an ease and be stress free because that's how I feel now, and I feel that it's very important that if you're an entrepreneur and you're running your own business, you want to clear up those ever-growing to-do lists and make your big picture a reality, but you also want to be happy, and you don't want to feel stressed out all the time.

Caitlin Pyle:

Yeah, and you're speaking my language, Crystal, let me tell you, because I've had my own business online for three years, and it is so hard to maintain stuff, mostly my sanity, and having really good people on board. I personally work with at least twenty different virtual team members at any given time. Several are full time. Several are nearing full-time status. It's just crazy. I could not do all that stuff myself, and so people ask me a lot, especially within Work-At-Home Heroes and within Work-At-Home School and stuff. They're like, Is there really a demand? And there really, really is, and I think your story definitely proves that. My story, being a small blog in comparison to other blogs – just with Proofread Anywhere, I've got at least twelve people that are working just on Proofread Anywhere. It is a proofreading blog, people! And I'm thinking that, and you could probably echo this as well, that a lot of people just don't know that there's a demand or don't think there is a demand because nobody really formally announced it.

The internet lives on the internet. It's a virtual universe literally, and there may be broadcasts and stuff on TV and traditional media that describes this advent of the internet and this crazy growth of online businesses and entrepreneurship, and it's like this underground world that a lot of people just don't know about, and so they just assume it doesn't exist. It's just like people that are cut off from the real world. They don't have any idea that such a thing as TV exists. I don't know, tribes in the Amazon or whatever, they have no idea that anything like this exists, and so they assume that it just wouldn't work or that it's some kind of scam or something like that, but I'm here to tell you there is nothing scammy about skills, and you have cultivated a lot of skills in your business. So I want to know how you got into this. Was

there a moment where you maybe snapped and you're like, That's it, no more? We talked a little bit about how you were so unhappy with your job, and were you angry about it? Tell me about the emotions that you felt.

Crystal Kordalchuk: I was so angry. To be quite honest, I feel like I might still be a little bit angry.

Caitlin Pyle: [laughs] Bitter. I can relate to bitter.

Crystal Kordalchuk: Yeah, I was treated so badly there. I felt like I wasn't even a person anymore. I was just this bot that sat in a chair and had stuff thrown at me, and you had to watch what you wore. You had to watch how you crunched your carrots at lunch. It was just – it was ridiculous to see a group of adults act like that when we all have our own special skills to contribute. And then something just awakened my soul one day, telling me that I was just destined for something else, something bigger, something greater. I just – I didn't want to feel like this dreaded blob anymore. I wasn't happy with myself. I wasn't happy with my friends, what I was doing, and I feel like I wasted so much time and so much schooling and money to get to where I was, and it felt like it was almost for nothing.

So fast-forwarding to now, it's been – I was at that job almost nine years, and I ended up becoming quite ill like I mentioned earlier, so during the time of healing, I started to let myself relax. I talked to a few doctors. I put myself on stress leave to reflect on myself, my life, my work, where I was going, where I wanted to be, and I really enjoy professional development, so I thought maybe that could be some time to dig in deeper to where I wanted to go from here. And then I kind of felt like I hit a wall, obviously not physically, but I realized that my life wasn't going where I wanted to be, and I felt like it was numbing and like I was in this rinse-and-repeat day to life where it was just circling over and over again.

Caitlin Pyle: *Groundhog Day* style.

Crystal Kordalchuk: Yeah, yeah. It was frustrating, especially when you work so hard to get somewhere and then you feel like you just keep spinning your tires and you're not going anywhere.

Caitlin Pyle: And I think it's because somebody else was in control of your livelihood, and I think that there's this false sense of security that people have because we've all been conditioned to believe that, hey, you go to school. You get a degree. You get a job, and then somebody gives you a paycheck, and that's the way it works. And that's the secure way to go, but the reality is that your security comes in your own confidence, in your own skills, in your own ability to generate a livelihood income for yourself.

Crystal Kordalchuk: I agree.

Caitlin Pyle: So what did you do at that point? What did you do when you were like, I've had enough? You put yourself on stress leave, so what actions did you take during that stress leave?

Crystal Kordalchuk: I had a lot of sessions with my life coach, and she kept talking about my organizational skills and my level of graphic design. I also did a lot of proofreading at my last job. I have so many books I swear I know like the back of my hand now. So she started talking to me about virtual assistance, and I was like, Is this a thing? I've never heard of this in my life, and then after doing some research, it's actually very huge in the States, and it's quite new, like an 80/20 percent compared to Canada. So I thought, well, my graphic design business and my website design is all one big bundle, and it's already virtual, so why not do some training and take my skills that I have when it comes to virtual assistance, proofreading, notes, organization, and bundle it into an expansion of my old business?

Like I said, I did a lot of research and some training and some courses just to make sure I was up to par with everything. I had my trusty notebook, which I basically took with me everywhere in case I had ideas, and just started building. I started building extensions to the services I wanted to offer, deeper levels of my graphic design services, programs. I built a page of resources, which I feel is very important for all entrepreneurs, especially ones who are just starting out, and I put it on my website of all the things that help me get to where I am, and then as I grow, that list grows, and I continuously share it with other people.

Caitlin Pyle:

Wow, I love it. I love it. I love it. I love it. And I loved your application for this podcast. We have every guest fill out an application that basically has you go through and answer every question that we tend to ask on this podcast, and you just went into so much amazing detail. I was so inspired going through it. I love the detail that you went into about what your life looked like before you started working from home, so let's talk about some results now. What kind of income are you now generating each month working at home?

Crystal Kordalchuk:

I'm actually making more than I was at my previous job, not by a lot, but enough to make a difference, so anywhere between \$2,500 and \$3,000 a month, and I actually just picked up two new clients yesterday.

Caitlin Pyle:

Oh my goodness. I would say that that is really growing. You're making more than what you were working before, and I can totally relate. When I was working at a regular office job, I was barely making over \$2,000 a month, but all the best hours of everyday except the weekends of course where I got to recover and prepare for the next work week was spent working at this upstairs office where it hardly had any light coming in, and I didn't even have a real desk. It was like a bar stool on a vaguely tabletop-like thing, and it was just miserable. I hated it, and I felt resentful. I took actions based on that resentment, and it eventually got me fired, but whatever. It turned out really well at that point, but I think sometimes we have to hit that rock bottom and to hear that you just opened up your thing.

This was a side gig you had for seven and a half years is what you put in your application, and that really struck me as like – they say that success is ten years in the making, and that doesn't mean that it's going to take everybody ten years to get to a full-time income. It didn't take me that long, but it does take specific actions, which you absolutely took, and I think – we talk about on Work-At-Home Heroes all the time about common mistakes that people make, and one that I keep coming back to is that people expect to have confidence and motivation before they start. They think they cannot start before they feel confident about everything. They have to have all the answers. They have to know exactly what's going to happen in a year, and then they won't start until they know that because that means they have to be absolutely, positively 100 percent sure. They've got to feel ready, so they wait and they wait and they wait. They wait for the ready bus I call it, the ready bus to come, and it never comes. So let's talk about confidence. Were you confident from the start, or what kind of obstacles got in the way mentally, maybe emotionally?

Crystal Kordalchuk: I was surely not confident when I first started, and admittedly, you're never ready. I may get a challenge from a client tomorrow that I know absolutely nothing about - right? Challenges, when it comes to owning your own business is kind of all over the place, and I've had many challenges, and I still do like any other entrepreneur. I was scared to death about my leap of faith and resigning from my job, taking this business from part time to full time, but I knew in my gut that it was my true passion, not only the part about getting to be my own boss, setting my own hours, and only working with respectable clients, but for the simple fact that I was getting to do what I finally wanted to do for a living, no strings attached from any other human being, and that was a huge step for me when it comes to my personal confidence, not only my professional confidence.

Mentally, when I first started tossing around the idea of completely being in the zone, I felt like this huge rush of creativity that was just never going to end. I had so many ideas I almost didn't even know where to take myself, especially when it came to re-branding my logo. I find when – as a graphic designer, when

you design something for someone else, you have all these great ideas, but when you design it for yourself, you're a lot more judgmental, so I designed probably, like, fifty logos before my other half was like, Okay, you've just got to pick one and kind of go with it.

Caitlin Pyle: The logo is not what's going to make you the money, right?

Crystal Kordalchuk: No, no, and like I said, if I were designing that for someone else, with someone else's business name, I probably would have loved it right off the top, but you're thinking too much about into your background and your personality and everything like that. So – and then I started thinking why wasn't I planning ahead to get a part-time job first, so that set in some panic, or was I truly going to make it with my business? How am I going to pay the bills? Am I smart enough? Am I good enough? Am I built for this type of home lifestyle? I was worried that, well, maybe I'm going to get lazy and then I'm going to lose all my clients and go under. And then I went, You know what? I've earned this. I've earned this place in my life. I worked so hard all by myself to get to where I am now, and I'm going to do this, and I'm going to succeed, and no matter how long it takes me, I'm just not going to give up. And it's going to be hard, and it's going to be scary and frustrating, and there's probably going to be a lot of sleepless nights, but I'm determined to make my passion become my hugest goal in my life.

Caitlin Pyle: Gosh, that's so profound. I'm just like – I got a little bit of goose bumps right now, you guys. It's so, so true that it is going to be hard, and people let that fear of it being hard keep them from starting. What would you say to those people?

Crystal Kordalchuk: No matter what you choose in life, whether it's being an entrepreneur or going for a job interview for your dream job, it's always going to be scary, and you're never going to feel 100% prepared, so you just have to find what you're really passionate about life and just dig in. Do a lot of research. Bounce ideas off your friends, your family. Have a life coach. A life coach has been

so important for me with all these steps. I couldn't have done it without her.

Caitlin Pyle: Wow, wow, that's pretty crazy. Most people think of life coaches as like, Okay, why would I need that? I have a life. I know how to do life. Why do I need to have somebody tell me what to do? And maybe that's just a like a rebel mindset. I kind of have that myself, just like, Oh, I can figure it out myself. I don't need any help, but we can actually hurt ourselves if we don't open ourselves up to other people in the community who are helping us, investing in ourselves, admitting to ourselves, being able to look at ourselves in the mirror and say, I cannot do this alone. I need help, and that community aspect, especially when we work from home, can sometimes just completely disappear, and it can create anxiety for us, and we can regress in our social skills and all kinds of stuff like that. So just reaching out and admitting that we need help—we can't do it alone—will actually help us get to our goals faster. So tell us then, Crystal, what does your life look like now? How has your life specifically improved since you started working at home?

Crystal Kordalchuk: So I'm 35 years old, just turned, and for the first time in that many years, I finally feel like I found my real self.

Caitlin Pyle: Wow.

Crystal Kordalchuk: I know my weakness. I know. It almost makes me want to cry. I've been through a lot of horrible experiences from my childhood until now, and I think finding myself has helped me really grow as a person. I'm happy. I had really bad anxiety issues for the last few years at my last job, and I feel like they're completely gone. I can sleep normal hours. I used to hum and sing in the car all the time, so I have this really fun little citrus-colored Dodge Dart. I actually sing in the car now, and I don't even care if anybody sees me.

Caitlin Pyle: Wow.

Crystal Kordalchuk: On Sunday nights before I would have to get up and get ready for work the next day, I would have this dread. From the second I woke up, I just felt miserable and depressed. I had stomachaches. I was literally gagging all the time, and I would just put myself on the couch for that entire day because I was so upset and filled with hate about having to go to that place, and it's all just disappeared. I'm actually happy to get up and go to work now.

Caitlin Pyle: That is amazing. I describe that feeling as the Sunday night blues, the feeling, which probably doesn't even describe it accurately, but I would just feel sad on Sundays, knowing that I had to go to some place to work that I didn't enjoy at all, and the people didn't appreciate me. I was underpaid, paid peanuts, forced to sit at a desk even when I finished all my work. I still had to be there. I was paid for time and not for my productivity, and it was just not a great way to spend the weekend, and I felt like – I actually calculated from 5 o'clock on Friday to 8 a.m. that I had to be there Monday morning, it was fifty-nine or fifty-seven – I lost track, but somewhere between fifty-seven and fifty-nine hours of freedom, and that's the way I described it because I was not free during the week. And I had to do a forty-minute commute to work, so I had to leave my house at 7:15 or I was going to be late, and we got in trouble if we clocked in at 8:01. More than once in a while, of course, there was a little bit of flexibility, and then I had a forty-minute commute, so I got home at almost 6 o'clock at night, and then I had to get up early because if I wanted to get any fitness in.

And so I had almost no time during the week to do things that made me happy, but it's so amazing that you took the action to – you took that not as a sign to just give up. I think a lot of people would just resign. They would just feel so resentful, so upset, just so – this is my life now, and they allow other people, other situations to consume them and define them, but you did not do that, which is just awesome. And you – I think that that's a strong thing to do because you are obviously getting physically ill. You're emotionally drained, but you still found that strength from within you, and that's the key is knowing that you are the one who has the power, and you can make the decision to take the action necessary to move your life in a completely different direction, and that it does depend on you.

And a lot of times, people think, Oh, it depends on me. Well, that's terrifying. That's scary. I – they have such a low self-esteem about themselves, and so they don't take action, but on the other hand of it, it's like knowing that you have the power, knowing deep inside that you have the power is also extremely liberating because that's where the real job security comes from is from your skills. Tell us about when you first got started. Did you have any unsolicited feedback from friends and family, and were people on board? Were people not on board? How did that work for you?

Crystal Kordalchuk: I think everybody had my back because they could see that I had changed so much that they almost didn't even know who I was anymore.

Caitlin Pyle: Wow.

Crystal Kordalchuk: For years, I had been contemplating on resigning from that position. It was like a dream, but I just couldn't figure out how to do it, and I was terrified, and I didn't know where to go. I knew that I had great talent and expertise from not only that job, but from other jobs before. But I was kind of like a puppet where I did all this work. Everybody else got the credit, and not that I'm saying we always deserve thank-you's and credits for every little single thing that we do, but some credit is due when we do a good job. They had me even labeled as a job title that doesn't even exist in the entire world of graphic design, and that's how they had me cut under the ropes.

Honestly, everybody had my back. Everybody wanted me to get out there, even people that are still working there now, which I feel unfortunate that they won't take the leap of faith that I did because they're just, Oh, I'm going to retire in fifteen years, or, Oh, I can't because I have a kid. But you know what? You can. This is your life. You have one life to live. It's scarier staying there being miserable and not knowing who you are than it is to take that jump and go work at a local restaurant or at the mall or

something for a little while until you get stabilized with what you actually want to do.

Caitlin Pyle: Yeah, yeah, there's something to be said about – it's not about just the money. We've said that over and over again. It's not about the money. It's what the money can do. Your happiness is worth so much more than a paycheck, especially if that paycheck is making you miserable. So tell us about what your typical day looks like. I know our audience is curious about that.

Crystal Kordalchuk: Yes. I am very much – and my boyfriend is going to laugh when he listens to this because he's going to agree. I am an organized person. So before, I'd have to get up at 6:15, be out of the house within an hour, same thing as you, forty-minute commute to work, can't be late or you're going to be in trouble whether it's snow storming or not. So now, it's taken me a long time to get to where I'm at routine wise, and I still feel that I'm struggling a teeny little bit because I'm at home now. I'm like, Oh, I can throw in a load of laundry or do dishes, and I kind of get sidetracked. Oh, look, something shiny.

But – so after my other half goes to work, I take some time to check all my personal emails, my work emails, catch up on all my social media accounts, do the same for my clients if they have anything going on that day, and then I take a short break, make myself a nice breakfast. I watch one of my favorite TV shows or read a couple chapters in whatever personal or professional development book that I'm working on at that time. And then I physically get ready like I'm going to leave to go to an external office. I get ready. I do my hair. I go through yesterday's notes and start on whatever tasks need to be tackled that day, and then after that, I go on to doing whatever graphic design or website design work I have for the day. If it tends to be a slower day, I try to toss in some personal design work. I recently opened an Etsy shop for fun because I do traditional artwork on the side, so I thought –

Caitlin Pyle: How about that!

Crystal Kordalchuk: – let's try it. I'm very big on journaling whether it's journaling about something personal or about professional development things like that new programs or platforms or things I want to learn, and I write a lot of lists. I have so many lists on what I want to do, what my five-year goal is, what I want to have done before the end of the year, the end of the month, and then I kind of make little checklists and sort through. And then by the end of every day – sorry, this is getting a little long-winded – I kind of go through my lists and prepare for what I have for the next day and the rest of the week.

Caitlin Pyle: Got it. That's really, really cool. I love how organized you are, and so I'm guessing you're going to know a very clear answer to my next question, and that is, what is next for you? Where are you going with your business in the next few months maybe? Let's just say in the next twelve months. Where are you going?

Crystal Kordalchuk: In the next twelve months, I would actually like to look into subcontracting a little bit. My clientele list is getting a little bit larger than I expected a lot quicker than I expected, so I'm sort of hunting around in these virtual assistant/graphic design/entrepreneur groups online to get to know people a lot more, see what their expertise level is, becoming more than just Facebook friends and actually becoming friends so that I can start building a list of people I can truly, truly rely on if I need to hire anybody. I'm also working on some new pages on my website and my blog. I'm actually just finishing my first interview segment. I did the whole month of November. Twice a week, I interviewed people from all over the world to talk about their aspect of what it is to be an entrepreneur, so now I'm working on my next segment, which is a learning series, different tips and tricks when it comes to branding. So that's –

Caitlin Pyle: Very, very cool, very cool. That's a very clear plan. I love it, and if anybody is sitting there wondering, Hey, is there really demand out there? You just heard it; Crystal is relatively new in her business, in her full-time business anyway, and she is moving quickly. She's already considering doing subcontracting, and if you

don't know what subcontracting means, it means other people who work at home that work under Crystal. So Crystal gets work from clients. She gives the work to the subcontractors, and that could be you if you're thinking, Hey, graphic design is something that I'm interested in. Maybe you want to reach out to Crystal. So my final question for you, Crystal, is what advice would you give someone who wants to work at home but is sitting there right now at home listening to this, and everything that you've said has spoken to them, but they are still so scared to get started? What would you say to those people?

Crystal Kordalchuk: Oh, to please never give up on yourself and when you feel like you just can't go anymore. It's worth it, and there's lots of people out there and groups out there who do lots of different entrepreneur styles and are more than willing to help you out no matter what your skill set. Also don't try and do all the design work, marketing work, social media work alone. Ask for help. Don't be embarrassed. There's lots of things that I need help with, and you just can't be afraid. Hire someone or bounce ideas off others just to get different perspectives. And the biggest thing I'd have to say is to follow your passion and create your big picture. You're worth it, and your world never – it needs whatever you have to offer.

Caitlin Pyle: Yeah, I get what you're saying there. So the world needs what you have, and so you have to be willing to offer that and that it is worth it to get out there. So Crystal, if somebody has questions for you if they want to just verify, validate whatever you said—did Caitlin pay you to say this stuff or whatever for her podcast—where can they reach you?

Crystal Kordalchuk: They can check me out on my Virtually Untangled page, which is virtuallyuntangled.com. I have a contact page there. I am also – I have a Twitter account, same name, and Facebook page, same name. And I'm in probably a good forty different entrepreneur groups, so I'm not that hard to find out there. Feel free.

Caitlin Pyle: I love it. So, guys, get in touch with Crystal at virtuallyuntangled.com. Find her on Facebook. Find her on all the

different groups that she's in, and get in touch with her. You may start working with her. You may just become really good friends. She could become your mentor. She has a lot of experience to share. Thank you so much for being with us on Work-At-Home Heroes, Crystal.

Crystal Kordalchuk: Thank you, Caitlin. It's been a wonderful pleasure.

Caitlin Pyle: Thanks for listening, guys, and if you're finding value in the Work-At-Home Heroes podcast, I'd love it if you can leave us a review, and of course, as always, come join us in the Work-At-Home Heroes Facebook community where we will continue the conversation. Until next time.