

Ep #69: Creating Clarity in a Creative Business with Gabi Anderson



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jenna Harrison

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Creatives nowadays have it better than ever when it comes to their financial situation and to their autonomy of artistic expression. However, they are still carrying the legacy of the starving artist, and that can lead them to make decisions like trying to be everything to everyone just so they can bring on the work. Today I'm bringing on my client, Gabi Anderson, to talk about how her business has transformed and to share some inspiration with you.

You're listening to *The Uncommon Way Business and Life Coaching Podcast*, the only podcast that helps you unlock your next level in business and life by prioritizing your clarity and your own *Uncommon Way*. You will learn to maximize your mindset, mission, messaging, and strategy in order to create a true legacy. Here's your host, top-ranked business coach, and reformed over-analyzer turned queen of clarity, Jenna Harrison.

Hey, welcome back to *The Uncommon Way*. I'm so happy you're here, because you're going to love this interview. Last week, you heard from my clients at the Clarity Collective retreat, and one of them was Gabi Anderson. Gabi hasn't been on the podcast before, so I'm really excited that now you're going to get to know her more in this episode.

I'm also excited because I haven't had any of my clients on who are creative. You might be wondering, "But wait, wouldn't someone who's a creative go to work with a coach who helps creatives?" Well, today, Gabi's going to talk about why she made the decision to come work with me, and how that has led to so many changes in her business.

If you're a creative who has hit a plateau, or isn't bringing in the money that they know they dream about, or is struggling to get clear on what their unique point of view and voice even is, you're going to be so inspired hearing from Gabi, who is just so grounded and centered and exactly who she is, and has such an amazing attitude about the possibilities ahead of her.

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Now, if you're not a creative, this episode is also for you because it touches on all the themes. All of the potential scarcity about how much is available to us. The things that we need to do to be smart business people. To take on clients based on what we think they'll want. How scary it can feel to really step out into our way of being and believe that that's a desire in the marketplace. And on an even deeper level, that that is worth expressing into the world.

Now in the last episode, I really plugged Gabi's Instagram and her website. Unfortunately, we had the wrong handle for her on the show notes. So, definitely check out the show notes now. Go follow her on Instagram, and also check out her website because she just revamped it. It is amazing.

If you're a creative and you want to see what's possible. Or if you're just looking for website inspiration, it is just so gorgeous. The most beautiful thing. And hey, if you want some of her magic in your branding, you might just want to hop over there, too. All right, friends, enjoy this episode, and I'll talk to you next week.

Jenna Harrison: Hey, Gabi, thank you so much for coming on today.

Gabi Anderson: Thanks for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Jenna: I'm so excited to talk about the creative experience within this container. Because we've had a lot of coaches on and some other alternate businesses, and there's a huge population of creatives that will benefit from our conversation.

So, I thought we would just start at the very beginning and have you talk about what was going on with you when you decided to come in. I know a lot of people that aren't creatives will relate, as well. And then, people that are creatives will be like, "Yes, that's exactly what's going on with me."

Gabi: Yeah, yeah. I am in year three of my business. The first two years, they didn't feel smooth at the time, but looking back I'm like, "Oh, that was

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so smooth.” In both of my first two years I hit my financial goals, which were six-figure goals. I did that just through referrals, basically.

I had continuous business, and I'd be finishing up a project and then another lead, or another two leads, would be coming in serendipitously, right at the time a project was ending. They would be very motivated leads that would sign on pretty quickly. And so, things just kind of kept rolling and kept going.

In my third year, everything just kind of dropped off, and that cadence really stopped and really shifted. I realized that I had just been going with the flow, and relying on all of these networks to come to me, without doing any outbound marketing. Without really thinking about the future long-term part of my business.

In that, I decided, okay, I need to figure out how do I market myself? How do I hone in and focus? That's the mind space I was in when I started looking for a coach.

Jenna: So, let's also talk a bit about what you were doing at the time, because that'll help people with the total context. You had worked as a designer, tell us all the things, and then you started to freelance.

Gabi: Sure. Yeah. I have been in the design industry for about 12 years now. I was full time in-house for 10 of those years. I started off in book publishing. I did book covers, mostly was my focus. Then I switched to the E-commerce space. In that, I was a designer and then got promoted to the art director level.

My most recent job was at Shutterfly, where I was art directing a team there focused on digital channels. And then I started my business in 2021, at the very beginning of the year. It was basically a freelance design model, where I was kind of doing everything. I was doing a lot of website design, doing brand design. Basically, anything that anyone brought to me I was doing.

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That's actually, I feel like, a lot of what we've worked on is me kind of letting go of my... I have a lot of perfectionism tendencies and a lot of tendencies to just be like, "I can do that," because I can do it. So, it's hard for me to say no to stuff.

So, my business was really a freelance model, doing all sorts of design and not really having any focus, just being a jack-of-all-trades.

Jenna: Yes, yes, I remember those words. I remember you saying, "I don't know how I would even talk about what my thing is, because I've survived up until this point by being a jack-of-all-trades," by being able to do anything, by being so versatile.

And that's the kind of thing where it's serving us so well to be in this one way, then when we start to think about what would we want to do, all of a sudden, it's just gridlock. Our brain's, like, "Wait a minute, this is how we've survived and what worked for us, why would we change?"

Gabi: Yeah, so true. I think pretty early on, in discussing all of that, it made me realize, too, that even though I was working for myself, I was still continuing a lot of the habits that I had from working for companies. Because I think to be a designer in-house, or to be an art director, Creative Director, you sort of have to mold a lot of what you do to the business, and you have to kind of flex your design skills to fit what is needed.

So, without realizing it, I was kind of continuing the habits, and not really changing my ways from being in-house.

Jenna: I just want to stop here and point out for anyone that isn't seeing the same connection I am, that this plays out in every business. It is. It's from our training as employees, it's from our training as women. We think that this is the way that we've survived until now, and this is what the market would want, right?

Our brain comes up with really intelligent ways to describe to us why we should keep being everything for everyone, rather than being us, and really

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shining in our way. Not that there's anything wrong, if that is really aligned for you, to be the chameleon and that's what you love; great.

But for some of us, there's a different expression waiting to come through. And a very unique and powerful place for us to hold our own. And that's kind of what we've seen with you.

Gabi: Yeah, yeah. I think for the very beginning, I probably held on to being that good at everything person for a couple of months. I feel like it was very hard for me to let go of, because I am such a perfectionist and overachiever, I guess.

Jenna: Gosh, I really want to dive into that. But before we do, since we're in the beginning timeline right now, I'm curious about what were your thoughts about working with a coach who wasn't a herself a creative, or had built a creative business?

Gabi: Good question. I have a lot of thoughts on this, I feel like. When I started looking for a coach, I noticed that I got a lot of ads for creative coaches, and I still do. I think one of the drawbacks for me was it felt like the creative coaches really had a sort of formula for 'this is how you make money as a creative.'

And, I've always been kind of averse to a formula because I just want to see myself as this unique butterfly. I want everything to feel unique and fun and like I can figure out a different way. So, I think something feeling formulaic was not what I was looking for. Not that all creative pitches are like that, I just was seeing that as a trend.

I also, in my network, have a lot of creatives. I have been in this business for 12 years, so I have a lot of mentors that are former creative directors, friends that are creative directors, and really talented designers and artists. And so, I sort of felt like I have a big network of people that I am able to tap into for creative feedback, and for questions I have in that space.

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I also have a very specific point of view when it comes to creative work, as well. So, I think that when working with another creative, I can get very focused on the design elements, I can get very focused on looking at their portfolio versus just thinking about a business objectively.

Jenna: And so, maybe, this was a space for you to just focus on the business. Is that what I'm hearing?

Gabi: Yeah, exactly. I also find a lot of value in working with people that are not necessarily creatives. Because I think you, and the people in the Collective, have been really helpful at showing me how things come across to someone that's not designing or painting every day.

I like to see that objective feedback. It's a voice for the audience that my work will be seen by, versus when you have a designer looking at something because they know the tools and stuff. I think that they jump closer to the piece.

When I'm working with another creative there is that designer created bias that comes into play, where they try to think of the audience but that's not as close to the audience necessarily, as someone that's not a creative.

Jenna: You knew somebody that had also benefited from the work, so you had a little bit of social proof coming in?

Gabi: Yes, that is very true. Yeah, Kat recommend you, and had very high praise, so that was very helpful.

Jenna: Going back to when we were talking about how it was hard for you to give up being the jack-of-all-trades, and there maybe was a little bit of friction in your head, cognitive dissonance in your head, for a couple of months as you were moving into it, would you say there was some call kind of moving you towards that? Or do you think of it as a business decision? What was it that got you from where you were to where you are now?

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Gabi: I would say it was a call. I am someone that really follows my gut with a lot of things. I think it's hard for me to... and that's in my Human Design, too... it's hard for me to do things that I don't feel in my gut. I can sort of ignore it for a little while, but it just never works out. I kind of always steer back to what is in my gut.

So, I think that I just hit this wall, where I was testing out some freebie offer or something, and had had a call with the lead for that freebie offer. I just hit a wall, where I was just frustrated by trying to fit into these formulas that I felt like I was supposed to fit into. And so, I just kind of threw everything out the window at some point then.

Jenna: I just love that there are so many people that will have heard you on last week's podcast. And just how clearly and decisively all of us were, talking about your art based on what we see and how you were as well, to now get this backstory about how there was this time where you kind of weren't that, when you were the chameleon and the jack-of-all-trades instead of having this very defined personality.

Gabi: I've noticed too, because I've been trying to be more present on social and other channels for sharing things, I've noticed that it's much easier for me to post and share now than it used to be. I used to feel like, okay, what am I putting on my marketing calendar for this week? What silly tips am I going to share?

Now, it just feels like maybe I am doing something silly, but it feels purposeful. And, I'm trying to be silly.

Jenna: Yeah, yes. And you know who you're calling to, and what you're about. I mean, that really is everything. I was going to ask, this leads in perfectly, how do you think clarity work, and reinvention work in particular, which are the two things we were working on, how do you think that has helped your business and/or helps creative businesses?

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Gabi: So, I think it's really helped me lean into elements of my work that I've always wanted to lean into, but have been very afraid of. I've been very afraid of wanting to own my art, and really wanting to hone in on my style and focus in on that, because I had all these years of molding myself to people and, you're right, I had all this social proof that that works.

Without the reinvention, I think that I would have just been continuing to do that and going along the same path. I think I would have been very unhappy. I feel like it's really helped me have a lot more joy in my work. I feel much more joyful and confident about everything.

Versus, I feel like when I started working with you, I was in this kind of negative, sort of sad headspace about everything. I kind of felt like giving up, but didn't feel like giving up. It was sort of wishy-washy. Now I feel very clear and focused.

Jenna: Obviously, I've seen you step into your own and your secret sauce with the art. But I've also noticed, for you, how productive you've become. I remember when we first started working together, one of the things or even a little bit later on, but one of the sticking points was 'I really need the accountability.'

I always think it's fascinating... It's funny, I still have in my calendar, 'check in with Gabi,' on certain days, since we decided to do that. But the thing is, that every time I talk to you on a call, you've already gone above and beyond what we'd planned for that week.

Just the fact that you are so fueled and you're doing so many things, and you're so productive, really speaks to how much I believe clarity work fuels us, right?

Gabi: Yeah, actually, I love that you said "fuel" since my whole website and brand is gas station focused. But yeah, I feel much more focused. I definitely feel more action oriented.

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I think when we first started working together, I'd wake up every day feeling very unmoored, and very indecisive about what to do. I had a lot of ideas, but I didn't know really how to focus and hone in on them. And now, I feel like I have kind of a thesis statement, I like to think of it as. I'm moving towards that, and everything I do is aligned with that. And, I have action items, it's very helpful for me.

Jenna: Yeah. I'm so glad you brought that up, because I'm sure so many creatives are like you, that they just have so many ideas, and they're like, "Where do I start? What do I focus on?" I've seen that in so many people that have maybe coaching businesses or education businesses.

But they are that type of person. Right? They have no problems coming up with the ideas, it's really about the implementation and just knowing, deciding, how to choose. Because they all seem like amazing opportunities or amazing ideas, but how do you constrain? How do you focus and choose what to focus on? But you have.

Gabi: Yeah, it's been very helpful. It's weird, because when I was in that indecisive, sort of frozen state, it felt very foreign because I am usually so action oriented and so goal oriented. But I think it was just too many things were happening, and I was feeling so unsure. It wasn't even, "Well, my motivation is plummeting," but I just didn't have this greater vision that I was moving towards.

Jenna: Which makes sense. People have used this analogy before, but it's like you have Google GPS on, but you haven't put a destination in and so you're just driving around randomly. There are so many different streets you could take; you could take the highway; you could double back and go the opposite direction. But where are you really going? If you just knew, then you'd plug it in, and you'd go there.

Gabi: Yeah, I love that analogy. I think we've talked about this a lot. But as someone who also really loves running, and playing sports has been a big

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part of my life, I was always sort of craving having a training regimen, as a hypothetical race of running a business.

It's not as black and white as training for a marathon, or something where you have very clear cut steps. But I do feel a lot more like I have these steps, and I am working on them, I feel like I have more of a plan now, which is nice.

Jenna: Oh, I love that. So, for anyone considering coaching, what do you think they need to know, knowing what you know now? And maybe what you would have said to pass on? Gabi, you can be absolutely candid, the good and the bad.

Gabi: I think to get the results out of it, you have to be willing to do the work and you have to be open to change, especially with the reinvention stuff. I feel like when I started with you, almost wanting kind of a black and white solution.

And then, I got something so much more than that. I don't think I was really expecting my business to change as much as it did. So, I don't know if that was an openness or it just sort of happened, but I guess being open to change would be beneficial.

Jenna: Or maybe also, you're kind of giving permission to the people that are just like, "Hey, things are hemorrhaging right now. I just need help, right now." So, that might be really interesting. Because I do, I spend a lot of time on this podcast talking about the great big vision, and moving into your secret sauce. Maybe there are people who are thinking, "Yeah, that's great for another time. But right now, I need help with this thing."

I think what you're sharing, that I'm thankful for, is that we'll help you, regardless, right? You can sit on a hot seat, which you have a couple times, and get so many direct tactical ideas for the exact problem at hand, or moment at hand. But then we'll also start nudging you towards your future.

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Gabi: Yes, that's a good way to put it. It's a lot of bigger picture work, and really thinking about your business. I think you do have to be pretty open to your business changing a lot. Maybe it's not the best fit if it's someone who is very clear headed about what their business is, and they just want someone to help them figure out, okay, your audience is on Facebook so you should be doing Facebook ads. That kind of stuff.

I think for creatives, if you are maybe more junior and need more actual creative feedback, or you need someone to kind of help you with your portfolio, maybe going for a creative coach would be good.

I like working with you because I already felt strongly about my work. So, you helped me envision my business as a business, which is weird to say. But I think because I had been running this freelancer model, and didn't really want to keep running it that way, I really needed someone to help me level up and help me market myself and be more objective about business too.

Jenna: And show up as the artist you are, I think was a big one as well. I do think it's right; you were there, where you definitely had your point of view and you had all this wanting to emerge and evolve. And me just asking the questions of you helped you finally articulate what it was that was your secret sauce. That's so good.

Before we sign off, is there anything, maybe epiphany, you've had, or different ways of thinking that you've gained now, that you could share with creative people who are in your place? Things that you've learned, things that you think of differently, that would really serve them?

Gabi: Yeah. I really believe now that there is opportunity, a lot of opportunity, in the art and design space if you niche, and you really lean into who you are as a creative, and lean into your very specific point of view.

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I have found so much more evidence since I've been looking about for wealth generation and profitability in that space, once you are able to really own who you are as a creative. Versus, I think when you are trying to be everything to everyone, then it's very easy as a creative to get knocked down price wise; everyone's trying to find the cheapest option. Everyone is trying to sort of use you for exposure or whatever.

But yeah, I now really believe in the possibility for success and wealth building. And just being able to really thrive in the creative industry.

Jenna: I would add design the business you want. Because you've come up with some really cool things, cool business models, cool things to do with your business to also generate income.

Gabi: Yeah, very true. That is something that I've also realized too, there is possibility to generate revenue through so many lanes. So, that's one of the things I've been very excited about recently, just kind of choosing the lanes that feel right for me. Seeing all that possibility out there is very exciting. Just design the business you want, I like that.

Jenna: Gabi, thank you so much for coming on and sharing everything that you've learned over these months. Where can people get in touch with you?

Gabi: They can find me on Instagram @gabithecreative. They can also email me through my website, which is GabiAndersonStudio.com.

Jenna: So good, so good. I'm sure that when I go back and record the intro... but I just want to mention, again, you also have an amazing shop. So, anyone that just wants to make their home or their wardrobe a little bit cooler, should definitely check that out.

Gabi: Yeah, thanks. That's also on my website, GabiAndersonStudio.com.

Jenna: So good. Thank you, Gabi for coming on.

Gabi: Thank you. Thanks for having me.

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Hey, if you want true clarity about your secret sauce, your people, your best way of doing business, and how you talk about your offer, then I invite you to join us in the Clarity Accelerator. I'll teach you to connect all the dots, the dots that have always been there for you, so that you can show up like you were born for exactly this.

Come join us and supercharge every other tool or tactic you'll ever learn, from Facebook ads to manifestation. Just go to TheUncommonWay.com/schedule and set up a time to talk. I can't wait to be your coach.

Thanks for joining us here at *The Uncommon Way*. If you want more tips and resources for developing clarity in your business and life, including the Clarity First Strategy for growing and scaling your business, visit TheUncommonWay.com. See you next time.