

EPISODE 30: HOW TO START A CONSULTING BUSINESS IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY

with Jennifer Rosenfeld

Marketing for Creatives Show
at IntNetworkPlus.com

Announcer:

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Marina Barayeva:

Hi everyone. This is Marina Barayeva. Welcome to another episode of Marketing for Creatives show. In this episode, we gonna talk about how to start a consulting business in the creative industry.

As a creative entrepreneur, you may think about other ways to expand your business or to transition to a little different field and start consulting and coaching other people. Well, here we are with our great guest today Jennifer Rosenfeld.

Jennifer is CEO of iCadenza and President & Principal Manager of Cadenza Artists. She has extensive experience working with musicians of all genres on identifying and pursuing their professional goals, and overcoming the obstacles that come up along the way.

She has also worked with organization leaders on creating a culture of innovation and developing promotional and strategic initiatives.

Marina Barayeva:

Hi, Jennifer. Welcome to the show. How are you today?

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

I'm doing great, thank you so much.

Marina Barayeva:

That's amazing. Jennifer, please tell us about yourself. Tell us your story.

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

Sure. I am the CEO and cofounder of iCadenza and Cadenza Artists. I cofounded these companies with my business partner Julia Torgovitskaya Rapoport. We started working

together in 2009 after we graduated from college and started our first company, iCadenza. We actually met in high school or middle school so we've known each other a very long time.

I never thought that this would be my career, being an entrepreneur in the world of music and the arts, but here I am and I'm so grateful to do what I do.

Basically, iCadenza is a company that supports musicians and other performers with their business development, project development, and all of that. We work with a lot of high-level artists to help them launch new projects and create an effective vision and strategy for their careers.

Julia and I have training on the business side but also in coaching and developing others, so that's what we bring to our work with musicians. We also do online education and consulting for organizations, mostly in the arts and higher education.

Our other company, Cadenza Artists, is a performing arts talent agency. We're based in the United States but we book artists all over North America and we do some work in Asia and the Middle East as well. That's what we do.

Marina Barayeva:

Wow, a lot of stuff all over the world. That's great. Can you tell us a little more? You're a musician first. How did you grow from being a musician to opening the consulting business?

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

I have done music all my life. I did a lot of piano as a kid. When I went to college I actually wasn't a music major but I still did piano and I took singing lessons. I sang in choir, I did a chamber music program and it was always so important to me.

I especially loved classical music and musical theatre. I'm one of those people who have seen Les Miserables an embarrassing amount of times but I just love it.

I've always loved and been fascinated by artists and have always wanted to be around creative people. It's really exciting that I get to work closely with them in what I do.

And similarly, now that I'm done with the educational phase of my life, I've been able to spend more time doing more music. I still play the piano and I write music. I started playing the ukulele a few months ago, which is really fun.

But I never thought I would go into the business side. I thought I would work in Law or go into Academia. I never thought that business would be a fulfilling and very creative outlet for all the things that I wanted to do.

It took some time for me and Julia to figure out exactly what is iCadenza and what are we meant to do but we landed on becoming a consulting company for the most part, which is really exciting.

Marina Barayeva:

Interesting. We also have a lot of entrepreneurs with different experiences listening to the show.

You are a musician and you work with the same audience. Some people are artists, architects, designers, photographers, all of them listening to this show, so what do they need to start a consulting business in a creative industry, like you do?

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

Like I said, I never thought that I would be in business and doing a lot of consulting in this way but I think there's great opportunity for it. There are many different types of consultants out there.

Part of it is figuring out what is the kind of work you like doing. In our field, in the arts, consulting can range from being very nebulous in its impact or more internally oriented like coaching a musician or another creative person on their mindset or on their career, which is a lot of what we do. It's less tangible in some ways but highly transformative for that person.

Then there are more concrete types of consulting, whether that's social media or developing some kind of strategic plan or for arts organizations for instance, designing their acoustics or helping them figure out how to fundraise to build a new facility.

There are so many types of consulting opportunities that exist. Part of it is figuring out what it is you want to do and what are the ways that you can help another person.

It was a journey for us to figure out what our zone of genius is and what we like to consult on. It's still an evolution of defining this is what we do.

There are certain types of projects that we have done in the past or that we get asked to do that maybe are not the right fit for us and we're still really trying to explore and hone in on what is the unique thing that we can offer as an organization.

I don't know if that answers your question but that's how I think about it. First it starts with defining how you think you are capable of helping others and you need to find a match for that in terms of needs and the market place but it all really starts there.

Marina Barayeva:

Basically, you take your creative career as the foundation and then you look for other business interests probably, and then you mix them together, that's how you turn it into a consulting business?

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

I guess it's something like that. Yes, if you look at yourself and your skills and your interests and how those could relate to another person.

"We all have things that we're good at and for many of them we don't always make the connection that this can be used to help someone else." But that's really where it starts.

Marina Barayeva:

You first were a musician and now you consult other musicians on specific topics, for example how to be your own agent or others.

When you find this second niche that you want to mix together, how do you define what consulting service to offer or on what subject to consult people or focus on?

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

Again, I think this is a process that is an evolution and as long as you're in business you'll probably be evolving it to some extent and that's certainly the case for us, but it all begins by talking to people who are a prospective client for you.

If you think about who is the type of person that you want to help, it's really great to actually understand what are their needs and what are their challenges.

Are their challenges something that they actually identify and recognize as challenges or is it something that you can see but they can't? Because if it's that scenario, it can be a little bit more difficult to help them understand the value that you'll bring.

The other part of it is the services you provide need to be the answer to a pain that feels real enough to them that they are willing to do something about it.

We all have problems and issues that we don't do anything about because it's not that important. But if someone is going to pay for your services, it needs to be a really important thing that you're going to address for them.

Always being in conversation with your potential customer, the person you can serve, is where you get all the information about what your consulting offering should be, what is the right way to position it, and what it should entail.

It's really great to try things and see how they go and then maybe you change them.

Marina Barayeva:

When you start working on your consulting business, where do you find your first clients? Or maybe you can share with us how you found your first clients?

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

When Julia and I first started iCadenza, honestly, we were still trying to figure out exactly what we were going to do. We had some ideas that we wanted to test but it's not like the whole grand plan for iCadenza came to us at the beginning. It's been a constant evolution.

The first project that we took on was doing interviews with musicians over video. What was so great about that was it was a reason to network and to ask people questions about themselves and learn about them.

We were living in Los Angeles at the time, I no longer live there but that's where we were and we made it our business to get to know everyone in classical music in the city, anyone who would talk to us.

We used whatever relationships we had from doing summer programs and teachers that we had known and friends who had done summer programs. We just went through our network and started talking to people.

It wasn't that we were trying to sell them something or in an aggressive way screening to whether they would be interested in purchasing our services. It was really about getting to know them and connecting.

Our first client was referred to us by someone who ran a summer program that Julia had participated in many years before. I remember, we met her and she was so amazing.

We were working with coaches at the time who were advising us on how to start this side of our business and we followed the steps of how do we have an enrollment conversation; how do we let her understand what our services are and what it costs. We did it and we were so nervous and she said yes.

Then we were even more scared because we had to deliver and there was this fear that we're going to give all our secrets away on the first session and then we'd have nothing left to help her with. That wasn't the case. It was a really great working experience and we found that the more we did it, the more we had to give.

That was how it happened for us. It all comes back to "being in a place where you can be meeting new people and learning their stories and feeling out whether there's a way that you can help them."

Marina Barayeva:

When you gave away all of your tips and shared all your experience, what did you offer after that?

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

It was very customized to her situation, and I think that was part of it. I can't remember exactly what we did in the first session versus the second one.

Sometimes we can have this fear that we have to hide our best stuff, not just give it all away. Some people really believe that, and we have to draw a line between what we give away and what people need to pay for it but many have the philosophy that you should give as much away as you can so that people understand that you have a lot of value to give.

I can't remember exactly what we did in our second session but it was really just building on the first one. The way we work is we have a conversation, we get to know someone, and we get to know their goals.

Something that we're really good at is understanding the big picture, synthesizing it and being able to translate that into action steps, put pieces together that the client might not notice or see for themselves and help them take their next step.

At the next step, there's always more to talk about. There's always more to reevaluate and support them with or maybe they want to take a step but they are afraid or they feel uncomfortable, so then we can work on that. There are always so many things that we are able to go into.

Marina Barayeva:

There are a lot of things. When you were in the creative industry and then you start something else, or whatever business you start the second one, it's hard to keep up with two stuff.

How can you still have the creative work and then turn it little by little into consultant work, how to you keep a balance?

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

I wish I knew the answer. I feel like I am still constantly struggling with that.

One of the first things that I realized after I graduated from school and started working on iCadenza is that when you're in school, you have a schedule. You have a formula for how to live your life and you get grades so you know how well you're doing in life.

Especially when you're moving into a career that is more freelance based, basically you have a more flexibly schedule, it can be really hard to use your time well. It's something that I feel is a challenge that I experience every day, to try and do better and better with that.

For me a lot of it is prioritization and being really clear with myself of what are the most important two or three things I should focus on in a single day.

I often, in my calendar, block out times for all the things that I need to do, whether that's a phone call or a meeting or working on a certain project. I try to stick to that and I try to minimize distractions and do things that help me feel recharged creatively, whether that's reading or going on a walk.

Those are all the things that I try to do but I have not figured it out. I'm still working on it.

Marina Barayeva:

(Laughter) Okay. When do you work on your both businesses, your creative one, the musician one and the consultant business. How do you offer this work to people? Because they're a little bit different but still similar things.

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

For me, most of my work that I offer to the world right now is through my consulting business. At this point I'm not really pursuing a professional career with my music, so at some point that may change.

I think we're in an era where it's the time for the portfolio career. I work with so many musicians through my company who are doing multiple things. I have members of my team who are doing both. They are consulting with us, with our clients, and they have a creative career of their own.

Part of it, I think, is identifying the definition that we use for ourselves to figure out who we want to be and what kind of work we want to do and then just learning how to be clear about that. Whether we represent that on our website or in conversation with others I think it all comes down to how we internally think about what we do and then how we present it.

I talk to many musicians who struggle with the fact that they're concerned that if they do too many things they'll be seen and people will be confused by them. For instance, I may work with a musician who is a singer and a composer. How do they merge those two identities? I really believe that the uniqueness of any person exists at that intersection.

I know for me, and I hear this from clients, that I'm able to be effective with them in part because I have a really strong connection to music personally and I understand their experience and what they're going through. I think that's part of it.

And then, for instance, through my work with iCadenza, I have to balance my own time between activities that are more business oriented and activities that are more creative, whether that's writing for our blog or creating our podcast, or doing some other type of creative development project, whether that's a training program for our clients or someone that we're consulting for.

I'm constantly having to balance my time and my mindset to be able to shift between creative activities and more business oriented activities like sales or dealing with financials. All of those things require a different state of mind, at least for me.

Marina Barayeva:

How do you promote your consulting business? There are so many things that you are doing but you still need to market yourself somehow.

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

For us, and this is what I recommend, most of our work comes through referrals and through meeting people and through getting into conversations.

We do social media, we have a website, we have a newsletter, and we have a podcast. We do a lot of marketing activities and we could do more, it's just a balance of where to use our time in the most effective way. It's a constant question that I think about.

But I think what is important is that if you're starting out and you're consulting and you want to grow your business, one of the most important things, maybe the most important thing to do is to get into conversations with people.

Not everyone you talk to is going to be a potential client and that's totally okay but to make it a very important practice to be talking to people, learning about what they're doing, practice talking about what you do and sharing about your services, that's the way to grow your business.

Marina Barayeva:

There are many things.

I'm sure you've got a lot of ups and downs over there. Can you share with us what mistakes did you make on this long journey when you started your consulting business and what challenges did you face or maybe still facing? What should we avoid?

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

There are so many. I think mistakes are a big part of the journey and I'm still learning. Honestly that's one of my favorite things about being an entrepreneur and in general, which is that I am constantly learning something new.

I'm constantly trying something where I am a beginner at it and I don't fully know the best way to do it and I'm probably going to spend too much time on something that I shouldn't do or whatever it is. Being okay with making mistakes I think is really important.

Let's see, in terms of some recommendations or key mistakes that we made. I think a lot of time can be spent very easily at the beginning on things that ultimately don't matter.

I remember pulling all nighters to finish our website and to work on some little portion of the website that no one really saw and maybe didn't matter, things that were not ultimately directly related to getting more clients and to growing our business.

I think that's part of it at the beginning which is how do you make sure that you are taking the action that's going to have an impact on your bottom line or on the ability for you to grow your business and be better at delivering it. That's one thing, really monitoring yourself and how you spend your time to make sure that it is as high impact as possible.

Then, I think, in running a consulting business something that every person will encounter is what do you do with clients who may not be the best fit for you?

We have dealt with clients who were not the right fit and perhaps we didn't realize that in the enrollment process or we did and we ignored it because we were really excited about having someone who was ready to work with us that we said yes even though we probably should have said no.

Becoming really thoughtful about who is the ideal client for you, what makes someone a good client for your work and how can you be screening for that in your conversations with them from the beginning rather than getting yourself into a situation with someone who is not going to be a good client, for whatever reason that means for you.

Maybe it is that they don't do what you are asking them to do and their success depends on them doing that stuff. Or maybe it is that they are very resistant to what you're proposing and they are not into your method.

There could be many other factors that makes someone not the right fit and a lot of this gets developed with experience, to be able to determine whether someone is going to be a good fit and become a client who you can really help succeed versus not.

Marina Barayeva:

In the beginning of the interview, you say that you have a business with your friend. How is this challenge going? Sometimes people think that having a business with a friend can break the friendship. Was it challenging for you? Was it supportive? How did it work out in the end?

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

I would say that going into business with Julia is one of the best decisions I've ever made in my life. And yes, at the beginning people were cautioning us that this could damage our friendship and you should be very careful about going into business with your friend.

I think all of those things are true but what made it work for us was deciding at the very beginning that our friendship comes first above business. That means, in our case, that I want what's best for her as a person and as my friend. That is more important to me than something that comes on the business side.

Fortunately, we haven't really had conflicts that have been a really difficult decision of having to choose between your friend and the company. That hasn't really happened for us, and that could happen theoretically. But we've always put each other first.

The other thing that's been so great about working together is that it's brought us closer in a lot of ways and it's forced us to invest in our relationship with each other in ways that I haven't done with other friendships because I guess I didn't need to.

Our relationship needs to be so much more high functioning and supportive and transparent than most friendships need to be because we count on each other in such a big way. We've done a lot of work on our relationship, not that it was ever in a bad place but just to make it as strong as possible.

We've grown a lot together and it's amazing to have worked with someone for eight years and have complete trust that she has my back and I have her back. I only have positive things to say about working with a friend but I can only speak from my experience.

Marina Barayeva:

That's amazing to have someone to support you all the time and I am sure even if you have some misunderstandings, you solve it and still stay friends.

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

Mm-hmm (agreement).

Marina Barayeva:

That's great.

You shared with us how you started, how to work with clients, how to grow, but let's imagine that you need to start all over and you already have your experience. So, as a musician or any other creative entrepreneur, you are starting from zero. How would you start your consulting business and what are the first three steps?

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

That is such a good question. I love thinking about this, the first three steps.

I think first of all I would spend some time envisioning what is the ideal scenario that I want for myself in a few years.

- Who do I want to be serving through my work?
- What do I want life, my schedule, to look like?

I think it's really important to have a clear picture of that. For instance, if I were to start a different business or move into a different direction, I think I would want to get the vision clear first.

Then I think I'd probably try to get into a more creative mode and brainstorm what are a few things that I can do, whether it's ways that I can help people or services that I can offer. I would want to get my thinking going so I would have something to offer or some thinking that is done there.

Then the next thing that I would do is make a list of all the people that I currently know who would be useful to talk to for some reason related to that. Then I would talk to them. I would interview them, I would ask them questions about what they do, I would see what I could learn from them and explore whether there was some way that I could help them.

I think all business development, especially if you are a consultant, you need to talk to people. You need to learn what they need and where you fit in and it all starts from there. There are a lot of other things that you can do. A lot of people are using online tools to build businesses like this, so it can be creating content, positioning yourself as an expert on different topics.

All of that matters and is valuable but I really think the scariest and most impactful thing is to get into a conversation with another human and explore whether there is potential for you to help them, and then ask them and find a way to bring that up.

That's what I would do.

Marina Barayeva:

Great, Jennifer. Sounds like a plan. You're ready to go. That's fantastic. Thank you so much for a lot of great tips here. How can we find more about you? How can we connect with you?

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

You can learn more about iCadenza on our website, which is www.icadenza.com. We have a lot of free resources for musicians and creative types for navigating this kind of career. We also have a podcast and have a lot of things that we do. Feel free to check out our site and reach out to us to learn more.

Marina Barayeva:

What's your favorite social media?

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

I guess you could check out our [Facebook](#) page. I confess that I wouldn't call myself the biggest social media person. We are active. We have a great page on Facebook where we're posting all this stuff. Definitely check us out there. We're on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) as well.

Marina Barayeva:

Thank you so much Jennifer.

Jennifer Rosenfeld:

Thank you.

Marina Barayeva:

That's all for today. Thank you for listening. For the show notes and the full transcript of the episode please go to intnetworkplus.com.

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