

Scholar's Voice Origin Story [Ep. 151]

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SPEAKERS

Cathy Mazak

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Cathy Mazak 00:02

Welcome to the academic writing amplified podcast. On this podcast, we believe that the culture of academia needs to change radically. Women and non binary people are revolutionising academia within institutions that were not built for us. If you're ready to reject the culture of overwork, kick, guilt and overwhelm to the curb, and amplify your voice to make a real impact on your field, without breaking down, or burning out, you're in the right place, with our team of experienced writing coaches, as CO hosts will share insights and talk to inspiring guests to bring you the practical strategies, systems and mindset shifts. You need to find time to write, publish work you love, and design your career on your terms. And it all starts with writing. Let's go.

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Cathy Mazak 00:55

Hello, hello, podcast listeners. This is Kathy Mays and I am so excited about today's episode. So if you're like me, you love a juicy good detailed behind the scenes story. I'm always like looking for like the behind the scenes, outtakes and things whenever I watch a movie, it's something I miss a lot from DVDs, right, they used to come with a lot more bonus content. And behind the scenes, I love that. One of my favorite podcasts is how I built this with Guy Roz love that podcast because you get to hear all of these really interesting behind the scenes stories about how businesses get built. So today, I am bringing you what I think will be like the comprehensive behind the scenes story of my business. That is this business that has created and brought to you this podcast now since 2019, the business that's been blogging since 2017, and the business that runs all the programs that we talk about on this podcast. Now, if you don't like business talk, if you don't like to hear people talk about money, if you don't like behind the scenes, then this is not the episode for you. Because I'm actually going to tell you my revenue numbers each year since the company was founded. And all of this is because if you listened to last week's podcast episode, you'll know that we are changing the name of the company from my name to scholars voice. Now, this means not just the name of the company changing but we're doing it as part of what you would call in the business world right like a brand change, we are changing from a business. That is a solopreneur business, right? Like was that hasn't been for a while. But a business that I started, you know, in my off hours on my

computer to a what I hope is a and we'll be continuing to develop as a full fledged business in the world. And that really that change needed a new name. Because the truth is that I am not the only person in this business anymore. And that's been true for quite a long time. So buckle up, because today is probably going to be a longer episode we'll see how it lands. But we um, week I am going to be talking to you all about the trajectory of what is now our company called scholars voice, how I founded it in 2017. What happened along the way and why in 2023, we are doing this big brand revision, I can't wait to dig into all the juicy details with you. All right. Before I get started on the story, I want to tell you a little bit about something that's coming up really soon that I want you to know about. So starting next week, we are going to be taking applications for a new pilot version of our navigate program. Now navigate is what we call our signature program. The title of the program is navigate your writing roadmap. And we have been offering navigate as a year long program for the past year and a half or so in fact, we just enrolled 3035 new members in November into the year long version of navigate. Because we are doing so many changes as we become scholars voice one of the things that we wanted to do was really take a look at all the programs and we wanted to look at them through the lens of a couple of really two main criteria. We wanted to make the programs more simple And we wanted to make the programs more impactful. We think those two things are really related to each other, right? Like there is much impact fulness in simplicity and clarity in the instead of like, you know, a program that has a ton of stuff in it, a very streamlined, focused program that can get the clients who take that program the result in a shorter period of time. And we really think we can do this with navigate. So we are doing something quite radical. And we are taking a program that we've offered Wow, in so many different ways. And we are going to offer it as a 12 week program. This is going to have group coaching and weekly group coaching in the program. In addition to our core navigate curriculum, which we are reorganizing, re ordering and revising, for this pilot version, what we're looking for is 10 to 20. academics who want to do this new pilot version of navigate, it will start it's 12 weeks long, it'll start at the end of February, and run until mid May. Okay. So if you count out the weeks, that's how long it's going to be. And we're looking for people who have never done our navigate program before. Now, if you're listening and you're like, wait, but I just joined navigate in November, and now you're changing it or I did it before. And this sounds really good, I want to do it again, don't worry, there's going to be an opportunity for you to participate, but not in the pilot round. We're really looking to test some things in this revised curriculum and this revised format, so that we can make sure that those are the things we want to do when we rerelease the program in May, okay, so don't worry for May, those of you who have done maybe they are in the Navigate Alumni Program, maybe you are currently just enrolled in navigate either from November's group or the May group, don't worry, there's going to be an opportunity for you to join the 12 week version of navigate in May, for this round, we're looking for people who want to clear their publication pipelines, and who really want to do it in a way that is maybe a little intense, but very effective. Okay, impactful, and simple. So anyway, more details, many, many, many, many more details about that are coming in the next week, you're going to be hearing a lot of content about that new version of navigate, including a new program promise and all the new format and everything and the price, don't worry, you'll get all that information. I just wanted to let you know, because actually navigate has a really important role in the story of our company. And I can't wait to tell you what we're going to do with it in 2023. So okay, so let's get started. Then, without further ado, let's get started with the origin story of what is now scholars voice. All right, if you are new to the podcast, I'm going to give you a couple sentence version of who I am and what our company is. So my name is Kathy mezack. And I'm a tenured or I was a tenured full professor, when I started this online business, creating professional development programs for academic women and non binary professors. So this is, you know where we are today. But it's also how we started, I really started out in 2017, I had gotten tenure, I had gotten full. And I think what I want to do is talk about kind of pre 2017, and a little

bit of like kind of context about the founding of the business. And then I'm going to go through each year and do some highlights, I'm going to tell you how much money top line revenue money we made each year from 2017 to the last numbers that just came in, which is 2022. The reason for that is like I don't know, if you know, if you follow any business podcasts or if you're interested in entrepreneurship at all, very few businesses, and I think even fewer businesses, women owned businesses make it to the million dollar mark. I think it's one or 2% of women owned businesses make it to the million dollar in a year revenue mark. That is considered still a very small business. So just to give you like a little bit of context, many of the businesses that you know that are small, I mean a small business is still like you could be a 20 million dollar a year business and still be considered a small business, right? So we're talking about like in relative to that, like a million dollars a year is rather small. But I wanted to give you a context because it is kind of like a turning point and a goal for many, many businesses. And when you're hearing revenue numbers, if you're not used to hearing revenue numbers, I just want to kind of give that to you as a little bit of a context. And no, we have not hit a million dollars in a year. Although we have made over the course of the years that we've been in business, which is six years, we're going into year seven, we have generated over \$2.5 million in revenue over the course of the whole business. Okay, so that'll get more context here as we go on. So I'm going to divide the journey, the description of the journey into kind of pre 2017. And then I'll take you through each year of the business, just like what we did, what programs we introduced, how much money we made, what size our team was, and all of that. So it's really nitty gritty and behind the scenes detail. So I hope I hope you enjoy. Alright, so let's see in 2017, I, as I mentioned, was a mom of three, I had become a full professor, I had founded a research center, the first qualitative research center on our campus, I had brought in over a half a million dollars in federal funding. And in an English department, at least where I am, or where I was at University of Puerto Rico and migrants. That was like a really, really big deal. So I had brought in a lot of funding, I've made international collaborations and relationships with bilingualism researchers all over the world. And yeah, like things were going kind of trucking along nicely. Let's see what else happened in 2014 or so my publication kind of life really started to take off, I really hit on a research thread, it was a little bit of like a What has turned into quite a wave of research around translanguaging, which is kind of what's like a new way to talk about bilingualism in classrooms. And I did research right at the beginning of when people were starting to use that word. And so I was able to really start to publish in a really Michi kind of beautiful area that I really, really believed in and felt strongly about and was developing this research program around translanguaging or, you know, Spanish and English language use for learning in college classrooms, mostly college science classrooms. So that was my kind of Michie little area. I had gotten published in the Journal of bilingualism and bilingual education, got published in anthropology and education quarterly, took and did two really lovely, edited volumes, which in linguistics edited volumes are, I mean, we can have a conversation about the the, you know, why do edited volumes in linguistics? I think they have they're certainly not peer reviewed journal articles, but they count, right? Okay, they count. So, between 2014, I would say in 2017, like that whole that I was really developing that line of research. And also I had my third baby and turned 40. So, in 2015, is when I had mighty Ella, who is our youngest. And I had told my husband that we were not having any babies after 40. And so I got pregnant when I was 39 and had her when I was 40. So that was 2015. Now a beautiful thing about Puerto Rico is that the maternity leave policy is actually very nice at the university. So I was able to take off like a whole semester plus a summer. So like, a lot I was able to take really take time and be with each one of my children when they were born. And I don't think that maternity leaves are sabbaticals. Right because they're not. And I just want to say that I think one of the reasons that I was able to be successful in my career is that I took them as time away like there is not a sabbatical. It's not that I didn't work because absolutely my body was recovering from birth from pregnancy and birth. And, you know, I was mothering an infant. But I was not thinking

about academics or anything to do with work for the whole time I was on maternity leave. I didn't answer emails. I didn't read anything. Like that was like academic. I completely check out for my three maternity leaves. And actually, I think that really helped me to, to keep going as long as I did, you know in academia. So Let's see, I don't have the timeline completely perfect. But let's say, around 2015, when I had money, and I was on maternity leave, let's see before that, actually. So, before that, I,

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you're gonna laugh, maybe I don't know if I've ever talked about this on the podcast. So before that, we were trying to make ends meet, we're trying to make ends meet with our student loans, and our two cars and our house and our two children. And we had my husband kind of had this hobby of exercise and supplements and all these things. And so because he was spending a lot of money on in this certain company, which I'm not going to mention, but on exercise programs and supplements, because he was spending a lot of money, we looked at how much he was spending and decided, Oh, well, I think I'll become, you know, a coach in that company, they call it a coach, but it's really a salesperson, right? In that company, in order to, you know, get the discount on the supplements and things. This company is what they call an MLM, a multi level marketing company. And as we first we joined, like, for the discount, and then I was like, well, maybe I can make some money here, and we need a little extra money. So let's see if I can like run this as like a little side business. And as many people, many people join MLMs, think this, right, I'll run it as a little side business, and I'll make a few 100 extra dollars a month, if I made 500 or 800, extra dollars a month, it would be really amazing and would help our family out a lot, right? Like that would be the mortgage. So fantastic. So I did that. And I did that before I was pregnant during my pregnancy, and for some amount of time, while I was on maternity leave. So if you're unfamiliar with the world of multilevel marketing, or and this company in particular, what I was doing was like basically, on social media, I would talk about my own fitness journey. And I would, you know, recommend programs to people on social media, right, mostly Facebook at that time. And, you know, so I was doing that. And one of the things that they recommend you doing is like, you know, get your friends together, have them buy the program, and then have a Facebook group where you basically are posting every day and having people like it's like an accountability group kind of thing. So I was doing that. And I was creating all kinds of content inside of these Facebook groups, I was creating content on Facebook, and I was, you know, trying to make this extra side money through this multi level marketing company. So on the surprisingly, unsurprisingly, I never really made any money, you know, like not enough to offset the costs of buying the supplements and buying the programs and all of those things. And also, so, so, no, I was, but I realized I was like, you know, I was creating, I was creating these like little online communities and that people loved them. And that was great, but it was never gonna like make me a ton of money. In the process of doing that. I enrolled in a course in personal branding. Yeah, in personal branding it through my university's like continuing education, you know, school. So it cost like 50 or 80 bucks. And I was thinking I would do it to try to grow this little like multilevel marketing, fitness business, quote, unquote, it wasn't really a business thing that I was doing. But when I took that course, two things happened. One was, I was like a new mom. Well, I wasn't a new mom, but I had a new baby. And so I was able to it was an online course. So I was able to take your watch. I'd never taken an online course before. So this was like, you know, 2015 2016 I had never taken an online course before. And it sounds crazy now, right? That sounds like really ridiculous now, but think about 2016 Right? Like it was not, you know, it was a different world. So I took this online course. And I was like, This is really neat, because I can watch the content at night after the baby goes to bed or I can watch it in like little short, you know, bursts throughout the day.

And that was so that was one thing that happened when I took that program. And then the second thing that happened was I was like, Why in the world am I spending so much time trying to sell fitness programs I'm not like even that interfere That's right. Like I had had good success with the programs and I liked healthy eating and like it was, that was all fine. But I was not an expert in that I just, you know, was able to kind of attract people to me and talk to them as humans. And that made me okay at sales for fitness programs, like not something I even look back on. And I'm not even that I'm not even very proud of that, just like, I did it just true that I did it, right. So as I was doing this personal branding course, I was like, wait a minute, like I sell, I sell these like a fitness video. And I make \$15. And I do all this work to create these like accountability groups and do all this social posting, and all the sales and attraction marketing. And I make \$15. Like, it seems silly. I am a well trained professional. So that taking that online course made me think two things, one, online courses, that's really cool, too. I have an expertise area that maybe could be monetized. And it's not through somebody else's multilevel marketing business. So I started to kind of delve into the world of online courses, in 2000. Like in around 2016. When I started doing this, I would say that there were some big names in online in the online course world, they're still kind of big names. So Amy Porterfield, who has a business podcast called Online Marketing Made Easy, Pat Flynn, who has a business podcast called Smart Passive Income. And I think even from that very start, I was listening, or I had started following Mariah cause who was all about like creating online courses as well. So these people were teaching how to put out content in the world at that moment, it was through a blog, right, like through writing a blog, and then create a course, for the people who followed you online or who found your blog. And so I started thinking like, well, and one of the things that anybody tells you when you're starting a business, is to think about, like, what's the thing that people ask you about all the time, right? They're like, how did you do that? Or Wow, it's so interesting, you did this. That is could be something that could turn into a business idea. And for me, especially at that moment in my life, I had just done this maternity leave, I had all these publications come out had two books and all these articles out, it looked like I wrote them over maternity leave, like my baby was born in September 2015. And a lot of the, you know, I had submitted like most of those, no, 2016. She was born 2016. Sorry, sorry.

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So I had submitted much of that like, right before I went on maternity. And so of course, they come out in publication, you know, 789 months later, right? So and that was my lovely maternity leave was was long. So a lot of people were asking me like, well, how are you? Like, how, how do you teach a four four load, which was what my teaching load was at University of Puerto Rico at my place? How did you do for for load? have three kids? Like? How are you doing this? Like, how are you still doing research and publishing? So I thought I started I thought about lots of different like possibilities for, for like a blog, I only want to call it like a business idea at that point. Because what I was really looking for was like a blog idea. Like, what's something that I could write a short article about every week? And I landed on this question that people asked me, which was like, how did you get how do you get your writing done with all that teaching, and the parenting all of that stuff. And I realized, I start I remember being in bed, and with a notebook and brainstorming blog ideas, like blog title ideas, for a writing and publishing in academia blog. And I wish I could find that notebook. I'll have to dig around and see if I can find it. But basically, it was like someone turned on a faucet. And I just had so many ideas and so many things I wanted to write about and so many things I wanted to say. So that is really how what is now scholars voice was born back in 2016 when I was thinking, you know, like trying to figure out something to kind of make a little side money to help us make ends meet. Okay, so I got the idea and I started blogging, so I bought my name right Kathy Mays

spec.com and started blogging, they're all about writing and publishing advice for women professors. Like that's how I really started, I even thought at the beginning, I was talking to moms, but in the end, it was really women. And then the audience evolved to include women and non binary professors. As the business grew, right? So I took, so in 2016, I was I would say, in like, September through December 2016, I was thinking like, Okay, I'm going to build this blog, I'm gonna get started, I'm gonna build a course based business that I can run, while I'm also being a professor, right to help others to get their writing done, and to, you know, put out their publications. So, I hired as a personal coach, I remember I spent 1000, or \$1,200, for like, I don't know, eight or 12 weeks of coaching with the woman who was the teacher of that original continuing ed course, that was about personal branding. And so I hired her as like on a one on one coat for one on one coaching program. Since I was making \$0. It felt like, like \$1,000 felt like a lot of money to invest. But she really helped me kind of outline everything, name the company in that moment, which she really thought she didn't she's, especially with into personal branding, like she was she was like, well, it should probably just be your name. And, and, you know, talk about, like, how to set up the beginnings of this online business. So in February 2017, I incorporated and I think I was probably blogging before then. And just really, you know, trying to produce content online that was valuable and helpful to people, I mostly just use Facebook. So I would do, I made a Facebook business page, and I would do lives on my Facebook business page, I would blog and then I would share my blog posts out on Facebook and in the groups that I was in. And one of the groups that I was in was called Academic mamas, I don't know if it still exists on Facebook, but it was 10s of 1000s of people large. And I would just write a blog post and post it in there. And since I was really talking about many things that were, you know, relevant to that Facebook group, I would get people to sign up for my email list, which I would just like email my blog posts out every week, right? And come to free webinars that I did, and that kind of stuff. So that's how I started growing the business in 2017. And in the summer of 2017, I put out my first version of navigate. It was called the academic women's writing roadmap. That was the original name of the program. And it was a course. So it was a digital course, with recorded videos. And I think maybe, maybe that summer, like, I think maybe that summer, I offered it with like three tiers. And one of the tiers had one on one calls with me. And the price points were were very much lower than they were today. When I first first offered it, it was \$297 total total for the course. And I think the the one on one version was 997 that had one on one coaching in it. And there was some intermediate version probably in there somewhere. And I think that the first time I launched that course, which would later become navigate, I made \$14,000. And it felt like I had hit the lottery. It was like what I can make \$14,000 from doing this thing, which is so much fun. And I did it all from my computer at my home in my off hours. You know, like I didn't need to show up to give class I was able to create exactly the curriculum I wanted exactly the length I wanted. And so it was really, it was a very, very liberating and exciting feeling. So in 2017, I made around \$25,000 And that was mostly with navigate, which was then called the academic women's writing roadmap. But I also did a couple other things. I did a virtual what I used to call like what now it's called is the writing sprint blueprint. But what it used to be was the virtual right There's retreat. And it was basically it's very different as writing sprint blueprint. But basically it was like a two week writing sprint, like a guided writing sprint. And now we do those inside our programs. And we have a kind of do it yourself version called Writing sprint blueprint. But that was like my actually my first first program, I think it cost \$97 When I did it live anyway, in 2017. That's really it, I think I did a writing retreat. So I think I also might have done a writing retreat that year, with just like three or four people. And the total that we made was about we being really me was about \$25,000. During that year, I didn't, like I really didn't hire anybody I had, I believe I'm just looking at my expense report while we're talking. Yeah, I hired Esther Littlefield who, who at that time was like an online business manager. And now she's my Podcast Producer. That's why I mentioned her name. So still working with Esther, after all these years,

but in a very different capacity. And what she would do was like, she helped me set up, like the technical side of the business. So like, I built the original website, by the way, I built it myself on WordPress, and set up my original version of my original email marketing software. But during that time, she would help me with launches, she helped me load blog posts up and helped me with automations, and things like that. So she did some like the technical stuff in a very contractor kind of way, like, we just was like, here, I need this done. And I think she was on like a little retainer by the end of 2017. But that was it. So then in 2018, I'm trying to think, oh, so the other thing, contextually what was going on in 2017, especially in like March of 2017, there was a big university strike at my university, in the whole University of Puerto Rico system. So some of you may know, the lay promessa, which is basically where the US put a fiscal control board to control the finances of Puerto Rico. And one of the things that fiscal control board insisted on was a \$450 million cut to the University of Puerto Rico system. So University of Puerto Rico system had been funded off of like the general tax fund, the fiscal control board didn't want that they wanted to make it more like a US state schools model. And basically said, you have to cut \$450 million. So in 2017, things were getting like really rough, they had been getting rough for a while, really, for 10 years, because I think I moved to Puerto Rico in 2007. So 2006 2007. So the whole time I had been a professor, like things were going downhill slowly. But it really got scary in 2017. And what I mean by scary is, we were both professors at the university. And I was just wondering if someday we wouldn't get paid, like, and as many of you probably are, we were living paycheck to paycheck between our student loans and our mortgage, and the cars and all the things. And so it was really like scary to think that we didn't have any other source of income. And that was another reason for starting the business was to like develop another source of income, that, you know, could help us out, help us get out of debts, we're in a better position, and also just kind of diversify income streams, right, that all of our money isn't, wasn't coming just from, you know, the Puerto Rico as we were public, as public employees, right, as university professors at University of Puerto Rico. So that's 2017. Okay, in 2018, we continued to do kind of basically those programs that I mentioned before, when I say we, I really mean me, we still had what was called at that moment, the academic women's writing roadmap. I was also starting to do some kind of one on one coaching I did some different iterations of one on one coaching. We just did try different things I did do a writing retreat, I developed the Organize your academic life course, which we still give to people who enroll in amplifier elevate I'm just looking at my still did the virtual writer's retreat. So we were we were doing different things I was still the big moneymaker was still navigate. And that year we went from making \$25,000 to making \$100,000 And so these numbers I'm giving you our top line revenue numbers, I don't want to get into all like the total expenses and taxes and everything like that, because I don't think it's useful unless you're a business person, you know, really wants like all that level of detail but these Quickly, the in 2018, I was still working my full time job as a professor and then on the side and on the weekends, I would be working on the business. At that moment, I'll say like, quite candidly that I was so excited to be working on the business, and not as excited about my university job. Like, as I mentioned, before, budget cuts were happening, the message we were getting from the university was like, Just be quiet and teach your classes like stop and not stop applying for external funds. But we used to have different incentives to apply for grant money that they cut. It just started to get like this really like a very unfun place to work. And but you know, it was what it was, we were we were all suffering through it together. And on the side, I had this thing that really lit me up, which was my business. So I was still blogging, written blogs at that point, I was doing Facebook Lives, I'm not sure if I not sure when I started the Facebook group, it might have been in 2018. At some point in 2018, or early 2019, I had a Facebook group called I should be writing, I probably started that pretty early. And basically that grew to over 16,000 people before we finally closed it. So that was so I was I would go live there, posting my blog posts around doing free webinars, and then of course selling these different programs. And like I said,

in 2018, made 100 And something 1000 \$104,000 It looked like in terms of expenses. We did, you know had what have different kinds of expenses. But in terms of like team, I had Esther, as my online business manager, and I think in 2018, or soon into early 2019. I hired LaToya and she came in as an executive assistant, but developed later into an online business manager. And as Esther moved more into podcast production, Latoya kind of took over the online business management part of the business. So I always thought I want to say like, throughout all, every moment that I've been in business, I have had a business coach, either through programs, or one on one coaching. I've always invested like a pretty good chunk of change in coaching. That's one of the reasons I believe in coaching so much, because it's helped me so much. So anyway, I just wanted to make sure that you knew that as I you know, because I still had my university salary at this point, I was able to invest in business coaching to continue to develop as a business owner and of course creator. Yeah, so that's 2018 It wasn't a bad year at all, it was pretty good. And increasingly, as we head into 2019, things started getting, you know, I was getting itchy, I was getting itchy to leave the university job. I think mostly, I mean, I think a lot of it had to do with like, I just loved writing the blog so much. I just loved creating courses and content and programs and I loved coaching. It was so much fun. It was like all the good parts of teaching, but with no grading, you know, like and no textbooks like I had to make it all up as I went along and create it really myself. And so I think that's why I started to get more and more attracted to the idea of leaving my university job and going full time in the business. So in 2019 I think I was definitely like looking towards making an exit. I joined a program that helps me further expand and develop the business. So when I joined that program that 2019 is when I launched amplify, which is our pre tenure group coaching program. So I launched amplify in I think I started selling it at like the end of May 2019. I'm not exactly sure around there somewhere. I just know that may 2019 was like a really big revenue month. And overall for 2019. We made almost \$400,000 Which seems just kind of ridiculous at this, like right now cuz I don't know how I did that. Like, I don't know how I worked my job. And also, you know, pretty much put that program out. Well, I do know how, here's how I'm talking about, you know, fiscal years, not academic years. So, January, February, March, April, May was when I was still working my job. That's the last time I taught university classes was May 2019. So I actually did so well in May 2019. that I took a leave of absence without pay from my job. So we launched. So let's see, at that point, I had my coaches, whoever I was paying for coaching I had, that's for my own coaching, right for my own business coaching as an expense.



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I had. Esther, who was,



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I think I had I asked her was still like the online business manager Latoya had come in as an executive assistant. And then, in 2019, when I launched amplify the first round of it, I delivered, I was still the only person delivering any of the programs. So as we were successful with amplify, like, I was like, gosh, well, there's no way I can do this amount of delivery and also work my full time professor job, it just didn't make any sense. So I, you know, took the leave of absence without pay, officially starting, I guess, probably July 120 19. And went on the hunt for coaches to help me deliver particularly our amplify program. So we that's how I found Gina Ambrosio. So you'll be hearing more from them in the next few weeks on the podcast. But basically, I hired them, I think in August 2019, I found them turns out found them both in a

Facebook group called Academic say goodbye. And they both came on very part time, just a few hours a week to start to help deliver the AMPLIFI program. And that was one of the most amazing things that I was able to do, right and that we were bringing in other people to do program delivery, because then instead of me creating the programs by myself, then I had Gina and Rocio who were helping to co create the programs like I mean, I've always think of the programs as CO created with the participants of the program. But then to also have these other people who were doing one on one coaching, who were doing group coaching, who really got to know the clients could help make the programs better. That was amazing. Also September 2019, we launched the podcast. And I think that the podcast has been such a wonderful way to reach people to get like to really, really get people who listen to the podcast tell me that they feel like they know me. And so and that happens to me all the time when like I actually get on the phone with someone to talk about enrolling in one of our programs. And they'll be like, Oh, I feel like I know you because I listen to you every week. And so it's a little strange, but also like I feel the same way about the people, you know, the podcasters who I listened to. So it's a very intimate medium. And it's not very distraction I right that there's not like that like news feed feeling like on Facebook and everything. So I love podcasting. I'm so glad I started the Podcast, the podcast, really once I started doing the podcast in September 2019. I stopped blogging, in terms of written blogs, that's something we're going to bring back in 2023. So be on the lookout for that. That's exciting. So, anyway, so 2019 I started the podcast, Gina and Rocio we're helping deliver our amplify cohort that started in September. And so now instead of being a team of just me, or just me, with Esther and Latoya helping, I had me, Esther, Latoya, and Gina and Rocio. And I think that's why we did \$400,000 in 2019, because we really grew, we grew in clients. But we also grew in visibility with a podcast and we grew as a team, right? So then, like, I needed that, you know, to be able to make the money to like, because I pulled the salary rug out from under myself, right. But also, like, I needed to pay my team. So it was like, I really had to make the money. I really had to make sure we hit our goals because because we have the team to support. Okay, so then actually, at the end of 2019, we created and launched Elevate, which is our mid career program. So we talked to so many mid career academics at that point, and really, like, develop this program launched it, I think we had six or 910 people do it the first time we did it, which was February 2020. So we headed into 2020 with quite a range of programs. We had our navigate program, which I think maybe by 2020 was called navigate. It's funny because I consulted a like a naming expert. Like I hired somebody to give me naming ideas for the company. It was a really interesting experience and she was amazing. She's right To her, and it was really fun. And so I didn't love any of the company names that she came up with. But I did, but she was like, Oh, you could call that navigate, because I had AMPLIFI elevate. And then I said, I have this thing called the writing roadmap. I had taken the academic women's part of it, it was just too long of a title, you know, and, and so, so yeah, so she was like, well, you can call that navigate that would fit in and it did fit in so beautifully. So then we actually think in 2020, we trademarked navigate colon, your writing roadmap. That's a registered trademark. And so that became kind of the official name of that program. So I had navigate, we had AMPLIFI, we had Elevate, it was an you know, as I will talk about for 20 to 23 years, it's a lot of programs, but we were all home and, and in 2020, I think that Gina came. And there was a moment that Rocio was full time as well, that they both were full time. But he think Gina became a full time coach for us in 2020. So she had worked for the Vermont Humanities Council, and she decided to leave that position and come work for us full time. So 2020 happens, which was a, you know, we grew a lot in 2020. Some of the highlights were, I mean, we did this webinar, I remember, that was about like, writing in times of crisis. And we had, it was a free webinar, and we had 1200 people sign up, which is just wow. So anyway, 2020, I still continue to join different business training programs. And some things have been 2020 into 2021. From the business side, that I might as well say because geez, like, we SIBO like in case you want to know. And we really tried to grow. I really thought, Okay, we've got our

programs, we've got our great coaches, I'm delivering less and less because the coaches are delivering more and more of the program components. So now what we really need to do is ramp up marketing. Right, that was my thought, in 2020. I think because many online businesses, I mean, obviously many businesses did badly in 2020. It was a painful year in so many ways. Many online businesses and online course businesses did rather well in 2020. We grew from \$400,000 in top line revenue in 2019 to \$667,500 in top line revenue in 2020. At that point, basically we had Esther was our Podcast Producer, so she wasn't our online Business Manager anymore. She was a Podcast Producer. Latoya was our came on as our online business manager I hired I don't know if it was 2020 Was it? I think so. I hired Paulette, who is she? I hired her as an executive assistant. So basically, like Latoya got promoted, Paul, like a minute's executive assistant like we have. That's right. That's that's when we hired Paulette. She's had her three year anniversary. I can't believe it. It's amazing. So we were growing as a team. So we had Latoya, Paulette, Gina Rocio, and then we had different contractors, and one of them was Esther. So one of the things that that was horrible about 2020 was that we were supposed to have a we got upset the horrible thing. We were supposed to have a really big, really big being like 20 people, I think 18 to 20 people. We bought out this beautiful, small in, in ocean parks Ocean Park in San Juan, Puerto Rico. And we were going to have a beautiful writing retreat in July 2020. And basically, we sold that retreat in like September of 2019. It was sold out like really fast. And we had to cancel it and give all the money back. And that really sucked. Let's be honest, that was terrible. We did sneak in a short retreat or our AMPLIFI folks at the very beginning of 2020 in January end of January. So that was great. But then that has scared me off from doing in person retreats since then it was really financially difficult to handle in terms of cash flow. So anyway, so 2020 was like we increased in revenue. We grew by 50%, I guess, which was nice. And we also brought on a lot more full time employees when we brought in Paulette and Latoya was full time at that point as well. And Gina, so then 2021 So as I mentioned, we were I was like, how are we going to grow let's grow marketing. And so we brought in a marketing assistant. We brought in a customer service person we like it was like we grew the team a lot in marketing, but Our revenue didn't really grow. So in 2021, we made \$735,000. But we have this like rather large team, like pretty dang big team. And we also hired Thalia, who's our who's a coach with us now as well, you know, part time, at some point in 2021. And we had this team of like seven or eight people. And we were not bringing in enough new revenue or more revenue to support that team size. It was really, that was the first time in the business were like, there were months, I couldn't pay myself. And it was scary. It was scary. So, but that's part of being a business owner and the risks that you have to take. In 2021, we really pretty much ran the programs that we ran in 2022. So we ran, navigate, amplify and elevate. And, and it wasn't that we did badly. I mean, we did grow somewhat, we just hired to what turned out to be too many people and didn't see enough of return on investment on those hires. In 2021, we also shut down the Facebook group and took any of our program groups off of Facebook, we have a complicated relationship with Facebook. Basically, it's a love hate. Well, now it's just a indifference. But in 2021, it was a love, hate.

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Love, because it was a great platform for us. We were eight we started we did this inside of our Facebook group, we did a live video show. So every Tuesday at noon, I think we we went live and it wasn't just me with the coaches as well. And so we got to create some pretty cool content in there with for, you know, for our audience. And also, if you are in or have ever managed a very large Facebook group, it can go off the rails, usually while you're sleeping without like some pretty strict moderation. So we took a really like a look at like, what we want it, we took a really our I took a really hard look. And then when we talked about as a company

to like, we were like, Well, where does community happen? So one of the things is like one of our company values is community. And so it was like, Well, why would we shut down if one of our company values is community? Why would we shut down the 16,000 person Facebook group that a lot of people feel like is a great online community? Well, the reason that we shut it down was because we wanted to create more intimate community and we wanted it to happen inside of our programs. We wanted to be able to put all of our community energy into people who were in our programs, not people who were in the Facebook group who might never join our programs. And so that was a strategic decision. And it was so liberating to close the Facebook group. It was like it felt so right. I was so happy. Like I was like, Yay, we're finally off of Facebook. Around the same time in 2021 was when Zuckerberg announced meta. And I know I'm sure that there are great reasons for the metaverse and that there are some things about it that could really be helpful to humanity. I was like, Really, we're going to live more of our lives online. Like I was like, No, you know, feeling really resistant to that. We had tried a pretty aggressive Facebook ads strategy in 2021, and spent a lot of money on Facebook ads, but weren't getting like the quote the same kind of quality leads. And so we were like, well, how do we want people to find us? We want people to find us through the podcasts, our best clients come in. And they say, my friend recommended your podcast, and I love the podcast. So we decided that that's where all of our energy was going to go. It was gonna go into the podcast. And then if we want to build community, we're doing it inside the programs. I think in 2021 was when I don't know if we started in 2020 we had a moment or momentum program and our momentum program was like a low priced, co writing membership where people could come in and they and we had co writing times and things and we phase that program out also, I guess in the end of 2021 Yeah, at around the same time we phase the group out. And part of it was just like we were spread too thin. We had too many programs and we needed to really concentrate our energies better. Also, you know, we had had like a rocky in the end that the year turned out well, but 2021 was like a rocky revenue A year that I didn't want to experience again. So we cut some things because I didn't want to spend money on them because I was like, Okay, I don't I need I can't have. I can't have another rough revenue year. All right. So 2022. So in November 2021, we closed the Facebook group, we also closed our momentum program, although people who were in it could stay in it until November 2022. So it really, really closed just a couple months ago. So 2022 2022 we still ran like we had, we were running momentum, but we had kind of closed it kind of fused it with navigate and made navigate a year long program. So we had navigate, amplify and elevate. And we had Latoya left the company in 2021. So we had Paulette step into the online business manager role she is operation we call her the operations and finance manager. Oh, at some point in their Gosh, in 2021, I think as well, we hired Yulia and Yulia is our she does, like she's really saves me a lot of time because she does much of our writing, so that our marketing writing and our emails and stuff that go out, Yulia writes, and so and she plans this content, like she's the one who says like, Okay, here's what we're talking on the podcasts about for the next 15 weeks, or whatever. So she does content planning, and writing. And so she, so we have Yulia, she's pretty much full time. We have Gina who's full time, we have they and Rocio, and oh, and this year, I hired the lovely today. So who is a personal assistant for me, so I don't have an executive assistant anymore. But I have a personal assistant and today, so there's a lot of executive assistant type stuff. So she's in my inbox. So that Paulette is just doing the business emails, not my kind of personal emails. So we, we got rid of a lot of those marketing people that we hired in 2021 exited the business. And the only person we brought back was today's up, or brought in was Teresa and that was in end of July beginning of August 2022. So it was like still pretty recently, in 2022. We made 7070 \$774,000 \$774,000 A little better than 2021. But with fewer expenses, because we had fewer personnel, we still sold the three programs. And yeah, and so now we are up to date. So let me tell you a little bit, we're gonna get more into this with a in another in a future podcast episode. So now we are, you know, December 2022, has passed and it's

January 2023. And we have announced our new company name, which is scholars voice that has been in the works for over a year. We landed on the name about a year ago and filed trademark paperwork for the name. And and yeah, we will mostly because, well, for different reasons. One of the reasons is that I was almost completely out of any program delivery. So we want to so what we you know, what happens is then that I'm doing all the marketing outward facing stuff, right? Like, I'm the main voice on the podcast, I'm the person doing webinars, I'm the person signing the emails, you know, and all of that stuff. And then you get into the programs and the people giving you the programs are a different set of people they are genome, Rocio and fan. So, I really like we wanted to better align the outside vision with the of the company with the inside vision. And we also over the course of from 2020 to 2022, we really did a lot of work on diversity, equity and inclusion. And in the process of doing that we wrote a value statement, we created a structure for our business, which is it's not completely non hierarchical, but it is not represented in a hierarchy. It's represented in a Venn diagram. We have created definitions for things inside of our business that are feel really good to us. Like our definition of growth is different than what if a typical business definition of growth is and those kinds of things. So we really wanted the outside vision of the company to align better with what had been happening internally. And that's why we decided to rename the company. You'll notice that for right now things say scholars voice with Kathy may Zack that's because, you know a lot of people do know my name. And so if they're searching for my name, I don't want them to land on scholar's voice and then be like, Who is this? You know, like, oh, no, she's here like, this is her company. So, so that's why we're keeping that, at least for a while for some kind of transition period. What else? Oh, my book came out in 2022. My book came out in 2020. Do Yay. So that was another kind of cool thing that happened. Anyway, we are trying to, again, we're trying to align this outer voice, we really worked on our branding, we worked on Like, who do we want to be in the world, and we just the company became bigger than me, right? It's not just me, it's not just about me. It's really about the hundreds and hundreds of clients that we've helped. It's about this team that we have co creating the programs with the clients. And it's so much about voice and not just my voice. It's really about voices, and about your voice, and how we can support you in making your voice louder, and more influential and more impactful in your field. So, in 2023, there's a lot of new things happening. We're getting the new company name, setup, new logo, new colors, new website, our new website is going to be so beautiful. I hope by the time this episode comes out, I think it should be out and debugged. We're going to be doing more we're actually going to be doing on the podcast next week, you're

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going to start to hear some bonus episodes that are more raw, like more, like less, a little less produced, but still hear in your podcast feed. So more podcast episodes, there's going to be more voices on the podcast. So you'll be able to hear more from our coaches and from different members of our community. There's going to be blogging, like written blog posts, we're revising blog posts that were popular, we're updating them with our new with our kind of latest thoughts. And we are doing some major program revisions in to that end, I will mention again, and you'll get more details about this next week, if you listen to the podcast, and if you're on our email list, we are running a pilot version of navigate in a 12 week format that has group coaching in it. So more on that on the podcast very soon, it's going to be an application only program just like amplify and elevate, you're gonna have to apply to join, we're very carefully curating the community. And you're gonna see just so much focus on writing and publishing to make your career better, which, of course, is what we do here anyway. But we're really getting more streamlined with our programming, I'll officially announce here that we have put our

amplify program on hold. So we are running, we are finishing up this current amplify cohort, which finishes at the end of February. And then we will we are not planning on running amplify, which is our pre tenure program. Again, in 2023, we instead are going to be revising that program to bring it back in probably a new format in 2024. And if you're listening, and you've made it all the way to the end of this episode, our Elevate program starts really soon, it starts at the end, the very, very end of January official kind of first week is February, the week of February one, and runs until the end of July. And then we will not be offering that again for a while as well. So I'm really excited about all the changes. I'm really excited about scholars voice. I'm really excited about bringing you a lot of new content on the podcast, we had done a lot of releases last year, partly because we're trying to get our act together, you know, partly because they did well, like releases were doing well in terms of downloads. But you're gonna hear a lot of new content coming up and I just can't wait. I can't wait. Thank you so much. If this was interesting to you, please just like drop us a note and let us know it. You know, I love a behind the scenes. So you're really got one. There's a very long podcast episode. But I've never talked about revenue on the podcast before. You know, I think that I think it's interesting to me. It's interesting. And I'm very proud. I'm very, very proud of having built a company. It's not something I ever thought that I would do. You know, I really thought I was going to be an academic for my whole life. But I can truly say now that I built a company, and I'm building a company right, we're still in the process of building it. I thank you for participating in that. And yeah, thank you so much for listening to this podcast episode. And thank you so much for spending your valuable time supporting yourself and your writing by listening to this episode. If you like what you heard today, the best way to say thank you is to hop on over to Apple iTunes and write an honest review. The more reviews the more amazing academic women and non binary people will find this podcast so go write one now