**LWQA episode 118**

You're listening to lifework, QA episode 118. Welcome to life work QA where I answer a listener question each week and provide resources and guidance to help you take your life and work to the next level. I'm your host. Dr. Katie Linder. On this episode. I want to talk about taking creative risks because as we enter into the new year, maybe there's something that you've been thinking about maybe taking the plunge on and you're not quite sure if you want to move forward with it. And I think that some of the best payoffs that I've had in recent years are because I have taken creative risks, so I thought I would talk a little bit about some of those creative. And then also some questions that you can ask yourself if you're still a little bit on the fence and you're not sure if you want to do this. So first of all, what is a creative risk the way that I'm kind of defining it is something that you do that is meant to kind of enhance your creativity or it's something you've never tried before and you really have no sense of what the outcome will be and it's something that feels a little bit scary. It definitely feels risky. You're not sure if you're going to like it. Some things might be kind of feeling a little bit permanent or semi-permanent. And so you're not sure, you know, if you really want to do it or not and but it's something that you've been thinking about for a while or something that is occurred to you and you can't shake it. It's something that you're really thinking might be interesting. You're very intrigued by it and you want to maybe try it out. So some examples of this for me that are I think. Now they seem kind of obvious. But at the time they felt like this kind of creative risk for me one was definitely podcasting when I first started out with that, I'd never done it before. I didn't know anyone who done it before I was launching a podcast with my work at Oregon State eCampus and working with the multimedia team and they hadn't done it before and we were all just kind of feeling it out and seeing what it would be like and now, you know, we're a hundred and fifty interviews later. And it feels very comfortable obviously iPod casted on the side with the show and it's definitely something that's a huge part of my life of my creative output and. It's you know in the beginning it was a creative risk. I didn't know what it would be. Other than that. I think a lot of my book topics have been creative risks because they jump around a little bit if you followed along the first one was about my dissertation, which is definitely not the research area that I do anymore. The second one was about a program that I was creating around Blended course design. The third one was around an issue or problem that I saw in the world around managing professional identity and there have been a bunch of edited collections in between about kind of random topics that were interesting to me. So sometimes, you know taking a creative risk can involve devoting a pretty significant amount of time to a new topic to learn or grow in that area and you don't know what the output will be or what other people will think of that. Kind of along those lines coaching training for me was also a little bit of a creative risk because I wanted to explore it. I wanted to see if it was something that I really would enjoy as much as I thought I would and I definitely do but it was a significant amount of time and it was also a financial investment that my partner and I had to make in order to do that and it was something I've been thinking about for a really long time and finally decided. Okay. This is the year I'm going to do it. It was something that was definitely on my bucket list. And was really happy to wrap that up in 2018. I would also say for me chopping off all my hair to a pixie cut was kind of creative risk. It was something that I had done in toward the end of undergrad. I had my hair really short and grad school because I didn't want to worry about it. And then I grew it out again would during kind of my following next year's and my professional life and then was traveling so much that I thought, you know, I kind of want to chop it all off again and a lot of people worry about. Short hair. Can I pull it off? You know, like it definitely is a little bit of a statement that you're making and after I cut it off. I cannot tell you how many people came up to me women particularly and said, I don't think I could do that. But I really want to and it feels really risky. So even changes in your appearance can be a creative risk if you decide to take on a new style or a new haircut or you start to dress differently, you know, all of that can feel kind of risky. I definitely think some of the things that I do on social media feel like creative risks. And again, these things don't have to be big they can be things you're doing kind of on a daily basis, but it feels risky or you're trying out something different and I think for example when I went to the grid structure that I'm currently using on Instagram, which I've talked about before on the show and it's kind of like an integrated grid where all the images kind of fit together in one big puzzle. That felt a little bit like a creative risk because I didn't know you know what it would turn out to look like. I didn't know if I would like it if other people would like it and you know, I just kind of jumped in and did it and I think it's been really fun. So part of I think taking a creative risk. Is there any part of it? They were going to enjoy I mean, it shouldn't feel like a grind, you know the whole time and all of the creative risks that I've taken. I've had some moments at least an often times a lot of moments of enjoyment with those creative risks. And then the last example offer before I'll jump into some questions about how you can kind of think about this for yourself is, you know, every time I launch a new program whether it's the writing groups or next week. I'm going to be talking about a new group coaching program around radical self-trust stay tuned for that. But every time I launch a new program, it feels like a huge creative risk because. I don't always know what people are going to do or if they're going to sign up or if they're going to like it. And since I launched the writing groups in last summer. This winter was the first time that I filled every slot. It took a little while for the word to get out for people to kind of think about it for some people to budget for it to make sure they wanted to do it and it takes time with some of those programs and I've had enough people every time to keep it running and it's been one of the true joys of my. In business is to run these writing groups, but it's a risk because you just don't know what if nobody signs up. You know, what if nobody likes the image that you post on social media? What if nobody buys your book? I mean, there's all these things that could happen and you really don't know and so it's it's one thing to kind of launch these programs and put them out to the world. It's something else entirely to kind of Wonder it how will other people respond you have only so much control. So because of that I wanted to offer a few questions if you're thinking about taking some creative risks in your life or work here are some things to consider. The first one that I always ask is what's the absolute worst that could happen. So if I launch one of these programs and nobody signs up, well, that's kind of it. You know, like I could launch it again. I could try different marketing. I could you know lower the price. I mean, there's all different kinds of things that I could do, but you know in my mind the worst that could happen. Is that I completely misread an audience need and it doesn't actually exist and I have kind of done something. That was a mismatch for what I thought my audience needed and so far that hasn't happened. I try to listen really carefully to what people are needing and wanting from the work that I do, but I think that. Taking myself to that worst place of like, what would that look like is always useful because I can think about a plan b or a plan C or you know, what would I do if this doesn't work out for me? And this goes for everything like chopping off my hair. What source guys that could happen. Well, I hate it. And so I grow it back out again, you know, like it's time heals a lot of things. So I think with creative risks you can kind of think about what's the worst that could happen and would time he'll that or are there other kinds of plans you could make that would help. Now, of course, I always ask myself. What's the best that could happen if I'm taking a creative risk? It's because I think it's worth it. And I think that there is something that could come out of it. That would be really amazing. So what's the best that could happen and that is something that I think I focus on a little bit more. I'm definitely an. So I like to think about the better part of the the possibilities then focusing on you know, what the worst is that could happen. So it's definitely one of those like expect the best plan for the worst kind of situations. I also sometimes when I'm thinking about taking a creative risk, but I'm not sure if I want to pull the trigger. I will look for inspiration of others who have done it and been successful. So I'll create a Pinterest board of pixie haircuts or I'll talk with other people who've gone through coaching training or I'll look to other author friends of mine who have written, you know a range of different book topics and we'll talk about that. I'll think about you know, what does this look like to be successful in this realm and it kind of is a way of reminding yourself of other people have done this I can do it too. And I think that that is something that's always a little bit reassuring for me because it means there's some kind of roadmap. I may not know what the roadmap is yet, but I know that it exists and I know that someone else has done this successfully before the other thing that I kind of focus on is what is the problem. Or the issue that would be solved by the creative risk that I want to take and this really ensures that the reason that I'm having to take their creative risk that there's a purpose behind it and that when it gets hard or if it's not working in the way that I originally planned I feel motivated to keep going and I feel like there's a larger purpose and I think that focusing on solving a problem for myself or for other people has been something that has really carried me through a lot of creative. So with my coaching training part of it was some people wanted me to be credentialed. They needed to have me have a credential in order for like their institution to pay me to coach them. And that was a problem. That was something that I wanted to solve. I also wanted to increase my confidence around coaching that was kind of my personal issue that I wanted to work on. I wanted to have more coaching Tools in my tool belt. So there were various reasons why I decided to do the coaching training when I did. When it came to things like launching particular programs, one of the things I'm really interested in is solving particular problems. So with the writing group program, a lot of people had come to me and said they were really struggling with accountability and I had heard this message when I worked in faculty Development. I've heard it for years that this is an issue for people. And I had a lot of individual coaching clients who are really struggling with this and I thought well, let's do this in community. Let's bring people together to solve this issue in small groups where we can kind of learn from each other. So I always look for what's the bigger problem that I'm trying to solve with this particular thing and that also helps with things like marketing because I can say, you know, like this is why this exists. So if you fall into this category of having this challenge or issue or question, Come over here to this program because it may be something that can help you and I want to make sure that I'm really doing a good job of solving a practical issue for people with the programs and services that I'm offering. And in the last kind of question or thing that I would recommend is, you know, how long have you been thinking about this creative risk for some things in the creative risk that I take? I thought about them for years or months and I really ruminate on them for a long time and not in a way that's not productive but really more of a way of like trying to decide what's the right timing in order to do this, so, I don't know if I've mentioned this before on the show, but what. In high school, I bought a book on coaching on life coaching. Like I was drawn to life coaching at a very young age. And I remember knowing at the time, you know, like nobody's going to want to be coached by someone who's a teenager. Like this just doesn't work that way and I just kind of talked to the idea away for something that I could maybe focus on later on but I've always wanted to be a life coach. I mean, that's something that's been, you know part of my professional kind of dreams and history for decades. I think that said their stuff like that that it's like well, when's the right time to do it and I knew the right time would be when I was an adult where people would actually take me seriously and find my work to be credible and where I would be more helpful to them at an older age where I had more experience. Other things, you know, like in terms of like chopping up a are for pixie cut. I've been thinking about that for quite a while to because it was really annoying to be traveling and having to get up super early and you know, make sure that I was able to style my hair dry my hair and all these different kinds of things and so I've been thinking about it for a long time. And when I finally decided to pull the trigger, it feels a little bit sudden, but it had actually been on my mind for months. So I think sometimes with creative risks you need to sit with them and let them percolate and really decide. What is the right timing in which you want to bring in that creative risk into your life because sometimes you're spending quite a bit of time with it, whether it's writing a book or launching a program or taking on, you know, a new commitment of a training or a course or something like that. It can feel like a lot of time and a lot. Energy and a lot of Creative Energy that you're devoting to it. And so you want to make sure that you're kind of thinking about the right time. So I would really love to hear if you are planning on taking a creative risk in 2019 and what that's going to look like for you. I have a couple in mind of what I'm planning on doing some you'll be hearing about in the coming weeks and months and others. I don't even know what's coming. I think there's going to be some extra stuff that I'm not foreseeing that's going to be creative risk this year, but I'm already excited about those two so you can always email me at contacted Katie Leonard artwork. You can tweet to me at Katie double unders. Winter or you can connect with me on Instagram KD underscore lender. I would love to hear from you there. And especially if you have additional questions about what it means to take creative risks. Thanks so much for listening to this episode. 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