

102. Digital Social Learning Solutions w/ Dr. Nicole Papaioannou Lugara

Daniel Dissinger: [00:00:00] Hi, everyone. Welcome to another episode of Writing Remix. I'm your host, Dan Dissinger. And today I'm here with a really awesome guest. Actually, this has been actually a long time in the making. There's been a lot of back and forth and a lot of the planning. But that's, you know, that's per this podcast. I feel like every guest I've had, like, it has been like so much communication.

And I'm like, we're getting these people, we're getting this person on. And I'm really happy to have her here. I'm here with Nicole Papaioannou. Nicole, thank you so much for being here. Hey, thanks

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: for having me, Dan. It's always nice to reconnect with a St. John's, uh, former program member. And you know, uh, you're a master of follow up.

Daniel Dissinger: I have learned to be better at that. I used to be so horrible. I used to like, someone's like, I emailed you like a month ago. I was like, Oh damn. And now I feel like I'm like, I have something that I need to make sure that follow ups happen, but yeah, and [00:01:00] it's always, um, I feel like there's like a collection happening of everyone from these programs that I went to, whether it's St.

John's, Naropa, um, I'm sure SUNY Westbury is on its way to being part of this collection. Um, but it's always great to reconnect and always good to see what everyone's been up to. And, but yeah, why don't you let the audience know a little bit about yourself, what you do, and then we'll just jump right in.

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: Sure. So currently I am the owner of a Learning and People Development Agency called Your Instructional Designer. And we're really focused on bringing, uh, uh, startup and midsize businesses, really great learning strategy and content so that they can scale their organizations. So, uh, I've been in that.

space of corporate learning and development since I can't do math, like nine years now. Um, and before [00:02:00] that, you know, you could probably take a guess. I was working in the wonderful world of higher ed as an adjunct writing faculty member and a writing center consultant. So, um, It's been an interesting trajectory and a lot of fun.

Daniel Dissinger: I know we were talking a little bit about a little bit about that before we hit record. And so I guess my, for me, the first thing I'm always, I was curious about, um, especially when we were emailing and messaging on LinkedIn and going back and forth and I was looking up what you've been up to, what, How did you come to that shift?

Right? I feel like in academia, right? Especially when you're like, need well, neck deep in higher ed and PhD program, you're focusing on all the stuff you got to do dissertation writing. And, you know, the. The pathway towards the next step is usually a job in academia, like me, like teaching at a college, whether two year, four year, whatever, [00:03:00] what happened in that you kind of was like, you know what, I'm going to go in this other direction.

Like, how did that come to be.

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: I like to joke that I'm in constant pursuit of shiny objects, which most business leaders would tell you is probably a terrible thing, but like there's a little structure to my shiny objects. And so I'm really always looking for where my strengths are valued, um, where I can have an impact and also where I can grow.

And so that was a piece of the puzzle. You know, I was, um, probably, let me think. I was in like my fourth year of the dissertation program. I was ABD and. I was really unhappy being like tied basically to an 18, 000 a year, whatever I could earn over the summer, you know, salary as an adjunct. And so I was like, this isn't sustainable.

And not that I necessarily wanted to leave academia altogether, but at least until I could get my PhD and find [00:04:00] that tenure track. role, which clearly things changed. Um, and I decided I didn't want to do that. So that's my very long winded way of saying like, um, I kind of didn't know that's what I wanted to do.

And I just sort of, you know, due to life circumstances, a little bit of a nudge from my partner at the time to, to go new places and try new things. Uh, I found the job of instructional designer on like, indeed, I applied to a job in Los Angeles across the country and it was a good fit. So we tried an eight week freelancing trial and then I started there full time and moved to LA and that was it.

I started writing training about airplanes.

Daniel Dissinger: So that's interesting. So the first one, so can you explain what instructional, like explain, I guess, instructional design, right? I think like we. Especially in academia, like on teachers in the classroom, we always talk about. Developing curriculum and [00:05:00] developing instruction and pedagogy and, and all the things that go into creating a 15 week experience for our students, where they start in a place, their objectives, and they end in a place.

What is it that you like does extraction, what you do as an instructional designer like to. Like, actually, like, what is it that you do? I'm really curious.

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: Yeah. Um, so that's a whole can of worms that we're going to open up now. I like that you actually described it as an experience. You know, that is my philosophy really is to create learning experiences for the people who are going to go through My training, or I really don't think of everything as training.

And I think that's where I'm a little different than maybe what most instructional designers do or start as, um, and so it's really figuring out like what the right experience is to serve the needs of the business and the learners, but, you know, when I started and I think for most early career [00:06:00] instructional designers, it does look more like curriculum development and applying those principles, we know about what makes.

Good morning. Um, how do you give good feedback and thinking about how to apply that for experts and subjects that have probably never thought about that before. And so for me, you know, it was aviation. Um, I worked on a three 20 aircraft systems training as my first training project and I would sit with SMEs and try to understand what the pilots needed to know, and I would translate that into scripts for explainer videos, and I'd work with animators to produce, you know, the videos, um, to make sure we could explain what was happening inside the plane and in the, the flight deck of the aircraft, what buttons they needed to push, and then to give them opportunities to practice those skills at a level that was appropriate at that time.

So, We use adaptive learning. We had an adaptive learning platform and we wrote a ton of scenario based assessment [00:07:00] questions. And then the platform itself would kind of push people where they were meant to go based on the responses to those questions. What else did we do? And we did some, um, ebook e text kind of thing.

So I was the person responsible for chunking it all out for writing all the content, for putting it in the system and, um, making sure it was a good

experience. And then I, you know, it grew from there, but that was like the day one career.

Daniel Dissinger: Wow. So I'm thinking like in my head, as you were saying that I was like, from as a teacher, like, you know, and.

You're a teacher. Like, I'm just going to say that right now. I just like think like, because like, sometimes we feel like if someone's not in a classroom, traditionally in an academia, that's not teaching, but obviously that's incorrect. Like, so I just want to put that out there right away. But one thing I'm interested in is like.

It's, I'm curious about is, I [00:08:00] guess to me, I'm like, was it intimidating to kind of create something that like you've been studying in a PC program that's based in like rhetoric composition in English. And then all of a sudden now you're in charge of creating something that has to do with aviation and you're just like, how, what skill says transfer like what was the transfer of skill set that you felt that allowed you to feel.

Comfortable enough to kind of dive into something like that.

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: Yeah. I, there's a lot of things that I think are transferable and maybe that, um, we don't always realize you can transfer when you're in the PhD program. And so I think the first one is research. Like I am good at research. I can figure out where to go for reliable information.

I can synthesize research. I know how to look for the conventions of language that are being used in the field. I know how to like. spot what's important when you're reading a document. And so, um, I definitely did not understand what I was looking at when I looked at a flight deck and [00:09:00] I really needed to rely on my subject matter experts to provide that.

But I was able to, you know, at least ask the right questions and kind of fill in the blanks based on what I could see. So that was a massive. skill and I think it still serves me really well. It's one of the things my clients are really excited about when they work with me. Um, another one that was really valuable, obviously, is the ability to write well.

Um, you know, that's specific, I think, to being an English PhD and not necessarily a skill that all PhDs will have. But gosh, I don't think there is any role in business that if you can write well, Um, they will not see it as a massive valuable asset. Like you're probably more likely to get promoted to leadership

roles if you can write well, simply because you can communicate your ideas, get buying, you know, and then from my end create content.

So that's been a really big plus. And then, um, again, kind of specific to the work I did at St. John's, but I was studying. [00:10:00] What motivates students to take learning beyond the classroom and I'm not talking like service learning, or, you know, being forced to do some kind of public facing writing but like they were actually taking writing they were doing in class and just deciding they wanted to do something more with it.

And so for me that's the ultimate transfer of learning, right, like, I didn't tell you, you needed to go do something with it, you are actively taking what you're learning and applying it to new context. So, um, what I learned from doing that study, and what I learned about. Developing, you know, curriculum that would support those kinds of learning experiences.

Those traveled really well with me into, you know, workplace learning design, because ultimately these people do, they need to take this stuff. They're learning about these buttons that light up and they need to make sure your plane does not crash. And that's really what it is at the end of the day. Like that's the big goal of the

Daniel Dissinger: course.

Wow. Yeah. So the stakes are pretty high. So that might even be pretty helpful where the stakes are like so high, [00:11:00] maybe, but wow, that sounds so, it sounds so logical that the jump from one thing to the next would be, it would be easy to see, right? Like, but I feel like when you're in a PhD program, it's so narrow.

Like I always, and I've been talking about this, like what. A lot of different people that, you know, have been on the podcast, like how narrow the path seems when you're there that, um, you don't feel like there's other options as much as it being like. It's either, um, R1 research, tenure track, teaching track, or post doc.

And I'm like, they all sound the same to me. Um, and so did that, did you start, did you feel that like, and that kind of also inspired a jump or is it just that you. It just, you know, I guess like, do you miss being in a classroom, a traditional classroom as well?

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: Yeah. Yeah. I didn't [00:12:00] intend to make the jump.

Like I really sort of thought that this would be like a part time, not a part time, but like only part of my career, you know, I thought I would go, I'd finish up my doctoral degree and then I'd return to look for a 10 year track job, teaching track, or like, I never had an interest in R1, but I really, honestly, like.

I love what came out of my dissertation study. And I loved doing the work of talking to students and like synthesizing what I was hearing. I hated writing my dissertation. And so I knew, I just knew I was like, part of the job of being a tenured professor is publishing. And I'm never going to want to do it.

Like, it's going to be torture for me. Why am I going to put myself through this? Um, Like, but do I miss students? Yeah, all the time. Like I love teaching. Um, even in my role now, you know, I, I have like a sidearm to my business where I, um, I sell training to other instructional designers. And so I'm teaching instructional designers and that's kind of how I get my teaching fix.

But I also think there's something wonderful about, um, you [00:13:00] know, learning design, because where I could have 25 students in my class. I can now send this digital, uh, for another client. We do like a digital newsletter that has some really interesting micro learning like activities in it. We can hit 500, 000 people with that one digital piece every month.

So like you can amplify your impact very quickly. Wow.

Daniel Dissinger: That's amazing. That's, uh, that's something that I feel like, you know, a lot of teachers always like are working towards, like in a way going like, how do I amplify, like you said, like amplify my impact and sometimes like inside those walls, like of academia, it's like, there's only so far you can go because you have so many other people that you're also working under.

And right now you said, like, you're, you have your own, um, You have your own business. So how did that like occur as like, cause like you said before, like, you didn't think it was going to be this full time thing. You thought it would just be a really interesting experience. [00:14:00] What, what transpired or how did they go to that to being like.

Now I'm doing it like I'm starting my own business and let's do this. Great

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: question. Um, again, like totally just in pursuit of shiny objects. And I also, the other fact of my life is that whatever I resist comes to fruition. So like, uh, if you asked me when I was in high school, I would have told you I never want to be a teacher.

And, uh, if you asked me last. Teaching and studying curriculum design. I said, I never wanted to be in corporate learning. And then I said, I never wanted to own an agency. So here we are. Um,

Daniel Dissinger: I'm sorry. Could I just say that is literally everything you just said was literally kind of like, I never won. I hated school.

I never wanted to be a teacher and now I have homework every day and I'm in school all the time. Yeah.

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: Yeah. And so it's funny. There's, I don't know if it's like fear or it's just, you know, you have to walk the path. Um, But yeah, that's kind of been my, my life journey. Um, but really what happened. So I worked in that [00:15:00] role first as a instructional designer, and then I managed the entire department.

I had about 15 people under me and we won lots of awards. Our clients had great results, but we did not have a sales team in our company. It was a startup that started as a production company and purchased EdTech. And so they didn't really have a good vision in place at that time. And so it was like just before Thanksgiving when they told me I had to lay my entire team off and then the following month I wouldn't have a job and only three people remained at the company, you know, all 40 of us that were working on the learning stuff.

We're laid off and that's actually pretty. That's, uh, you know, kind of a warning sign. If you're thinking like everything is roses and you're ready to jump to learning and development, just know that we're usually the first to get cut. That is almost any person who's been in the learning and development industry for a while has a story like that.

Um, so at that time, my client, the aviation client. You know that they said you've been working with us for these years and you know our [00:16:00] systems better than anyone can we bring you on as a consultant. So I took it, I thought, yeah, that sounds like a good way to hold me over to my next full time job. And then I just realized that I liked not having, you know, kind of like a middleman.

I liked being able to provide really great customer experiences. I liked, you know, when I was working at that company, I was sort of tied to, to our platform and, um, Like their way of doing things. And on my own, I could be vendor agnostic. I could make recommendations that really supported their organizations learning and not just doing, you know, learning plus sales for the company I worked for.

So it just, I don't know, it just kind of made sense. And so I kept freelancing and then I got. Too busy freelancing. So I asked someone to help and then I asked another person to help. And then I had a baby and I needed more help. And so finally this year, I was like, I have 10 people. I work with like almost regularly.

I'm not a freelancer [00:17:00] anymore or an agency. Let's just tone it.

Daniel Dissinger: So, you know, to learn those skills, like scaling a business, having a business, there's a lot of other skills that, um, you need and to learn and. So how are you, how did you come to, I mean, I, it's funny, like, I feel like I'm trying to learn these things as I'm doing this episode with you.

Cause I'm just like, there are things that I have, like, that I'm like, how do I learn these skills? Where do I get that knowledge? Like, how did you get the knowledge to figure out about like scaling and business, having a business plan, understanding budgets, like where did. That knowledge come from,

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: you know, understanding budgets again.

No, I'm just kidding. Um, so I think there's a few things and some of it is honestly just privilege. And some of it is things I actively did myself. So I'll tell you all of them and whatever, you know, people want to pick and choose, they can pick and choose. But so. My [00:18:00] background, um, even from day one of like my higher education was always kind of interdisciplinary.

So my first degree was in English and communications like it was just one degree. It wasn't a dual degree. Um, but so we focused in like PR writing and film and casting like I took a really random assortment of classes that were all focused in communications and writing so I think it was already a little bit more business minded.

And then my internships. And, uh, my undergrad probably academic advising. So I feel like you, I kind of learned some interesting psychology skill sets there that I probably wouldn't have had an opportunity to learn. I'll Claire then in grad

school again, like I just didn't take traditional roots, like summers, I, I spent some summers working in my father's office.

So there's like a, a perk, right? Like I have everyone in my family essentially is a business owner, except for my younger brother who works. As a project manager for my father. [00:19:00] Um, and so like I have people I could ask around me and that's definitely privilege, but you know, having skill in business instead of just taking academic jobs definitely served me well.

I worked with an author who wrote for Esquire. So, you know, certain things like filling out FSA forms and silly stuff like that you know I learned that then. And then. Even in grad school, like sometimes I would just put myself on Craigslist to do like editing jobs and stuff as a freelancer. You can hear the good stuff in the background happening better than crying.

Right. Um, yeah. So, you know, I think looking for those roles is important if you want to kind of pursue business, I do think it just helps you be more well rounded and even within academia, like if you know how to. speak the language of business, show their return on investment or like the impact of the things that you're doing, you can, you can get more grants, you can get more administrators to buy in.

You know, there's, there's a lot of benefit and [00:20:00] value to that. Um, and then the last piece is definitely, you know, I just try to invest in my own learning. You can see behind me. Um, you can, I guess people who are watching camp, but there's a big bookshelf of books about everything from like business to instructional design, to just things I like to, you know, think about.

Um, so that's been really big and I've paid for expensive courses and I've paid for tools just so I could play in them and not necessarily with any like objective in my business. Um, but investing in your own learning outside of. I think what you learn in your doctoral program is,

Daniel Dissinger: is important. That's amazing.

No, seriously, like I'm, it's. It's really, it's really interesting to hear how people cultivate their, their, like their education, um, and cultivate knowledge outside of also like the pressures of the program they're in when they're being, you know, thrown things at like they're throwing things at you to kind of like read [00:21:00] this book, do this paper, do this thing.

Here's the next step in the dissertation. And outside that you're. You've been, you were doing all this other stuff. It's really impressive to kind of see how to create like such a multifaceted, um, knowledge base, you know?

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: Yeah. I'm, I'm super stubborn. I think that's part of it. Like I was going to make this program fit what I wanted to do.

And, uh, I think I did, which was really fun, but I also, you know, I didn't give, I don't think I gave enough credit to the flexibility of the program I was in and also to my network. Like, Talking to people, you know, I have two, um, female business owners who run very similar businesses in some ways to mine and we meet every month and talk like that's been a massive growth opportunity.

And I can't really put a dollar value on that necessarily, but no, just reaching out. Um, even when I was in grad school, like I linked up with least gallery up the set on. Twitter. And we had the FYC chat for years. And we went to do like conference presentations together. And I have a book [00:22:00] where I'm in, you know, in the collection, there's an essay because, because we stayed in touch.

And so there's a lot of value in that network and not just the scholarly network, but like, if you're interested in business, just talk to people who are doing those things. And most times. Yeah. People like to talk about themselves like me right now.

Daniel Dissinger: No, but you're, you're right. Like, I think people, uh, that's one thing I've learned.

Like once I like provide a platform, people love this talk. And I think that we, that communication skill set is so important that we don't necessarily actually teach that right. Like, and I think that leads me to like, like a question that I wrote down, like, Do you, what kind of, I mean, because you've had experience in academia, you're, you know, you were, you were there now you're doing all this awesome work and instructional design and things like that.

Do you feel like there's a role that instructional designers or someone that, you know, a business like yours [00:23:00] can play in maybe helping support higher ed or other educational spaces. into a 21st century view of the world. Like, I feel like that's been like my whole thing as I'm thinking about like where I go as a teacher and how I provide those experiences that are not so almost basically 19th century and 20th century base.

Like, how do I, do you feel like there's a role that you, someone like you can play in providing that type of support or nudge into like more 21st century? Like education, I guess.

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: Yeah. Um, I do. And so first I would say that a lot of teaching and learning, you know, centers for teaching and learning, they actually do have instructional designers on staff these days.

And so there's people there, if you're interested, let's say, in really making an impact, you know, I think most professors at this point have been forced to go online to some degree. Um, and so if you'd like to improve sort of how [00:24:00] you. practice that digital transformation, that's a really good place to start looking.

I think higher ed has a more narrow focus on course development, unless you're at like a really innovative groundbreaking institution, you know, ASU, Morehouse, they're getting into like virtual reality and things like that. Um, so yeah, there's an opportunity to just have those conversations. And then I know that when I was teaching, I was putting my classes online, even though that wasn't a thing to do back then, really.

Um, I was using like blogger and WordPress and pulling in resources from the internet instead of giving my students a textbook. And so I think if you're just interested and you want to start dabbling, you know, think about. You said experience before. Think about the experience you want to give them. And more importantly, what your objectives are for them beyond the classroom, because ultimately, even if you feel like your job is to teach them Victorian children's literature, there's something [00:25:00] you there's something to that, right?

Like there's something you got out of that experience or something you want them to get out of that experience. So maybe it's you know, more awareness of how that history shapes our own history, or maybe it's something about how you read texts and that'll translate whether they're going into finance or, you know, an English track.

But I, I encourage you to think about what that is and build towards that rather than building towards content. And then people like me are always going to be around, um, designing learning. So, you know, if you just want to be the expert and you want to hire someone like us, it's probably not what you're going to do personally.

But I think, you know, as administrators, maybe that's something to think about is do we want to team up with instructional designers, um, to create that content or that experience for us and let our, you know, our one amazing researchers, amazing subject matter experts, like, Provide the information. So there are ways to do that.[00:26:00]

And then obviously there's ed tech. There's all this stuff out there, right? There's a ton of ways, um, to do that, but I do think that they're really good teachers and there are really good teachers, educators still in higher ed. So like, I don't want to undersell them. There are people out there trying to do this work.

And so, um, just giving them a nod, like You know, I know they're out there and I know they can probably do a lot of the stuff I'm doing themselves if they just have the time and resources.

Daniel Dissinger: That's exactly like that was the that's exactly the thing that I was going to say like it's it's time and resources right because I feel like in academia you.

You're expected to both do this whole thing while at the same time, where's your professional development, you know, be on these committees do to this other free labor for us all constantly right and all of a sudden you start seeing like if you add up all the hours you're working. And then you put [00:27:00] that right next to the amount of money you make.

Yeah. There's a real discrepancy between the two. It doesn't add up exactly that way. So it's really important, I think, like what there at the end, what you said, like time and resources, you know. Is that something? Yeah, go ahead. Yeah.

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: Yeah. No, it's true. I mean, every semester I taught my class. I know I, the first semester I found out I was teaching, I like found out two weeks before.

So that was really fun. I remember writing my syllabus, you know, in the writing center between breaks. At Montclair State and just trying to get it ready, but I don't think I did a great job because well one you don't know what you don't know as a first year educator, but also like I just didn't have time.

But now you know now that I know what I know, especially about digital like you can create really meaningful assets if you're going to teach the same class for the next 10 years like you're going to update a little bit but. Maybe you spend the extra time this [00:28:00] summer to like get those things in order to

curate the right videos or create the right videos or, um, tap into like using, I don't know, spatial and meet everyone in some form of virtual reality or, you know, on their desktop or whatever.

Um, but it does take time, you know, like building really great, especially digital learning, everything instructional designers do is not digital learning, but that's just, I know where people seem to feel least comfortable. So like, yeah, those, those things take a lot of time and thought, because it's not like when you're teaching and you just kind of like pivot in the moment, right?

Like those things have to kind of, um, interpret the questions your students would be asking and maybe even be able to give them feedback. in the immediate. Um, and so you have to like do a lot of work thinking about the learner and their experience and anticipating their needs.

Daniel Dissinger: Yeah. And you, oh, you're always like thinking There's always random things that come up, right.

And I think, you know, this idea that, you know, [00:29:00] uh, that you keep saying that you kept saying like in the beginning to like chasing shiny objects. Right. Well, I don't want to downplay that because that is something like the idea of like being financially freed and financially supported to kind of also feel like the time you put in as being valued.

Right. And I feel like. In traditional academia, especially when you're non tenure, right? Like it's. The value of what you do is really not seen. They like to say it is they're like, Oh, the writing program here, USC, you guys do so much great work. I'm glad that your words are saying that, but it's like, how much can.

How much can that like be, you know, turned into something where like, you know, I feel that I don't feel the anxiety of like my like, Oh, my can be able to, you know, as inflation rises, be able to, you know, afford to live in a city like Los Angeles. Right. So it's interesting to kind of like. [00:30:00] See how, you know, each different track, you know, of what you, you experienced and kind of the main, like one of the things is interesting and kind of is not to downplay the kind of financial support that you might feel, whether depending like, you know, how I mean, starting a business is not easy and, and owning a business is very volatile sometimes, but I feel like.

As we're talking, there's a lot of joy and happiness in like what you do and you feel because when I speak to teachers, there's also a lot of like, uh, and I feel

that I feel that it's not that we don't love what we do, but like loving what you do versus being shown the appreciation for what you do is like very off balance.

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: Yes. Honestly, I think that exists in any realm. And so I, again, like, I don't want to like sugarcoat instructional design or like, Oh, to make it seem like those things don't exist. I, I am very happy in my role right now, but there are definitely times when I'm burnt [00:31:00] out. But, you know, for me, like the similar, I guess, situation would be, um, You know, when I worked in that startup, I was working like 70 hours a week.

I was making like 10, 000 less than my less experienced male counterpart, which I found out months later after he was let go. And, um, also like their idea of making us feel better was like a quarterly party with a lot of drinking and a ping pong table in the foyer. Like, you know, so I w I don't want your ping pong table.

I don't want your like Beautifully designed booklets that talk about the company vision. I want to raise, or I want my value to be noticed. Give me like a, I mean, I had a sort of better title, but honestly, I was managing the whole department and they never got a new director. I was the director. I never got the director title.

Um, because you know, I, I was young. Yeah. It's like, what am I? Mid twenties or something late twenties. Um, and so. Yeah, there's still problems there. And I think, you know, for me, it is about going where you're [00:32:00] valued and also just like where your values are well played. So even if I'm, I wasn't earning enough, like there is something to teachers, right?

Like there is something about the value of the work we do, not just like the financial value of the work we do that motivates us. And for me, no matter how much money I make, it's never going to be about the money. Like I could care less. And I've made that mistake of saying that to business partners. Um, but like, I, I don't really care about the dollars and cents, as long as I have enough to like thrive.

I really care about the impact at the end of the day. And if there's no good impact coming from my work, then I don't want to do the

Daniel Dissinger: work. Wow. Yeah. That, that word thrive is so important, right? Like if you feel like you could thrive, then, then you're in the place that you're supposed to be. Yeah,

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: yeah, totally.

Daniel Dissinger: So, uh, can I, you touched on something that like I want to ask you to, um, at some point when you said like, you found out you were making less than your male counterpart, right? So, yeah. [00:33:00] In the world, like, you know, obviously in, Academia, there's that, there's the discrepancies as well and, and between men and women in academia and who makes what, who gets, who gets the, the support, the financial support, who's getting easier promotions and tenure and things like that.

So, and then you. So, when you are kind of creating these networks, you know, what is the network. What's the question I'm trying to ask. I guess the experience of being a female business owner and finding other women out there to kind of create these like, I guess like networks and masterminds almost like it kind of like in order to support each other.

What is it, what is it like to have to battle still that gender gap, even when you're, you know, out there trying to create this business on your room. Yeah,

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: I mean I. It's there, right? Like I just, I acknowledge it's there. Um, I'm also, I [00:34:00] think I look a little younger maybe than I am. I have purple hair, right?

Like I'm a friendly person. And so there's a lot, I think that actually says, Hey, I might be dumb to, to some people, especially older. Um, Older men who've been raised with a certain idea of how women should behave or men in like heavily dominated fields. I've found a lot of it's, it's like 10 minutes to prove myself before anything can get done is what I usually say.

So having the support of other women is really nice just because. You can do things at the speed at which you feel like they should be accomplished, but I try not to like, I try really hard not to even let my ideas of how I think people are perceiving me affect how I interact with them. You know, I think transparency is really important.

I'm fairly assertive at this point in my career like I'm I'm gonna tell you if I think the idea is bad, whether you like it or not, whether like I'm, I'm not aggressive, you know, I, and I know that comes with this whole other, like, you know, feminist conversation about the word [00:35:00] aggressive. Um, but like, I, I'm not doing things to undermine people and I'm not doing things to hurt people or to be violent towards people.

Um, I, you know, I don't yell at my employees. I genuinely want to listen and find out what they're experiencing. And so I think eventually, you know, it does. I know this is kind of talking past your point, but like, I'm able to get what I need to get done, done. And so for me, for now, um, that's kind of what I focus on.

And then I try to use my vantage point as now a business owner, just to kind of say whatever I think needs to be said. Um, and I, you know, I've talked a lot on LinkedIn about like what it was like to be pregnant and try to be a freelancer and what it's like to try to. Work kind of in this environment.

And I've talked about my experiences as like a young female in that space. And, and, you know, I just told you I made 10, 000 less than my male counterpart. Like those are [00:36:00] conversations I might not have felt comfortable having while I was employed. So I feel like it's my responsibility to do it now, but as far as the masterminds, they've all really happened organically.

I think we just find each other and, uh, You know, you, you just need your people. It's really important to have those sounding boards.

Daniel Dissinger: Yeah. It's just, it's just amazing to kind of see how you, you like took these paths right without, not without thinking, like, I don't want to say it that way, but like you,

but like you, you saw an opportunity and you're just like, let's see what happens. And, and I think that's, that's so. Inspiring because especially when you're in like these traditional academic spaces working on like the dissertation and these things, there's like an embedded [00:37:00] fear to kind of move out of it and being like, you'll never finish or you'll do this or whatever, right?

And okay, well, that's fine and all, but I feel like The way in which you kind of maneuver around these things and how you created these spots for yourself and develop these, these things is, um, shows that like, It's, it's okay. And there are other opportunities that might also allow, like you said, to allow you to thrive.

Yes, there are challenges, but you're, you know, why not take that risk? Because truthfully, like even doing a dissertation is a risk. You're taking out all this time of your life to kind of do something. So if you're going to do that, why not take an opportunity that might be even better, possibly.

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: Yeah, I don't think I could have said that any better myself, honestly,

Daniel Dissinger: it's just so great.

Um, so I'm, you know, thinking about going forward and what you're, you're doing, I'm really curious, like some of the things that you're maybe [00:38:00] excited about, like in coming up for you and your business and some of the things that, um, you know, you're just kind of very, you know, kind of. Looking forward to in the next, I don't know, just coming up.

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: Yeah. Um, well, I did, like I said, I recently put it out there, you know, that I'm not a freelancer anymore, that your instructional designer is, is a fully fledged agency, and so I'm really excited just about. The potential there. Um, I really love working with people. I, I genuinely like people. Um, you know, it's cool to say like, I hate people.

No, no, like I like people. I think they're awesome. I might not always know how to interact with them. I can be a little awkward, believe it or not. Um, but like, I do like people, I want them to succeed and do well. And so being able to hire and like amplify our vision, but also be able to give people opportunities and to help develop people.

And like, I'm excited about that. I'm excited that like, I'm owning the fact that I [00:39:00] don't want to be a training company. Like I really do want to focus on learning and people development. So, you know, a lot of knowledge sharing, social learning networks, um, kind of like non traditional solutions for startups because they're kind of non traditional businesses.

So I'm really excited about that. I'm hoping for some more opportunities to teach writing. I teach like a scripting voiceover for video course for instructional designers, but I'm hoping to expand that. Yeah, I feel like those are the big things. I'm a co founder in another totally unrelated business, and I can't talk about it yet.

And it's the most frustrating thing. So I'm really looking forward to that launch so I can share everyone on the work there, which I think is really, they have an amazing mission and vision. So yeah, I mean, I think that's the big thing. You know, we were talking, um, just about, I mean, it was, it was nice to hear kind of the experience reflected, but you were saying you created these avenues.

And so like the one thing I think I would leave people with, I don't know if we're at the end, but this is like the one thing I would really [00:40:00] leave people with to think about is, um, make it easy for them. I don't mean your students, give them lots of rigor, but, uh, You know, if you want something

done, I think the academic version, this is where I got trapped was like always to criticize and poke holes and prove that it's not a good solution.

And in business, that doesn't really work. People are looking for you to bring them a solution. So whenever you want something, make it easy for that person to say yes. So like bring the plan. And so that's what I'm trying to do now, right? Like I'm shifting my agency model and I'm shifting how most people think about learning.

So my job is to make it easy for those clients to see the value. And that means preparing the heck out of my pitches, having a lot of great information available, but you know, depending on what you want to do, that can look different. Just, um, that's like my biggest, I think my biggest takeaway from working in industry is you make it easy for someone to say, yes, they don't have to think about it.

They don't have to. Do the cognitive load, you know, take up the bandwidth it takes to make that decision. You're way more likely to get what you want.

[00:41:00]

Daniel Dissinger: Well, I think that's a, that's a great place to just end because I'm going to take that with me into this next semester and to everything I'm doing because you're right.

You just, you're right, period. That's exactly the main thing about academia is to criticize. It's part of the vocabulary of how we do things and it doesn't have to be.

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: It's like we're perfectionists, right? We're very competitive by nature, maybe not with other people, but internally. And so poking holes is very safe.

You know, you don't have to take charge. You don't have to be the owner. You don't have to be the person whose identity is in some ways criticized because your solution is criticized. Um, so you have to be a little bit willing to put yourself out there, but that's also totally not what 90%. That's a fictitious statistic, but like with most of your classmates or your colleagues in academia are doing, most people are scared.[00:42:00]

Daniel Dissinger: Thank you. Wow. Nicole, this has been amazing, inspiring. I've learned so much. Like literally all my questions were like, almost like for like, I'm like, I need to know this. And I know that the audience is getting, get a

lot out of this day. Um, it's something that I think we all need to consider and especially just also just in the ideas of like, that there's always other ways to kind of do take what you've studied, take what you've done in school and to.

In a way I guess, oh my God. Totally cliché. To remix it kind of in a way so that you can create the life that you wanna live and then the one that's kind of gonna give you, let you thrive. Like just that word that you've, you know, been using. And I think I really appreciate and acknowledge and wanna acknowledge all the work you've done.

This is so great. And, um, just thank you so much for being here and helping teach our audience.

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: Thank you for having me and for letting me talk about, you know, my experience. It's been [00:43:00] really

Daniel Dissinger: fun. Yeah. Thank you. Well, everyone, please, um, put your comments, questions below, um, all, you know, we'll put some resources here at the end.

Um, Oh yeah. Why don't you, can you let the audience know like where they can find you and like, you know, learn more about your company and everything like that too.

Nicole Papaioannou Lugara: Yeah. Um, if you're really good at spelling, I don't know if my name will be in the podcast title, but you can find me on LinkedIn, uh, you know, slash Nicole Papaioannou, PhD.

So I'm happy to connect with anyone literally as long as, uh, you know, I'm happy to connect with anyone pretty much, unless you give me other reasons why not to, um, I, my business can be found at your instructional designer. com. And if you're more interested in like the learning about being an instructional designer pieces, then that's upscale experience.

com basically anything at your instructional designer. You know, Instagram, Facebook, all that good stuff is, is [00:44:00] me or one of my fabulous people behind the scenes. Um, so happy to connect with all of you. I'm happy to, if, if I see those questions and you tag me in them, I'm happy to answer them, you know, when I can, um, and I'd love to stay in touch.

Daniel Dissinger: Excellent. Yeah. Everyone, all those reasons we'll put all that in the show notes, but yes. And Nicole is prolific on LinkedIn. It's how I kind

of, I was just like, wow, there's so much going on. No, really, they're really like, there's so much to be learned from the things that you post on there and write on there.

So I think like everyone can, you know, it's just that as a resource to me, you know, it's really interesting and it's really helpful. But thank you so much, everybody. Please follow, like, subscribe, follow the podcast at writingremixpod on Instagram and Twitter. And we'll see you at the next episode. Thank you so much.