

**Laura** 00:01

Welcome to the Next Level Leap podcast. I'm your host, Laura Meyer top growth strategist to some of the country's fastest growing brands, and mentor to consultants. My signature leap methodology has changed the way 1000s of companies look at growth strategy, and this podcast shares, best practices, and inspirational interviews to help you make that next level leap in your business. Stick around and join me as I share the journey of how we as founders can multiply our income impact and influence by landing on the other side of our next big leap. Let's go!

**Laura** 00:46

Hey, Natalie!

**Natalie** 00:47

Hello, Laura, I'm so excited to be here. I love being here. I can share any time with you. It's always great.

**Laura** 00:53

It is so mutual. And it's funny because a lot of like my students come into your programs, your students come into my programs, a lot of people refer each other they collaborate together. More often than not, if I'm working alongside an operations leader, or my students are working alongside an operations leader, they came out of your program. So it's really fun for us to be able to have this conversation. And one of the things I really actually why don't we do a quick, like what brought you to today. And then there's some things about your business that I think you do exceptionally well, and it's very unique to the online space that I want to dig into.

**Natalie** 01:31

Awesome. So a little bit about me and my background, I like to say I grew up first Natalie 1.0, which I think we're at like Natalie 5.0 At this point, but I went to college for something completely unrelated to what I was going to end up doing for 15 years inside of fortune 100, you know, corporation, and I was extremely fortunate to, you know, take a different path. And it all worked out. I worked in human resources and project management for the first 12 years there. And then I took a hard right turn, was asked to come in as the Chief of Staff for our CEO of a 36,000 person company, obviously an incredibly challenging, stressful and all consuming role. And I was lucky enough to be there at the end of this CEO's run. And as he was leaving, and as we were replacing them, it was just the perfect opportunity for me to take a hard look at cause me to take a hard look at what was really important to me. And that that was the beginning of Natalie 2.0, which was and I'm very grateful for 1.0 For sure.

**Natalie** 02:44

But the 2.0 came about when I was given the opportunity to really think about what is important to Natalie, if everything changes on a dime, what are the things that really matter and it was nothing inside of the business that I had dedicated days nights evenings, holidays to, even though I was serving noble people and people I really admired and enjoyed being around and was grateful for the work. The real Natalie kind of came to be, which was, at this point, I had two children, and they were nine and six at the time. And this was the beginning of me just I never really struggled with mom guilt. I came from a working, you know, family, and so I didn't feel bad for working. But at this moment, I was like, man, if anything, like from a legacy perspective, that's when legacy was like everywhere, you know, sometimes when you just see words or numbers like in repetition everywhere, like I could not shake the word legacy from me, I'm getting all fired up just thinking about how I love it, how I was feeling in that moment, but legacy just kept coming over me. And so for me, it was like, what is the legacy that I'm gonna leave to my children, and I've suffered a lot of unfortunate loss in our life. And so that that word of legacy was really, really meaningful. And I could attach something to it, even though I was you know, kind of, at least I think I was young in my 30s And so I just wanted to make a really big impression.

**Laura** 04:09

Oh, my gosh, I love it. And what's so interesting about our journey together, is we've had a lot of like, secret conversations. And I want to start having some of those conversations publicly. So I wanted to bring you on, I'm really excited to share that with the listeners. And when I thought about building a consulting and fractional cmo training programs certification program, I, you were the first person that contacted and, and what I said was, I don't want to create another program that people don't get a result from, right. And I said, you have one of the most respected group programs in the industry, which gets people you monitor and track results, and people do the work and they get an ROI. And that is not as common. And the reason why I contacted you is because I knew that about your programs. And I think that's honestly the minority take a lot personally. Yeah, unfortunately, a lot of the group programs are packed with people, it's about volume, it's an experienced coaches, it's all of that, right. And you're like the antithesis of of any of that, right of like just trying to pack people in and grow fast and get to the, you know, get to the vanity metrics, like, like, you're the absolute opposite. But I think when you care about legacy, and you care about impact, as much as you do is like what you just said, you don't want it to just be a waste of people's money, like you want people to be able to spend the money and be like, that was an amazing investment. And so I contacted you. And a lot of the way in which you view your own business growth, I think you talk a lot about ops to your audience, but how you see your own business grow, which you're already at seven figures is really unique. So I'm going to talk about a lot of the marketing advice and like growth advice you don't take. And the first is the cohort model, like you feel very strongly about not having a program on evergreen and having it in cohorts. Why is that?

**Natalie 04:09**

So I took a big bold, scary leap out of corporate and I had no idea what I was going to do actually thought I would I never ever, ever considered leveraging the operational organizational productive, you know, efficiency skills that I was running a humongous you know, large company with, I never really thought I'd ever use that I was really thinking about more of movements around community and women and empowerment and a lot of, you know, kind of crossing the intersection of life and business coaching, but I never really thought I would be here so as time would tell, I ended up coming back to the gifts that come most natural to me that fill me up and that was in the world, the unsexy world of operations. But that's that's where I landed and I have taken a very fulfilling course Through that, which, you know, I started just as being a service provider serving in a one to one capacity with dozens and dozens of businesses, scaling businesses, and had been on the backside of seeing massive success. And, of course, you know, struggles and hardships along the way too, because that's business. And I've just had a great, you know, front seat ride along that path. And then I got to the point where other people wanted to learn how to do this. And I took all that intellectual property and turned it into our signature offering, which is the Director of Operations certification program. And that is our sole focus today. So I moved from a one to one service provider into an education company, and all of it is so rich, and who knows what Natalie 7.0 will be?

**Natalie 07:50**

Yeah, it's all about the delivery for me. And you know, definitely I am an operations person, I'm a very results oriented person. And to tie into the segue that you just shared here, Laura, I like I said, I work in dozens and dozens and dozens of small and online focused businesses. And I was in charge of doing things really quickly, swiftly. And, you know, I am at that point, I was really delivering the vision that the leader had. And so I saw a lot of what not to do, unfortunately, I saw a lot of programs being built, you know, being sold before they were built. And, you know, there there was just a lot of the lack of delivery, the lack of follow through is something that just upgraded my nerves. It really made me kind of paranoid about working with people and partnering with people because I was attached to those brands. And so as I got smarter and more equipped and more knowledgeable about this industry that I was stepping into it, that was one of the things that always went through our mind is is the product built? Is it actually measured? Do people really get results? Or is this one of those things where I call it the conundrum between impact and fame. And there's nothing wrong with people who want to be famous.

**Natalie 09:07**

But for me, I was working with a lot of people who wanted fame who wanted big bucks who wanted luxury lifestyles, and I don't I don't fault them for that. For me, there was a breakdown in the way that we were going to sell the product and I was still behind it even though, you know, the consumer doesn't see Natalie, I was doing things that just didn't feel right for me.

And so I learned a whole lot and in in that process, especially as me kind of taking all of this knowledge and turning it into my own product. I mean, we have grown very, very slowly. We have grown much more slowly than you know all those businesses that I've worked in, and there's a lot of reasons behind that. But one of the reasons that what do we know one of the one of the biggest reasons that made me grow slowly was the fact that I was limiting the number of people that I was able to work with at one time and so I have yet to have a business coach who has told me Natalie that cohort model is the best way to make money is the best way to scale your business. Because it requires a lot of labor from me It requires, you know, attention on any caps you have caps you it how many people you can work with. But at the end of the day, that cohort model delivers results, it gives me the ability to make changes, and scalable sustainable changes to the product that is our flagship, it really is our entire brand in this one product. And so, you know, reputation, really, it staying sound, and an accurate is very, very important. And I have just felt that, you know, being able to make an impact in a smaller guided group was more in alignment with me.

**Laura** 10:45

Mm hmm. Oh, my gosh, I love what you're saying that and it's so rare. It it really is. It's hard. And it's hard.

**Natalie** 10:54

It's hard. It's hard. And it takes a lot of money. Like, you know, people are like, they don't realize the number of team members that go into a cohort based model. But, you know, for us, it's it's the right thing to do, even if it costs more money, because the results are there.

**Laura** 11:09

Yeah, I love that. And it is it it's hard. Like it's hard to say no to people, it's hard to say that you're full. It's hard to be looking at payroll, and no, oh, we could probably let five or 10 more people in and that would probably pay that bill. Right. Like I'm there. Yeah, I have to because I launched a marketing certification program or consulting certification program, very similar to yours. And we cap at 20. And it's 100%, the right thing to do, because there's never a question that goes unanswered, in our weekly q&a. And we don't lose track of anybody. But it's hard to do you have long term if payment plans. Talk to me a little about your payment plans.

**Natalie** 11:54

Yes. So our program is a six month commitment. And it is intense, we are very upfront about it. It's a six month intensive program where you're going to be learning, you're going to be doing case studies, we're engaging on a weekly basis, and you have an accountability advisor that is with you every step of the way. So there's a lot of touch points. And because of that the cost of the program is a significant cost. And I always put myself I remember the very first investment I made in this part of me and Natalie 2.0, if you will, and I remember laying in bed, like trying to

figure out how I was going to talk to my husband about it. Because we at this point, neither of us had done a lot of online education, we both had, quote unquote, grown up and corporate. So corporate was funding our learning and development. And this was going to be the first time where we were personally going to be investing in my future self. And I remember the feelings I remember laying in bed, like you know how it is you're you're coming up with the talking points, like I want to make, I want to sell this to him, I want to be realistic, and I want and I want him to believe in this, like I believe in this. And I remember asking for \$3,400, basically \$3,500. And it was a big, big ask of my family at that moment in time. And so when I think about pricing, and I think of, of you know, our program is \$7,500 at full price. And so it is a significant a high ticket offer with an incredible delivery on the back of it. But it's a lot to ask. And so you know, in six months, we deliver this in six months, which is the right amount of time for us. But we you know, so many coaches and advisors have said, Oh, don't let your payment plans extend your delivery. Because what if they fail? And what if this doesn't happen? And what if you don't collect on it? And, and all of those are valid thoughts.

**Natalie** 13:52

They're not wrong for thinking that I choose to think that through our application process, the selection process, the bond that we create with these people, the way that we're getting to know these people on a one to one, I know when they have financial hardship. I know when they're when they're struggling with clients. I know when they've had to take a backseat to business. I know that I mean, we have one to one relationships. So we we build a real it's not an invisible person to us. It's not just a donor to us, right. There's a two way relationship. And so it's always felt very organic for me to to offer a 12 month payment plan for a program that is delivered in six months. And economically it's also the right thing for us to do right now. Also in the payment plan thing, Laura, we don't charge we have not charged an excess or a quote unquote tax for people who take are basically a penalty for people who take payment plans. We did do that for a while and then I asked myself like why do I do this? This doesn't make you know, this doesn't make any sense. So we don't penalize anybody for taking an extended payment option for themselves?

**Laura** 15:02

Oh, my gosh, that's so unusual. What is your default rate? on that do you know?

**Natalie** 15:09

We've had one person ever? One person. And we're close to 400 students at this point. So yeah, we and that's the other thing is when you build a relationship, we've had people who have had to default, or had to postpone payments for a couple of months. But I've only had one person over this entire time who could not pay us?

**Laura** 15:33

You were just like, bless and release.

**Natalie** 15:35

For sure. Just couldn't do it couldn't do it. I knew their circumstance. I mean, they were in a very hard, dark time. And it just it was fine for me. I mean, of course, we withdrew their access, etc. Yeah, that's, it's, it's not a program where people default ever.

**Laura** 15:54

That is so cool. That totally speaks to your program. I know another thing, which is so crazy when I was hearing you talk about this, because I think of you as like the ops queen with all the automations and everything. But you completely ignore a lot of the automation processes that you could have in place, right? Kind of What's your thinking around that? And then what, why?

**Natalie** 16:18

Yeah, experience, I think it comes down for us, we just had an intensive team day. And we did talk about this, because we do have a lot of opportunities to get people's money faster, right. And if we did that, we would move them from a sales page to a payment page. But for us, making sure that we're getting the right people in here is really important. So we, we impede that process by putting in an application. But still, there's lots of programs on the market, who have you know, who go from a sales page to an application, etc. And you can still automate so much of that, we have kicked that around. And for us, I want someone individually looking and approving these people, in almost every single one of our this was the the real determining factor of that of not automating this completely was in our applications.

**Natalie** 17:10

We went back through over 500 applications, almost every application 80%, a little bit more than 80% of the applications, ask a question inside of the application. If you're about to give somebody \$7,500. And I can't take the time to answer a question for you. I don't think that that's going to be consistent with the experience that that we want to give. So yeah, I mean, we have declined, automating several pieces of this. And then, you know, truthfully, we've also automated a lot of parts and pieces that you know, that can be in the actual delivery. But the onboarding process, which is where we have the most opportunity today, is where we've just said no. And it's sometimes uncomfortable to say no there. But it does feel like we're setting up the expectation that this is going to be two sided. And you know what, Laura, a lot of people come into our program. And they have never been in a high touch program like this. And they resist it at first. And so it's also a good like teaching moment for us at the very beginning, like oh, no, like we're in this, like, you're not going to come in here and hide if you're going to share this investment with us. And you have said that this is the results that you want, like we're going to meet you from day zero, and we're going to, we're going to stay in true on that all the way through 190 days.

**Laura 18:30**

It's so it's so fascinating to hear you talk because it's again, such the anomaly. And I, the things that I've heard people say that I've even questioned recently is like, you know, it's up to them to do the work, right. Or it's on them to get out of their own way. Or, and I and you and I kind of share this philosophy of like people pay to get a result. And they don't know what they don't know. And if part of getting the result is mindset, or part of getting the result is beliefs, or part of the getting the result is a certain set of skills that they feel like they need to have, or as part of getting the result is understanding how to generate leads like and follow up on those leads. I mean, all of that is what they don't know that we know how to do. And I love that you think about it of like, I'm going to set up everything in my business to focus on that outcome. Share a little bit about the outcomes that people get from your program. I've heard your students talk about it, but I can't recall it offhand. I'm curious.

**Natalie 19:36**

We have a lot of different types of people who come into the program. So we've got some people who are service providers right now and are interested in scaling their business or you know, up leveling who they are. And for those people really making sure that they walk away with an offer that is leveraging their gifts and their skills. We pride ourselves in not being cookie cutter right You're not going to buy, everyone who leaves a program is going to have a little bit different of a business a little different offer a little different avatar, we're not fitting into my box, because that wouldn't work, it wouldn't allow you to create the legacy that you want. And that's at the core, what I want for every woman, it's not exclusive to a certain kind of woman or ambitious woman or a person with this skills, I really want every woman to feel like they are in the driver's seat of that. So I we give a lot of autonomy to what they can build. But from a results perspective, we're looking at making sure that you know, they build a product or a business that works for them, that they if they are wanting to be an employee in someone's business, which we get plenty of those today, especially in the last year that has really been a different, a new emerging avatar that's coming into our program.

**Natalie 20:51**

But if you're wanting if you're looking for full time supported work, and you're you're wanting to be an employee, making sure that you understand the skills that you can bring, and then also creating that two way relationship, where we the content that we have, the coaches that we have your accountability adviser is able to help you fill in the gaps of what you don't bring to that company today so that you can up level in the company, those people typically end up walking away with a title promotion compensation increases. And then, you know, we talk a lot about profit sharing once there's been you know, proof that you are instrumenting change, and you know, helping a business to increase their profit margins. So those are also results that we get, but selfishly, we are really focused on a return on investment. Again, thinking back to that

conversation with my husband laying in bed drumming up the the strengths that come in there, I know how important that was to me. And even I've had people who have told me that like you're focusing on something that's not that important to everybody. And I'm still crazy, passionate about the ROI. And so we we have tools and deadlines and milestones inside of our program to help people along that journey of getting there invest if you want to get your if that's important to you, we you have all the means inside of our program to make sure that you can do that.

**Laura** 22:16

So good. So what's next for the ops authority? What are we looking at in the next few years? What do you predict in the industry? And then what are you working on?

**Natalie** 22:23

So this year, Laura, we have actually in two days, we have hired a filming company from New York to come down here, they've been down here, this will be their fourth visit to Texas, which is where I'm from, for us to completely overhaul and refresh all of our content. So 140 modules, and lessons have been written and will be recorded in the next couple of days. Of course, we've had to break that up over several visits. It's been a huge, huge, huge, costly project. I mean, that project alone is a \$70,000 project that we have just reinvested for the betterment of, of the brand and of the teaching that we're doing. So that was our big 2022 project. As we, you know, I built this business, around delivery, making sure people got results, and we're really stable. Our team is at a good space and volume for us. I think as we look forward to 2023, we are going to really explore the marketing side, it's it's my weakest side of business, because operations is my jam. So leaning into marketing, and really, I'm really excited about the focusing on organic really stepping away from paid and because it's not working for us. But looking at the organic, the ways that we can just bring more bring awareness of this to more people, and again, not from a selfish monetary perspective. But looking at how we can help people to see help people who are operators, to see that their operator is no operator is never a term that I would have ever used.

**Natalie** 24:00

Even when I was in corporate I would have never used that term. But helping people to see that they have these skills that are so many women, nurses, teachers, accountant, I mean, we see these these skill sets in professions. And so we're going to take do our darndest to get out there and talk to women who we feel have the skill set and if they choose to work with us and partner that will be fantastic too. So our focus is really in in organic marketing over the next year. And then whatever we need to make resources wise to make that happen, which will be you know, a big part of our growth in the upcoming year. And I suspect over the next 10 years, I mean, we have an exit strategy that we're starting to kind of ink a little bit. There will be a book a book written in the next two years and 2024 We're looking at getting our book out and



then you know our exit strategy will come mid 50s for me so looking to see what we can do do between now and then to make that a valuable offer for someone.

**Laura** 25:03

That's amazing. Oh my gosh, that was a great summary. And what a great reflection of what you've been up to the investments you're making in the business. Thank you for being transparent on the cost. Like I was sitting there being like, I wonder what that runs and you, you said, which is great, it's good, like mental note for anybody who might want to have the program professionally redone. And thanks for being here. If people want to learn more about your program, learn more about you where's the best place for them to go?

**Natalie** 25:28

Yeah, our website, the oppsauthority.com. If you're particularly interested in becoming a high level operator, you can go to directorofops.com and then we hang out on all the social channels so you'll be able to see us at the ops authority and any channel.

**Laura** 25:42

Awesome. So good to see you. Thank you so much for being here.

**Natalie** 25:46

Thanks, Laura.

**Laura** 25:48

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