

# 130\_Jenny Blake of PIVOT

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

Matt Hunckler, Jenny Blake



Matt Hunckler 00:00

Hey there, Powderkeg fans. This is Episode 129 of the powder keg podcast the show for entrepreneurs, leaders and innovators building remarkable tech companies in areas decidedly outside of Silicon Valley. I'm your host, Matt Hunckler. And in today's episode, we're revisiting we are revisiting an old episode where I spoke with Jenny Blake. It's a very prescient episode, because she is an author. She is a speaker. She is a podcaster and the founder of pivot, and a lot of people are having to pivot their businesses in their careers right now. It is crazy times right now, thanks to the mandatory Coronavirus shutdowns. A lot of businesses are having to pivot a lot of people are having to pivot their careers a lot of people are having to pivot in their personal lives as well. And Jenny Blake, I really enjoyed this conversation with her I had it two years ago. So kind of a prescient conversation almost seeing into the future here. What we talked about in that episode is so relevant right now, because she's the author of PIP it the only move that matters is your next one. And as the creator of the pivot method, which distills all of the wisdom she's gained throughout her career, teaching you how to change your business direction, while also not falling on your face. Or maybe if you do not as hard and picking yourself up more quickly. Blake learned a lot of these virtues by doing her own pivoting throughout her career. by spending two years at a technology startup in Palo Alto, she landed a job at Google as a product trainer for AdWords. She stayed there for five years, training more than 1000 employees in building her public speaking and career coaching skills. Before she pivoted once more to set out to become a solopreneur. And she is thriving. She now speaks and holds workshops on the pivot method around the world at companies like into

it and PIMCO and universities like Yale and MIT, and a conferences like TEDx and the world domination summit. She also runs the pivot podcast, which I highly recommend you check out amazing guy on there. She's got so many great stories and insights to share in our interview, we talked about him here, meditation, the pivot method, conquering your fears, so much more very human conversation. I love just how genuine and real she is. I think you'll get a lot out of this conversation. And again, I really hope you enjoy this episode, as we are practicing social distancing, hopefully practicing mindfulness as well. Not only on your own but with your teams as well. So please help me welcome my guest, Jenny Blake.



Jenny Blake 02:31

How are you? I'm



Matt Hunckler 02:32

doing really well. Really excited to talk to you today.



Jenny Blake 02:35

Likewise, thank you so much for having me and for understanding about the reschedule I really appreciate it.



Matt Hunckler 02:40

Oh, of course. No worries. How are things in your world?



Jenny Blake 02:43

Good. I just the reason I needed to move it. I spoke at the World Bank on Valentine's Day they had a fall in love with your career fair. So yeah, it was really fun and it was cool to go and get to hang out in DC for a few days. So I'm just getting back in them back up to speed.



Matt Hunckler 03:01

Totally. That is awesome. Did you? Is that your first time working with them?



Jenny Blake 03:06

Yes, it is. Great. I didn't know what to expect from kind of going to international DC crowd that works for the World Bank, but they were so nice. So friendly.



Matt Hunckler 03:16

That's great to hear. It's always nice when things work out that way.



Jenny Blake 03:20

Yeah, totally. How about you? How's 2017 treating you?



Matt Hunckler 03:23

It is crazy. You know, we we've, we've added a couple team members. I mean, really only two, but we were a three person team before that. So it feels like a lot. So the cool thing is, one of the guys I brought on is actually going to be a business partner. And we work together back in 2011. So we're kind of getting the band back together, so to speak.



Jenny Blake 03:46

That's cool.



Matt Hunckler 03:47

Yeah. Yeah. So we're having a lot of fun. Yeah.



Jenny Blake 03:52

Awesome. How long have you been doing the podcast now?



Matt Hunckler 03:55

So the podcast is still pretty young. We actually launched it in November. of Last year, so this this will be Episode 17, I believe. So we were fortunate enough to get some cool coverage on entrepreneur calm as well in a in a different article, of course, which it kind of helped boost the audience. So we're getting a few thousand listens per month. But you know, we want to get that up into the 10s of thousands here as quickly as possible. And

having awesome guests like you is a big part of that. Well, I have to be here, but it's so awesome to have that kind of growth even so early on. Amazing. We're fortunate to have a really kind of engaged audience at verge. So verge is the company that I started back in 2009. Actually, and I'm not sure how much do you know about verge Have you? Have I given you the rundown, or would it be helpful for a little refresher? Sure. Sure. So verge is a virgin the first company ever started that was not meant to be a company first So I actually started out of desperation because I was running an e commerce business at the time for non toxic personal care products and cosmetics, which we were about four years, four, maybe five years too early, or undercapitalized depending on how you look at it. So we, we missed that market by about five years. And that was a really difficult time for me personally, and just wanted to be around other entrepreneurs that were also going through the entrepreneurial struggle. And so the audience we've built is a really engaged audience, and very technical audience of entrepreneurs, investors and top talent at tech companies outside of Silicon Valley. So that's not the epicenter of the technology world, so to speak, but it is a huge portion of it. When you look at collectively, geographically outside the valley. I saw that and read that you're, you had some time at Google. Were you in The Bay area for that time.



Jenny Blake 06:01

Yeah, I was born and raised San Francisco and then Middle School in high school Palo Alto. Cool. Then UCLA college back to Mountain View for Google was there five and a half years in the Bay Area. And then, at long last made it to New York, which is I've been here five and a half years, where I always wanted to end up but I just kept getting pulled back in back to Silicon Valley. So yeah, it's great to be here. But I love what you're doing specifically for people who aren't in the valley, because that can be such a bubble. And then there are so many people, like you said, doing their own thing, all across the country and the world. So I love that you've created this.



Matt Hunckler 06:38

Thank you. Thank you. It's a cool audience. We've got about 8000 or so people on our email list that are super engaged with the content. So when we publish the podcast, we'll of course, share that with our audience and then we'll actually do a write up for you on Forbes as well, kind of program profiling your journey so I'll make sure you get links to those Once both of those go live.



Jenny Blake 07:00

Thank you so much. And where are you based?



Matt Hunckler 07:02

I'm based in Indianapolis, although I travel all the time, I'll actually be in New York, the 28th through I think the fifth maybe. And I travel quite a bit just because I do a lot of public speaking, sometimes emceeing. And a lot of times we'll even help out at some of these conferences with their pitch competitions. So a big part of what we do is around the pitch. So that'll head up this spoiler alert or foreshadow. Depending on how you look at it out. I'm gonna ask you for your pitch and then if you have any recommendations on how to pitch and present yourself,



Jenny Blake 07:36

okay, well how my pitch my pitch, just as as I as Okay, Hmm, that's gonna be a good one that's gonna be trying to figure out



Matt Hunckler 07:45

well getting the flow and kind of ease into things. Yeah, I won't. I won't try to put you on the spot too much.



Jenny Blake 07:53

No worries. I can ask whatever you want.



Matt Hunckler 07:55

Awesome. Awesome. I think as long as we're having fun and and getting into some topics works about, you know, feel free to direct the conversation wherever you're, you're most passionate right now, I've been reading a lot of your recent stuff. And we'd love to ask you about some of the things you've been involved with. More recently, including even things like the Silent Retreat that you went on, because I'm fascinated by that idea.



Jenny Blake 08:17

Talking great. Yeah, it's always fun. And it's thank you for even checking out new stuff, because it's fun to talk about the book. But even more fun to say what's up now. And we

can talk about post post pivot, like kind of what do you do once you've launched or once you've gotten the thing that you're looking for, you know, however, it applies to startup, the startup world or your community, but I do it has been really interesting to see what happens on the other side of a pivot totally. And then just so I know and doesn't matter either way, but about how long do you like to go and record for



Matt Hunckler 08:50

so usually record for about anywhere from 45 to 55 minutes, and then that ended up getting edited down to you know, 40 to 50 ish. Okay, thereabouts. Are you good till 230? Eastern?



Jenny Blake 09:04

Yes, that sounds good. If we're able to end a few minutes before, that'd be amazing. But if not, no worries,



Matt Hunckler 09:10

no problem. We'll just dive right in. I can make sure I can make sure we do that.



Jenny Blake 09:14

Okay, that sounds great.



Matt Hunckler 09:15

Cool. Well, Jenny, thanks so much for being here today. I really enjoyed reading your book, and getting into some of what you're doing with pivot and the pivot method. Your podcast is amazing as well. And it was really cool to see you featured in that article on entrepreneur.com with all of these other amazing female podcasters how's everything going there?



Jenny Blake 09:35

Thank you so much. The podcast has been this secret love that emerged out of nowhere, I was not expecting to enjoy it as much as I do. But I thought, you know, I was working on pivot, it took about three years from start to finish. And I thought, well, it'd be nice, I'm

interviewing people anyway, I might as well record these and have a podcast companion that goes with the book, so that as people are reading pivot, they can also hear Live stories from the people and experts that I'm interviewing. And then as I was working on the book, it just became this passion project. I had so much fun and they still do getting to interview my author heroes and getting access to people in a way I never anticipated. People like Kevin Kelley, and he's a co founder of Wired Magazine. Sure. For anyone who isn't familiar things like that Kevin Kelly, Martha Beck I mean the some of my author heroes getting to have them on the phone and talk to them one on one is just incredible. And people and then talking to you Matt, like being able to be a guest on podcast has also been really, really fun and kind of the I found with this book launch is my second book. The my favorite way to get out there because it's so authentic. We get to just shoot the Marines have a conversation and people get to listen in and so it's been really rewarding.



**Matt Hunckler** 10:53

Well, absolutely. And you do such a good job with it. You really get a sense of who you are, what you're all about and how you're going about it. continuing to learn, you know, I love that. In your bio you've mentioned you know, you're a bookworm, always consuming all kinds of different books, and of course, writing books of your own. And I want to make sure we dive into your book pivot, or your most recent book pivot at some point in this conversation, but I, I'd love to learn a little bit more about what makes you tick, because you're clearly passionate about learning. You're clearly passionate about technology. And I'm curious to know if some of that is because you grew up in San Francisco.



**Jenny Blake** 11:33

I think a big part of it. My mom was really good about getting computers when they first looked like the apple two c came out or so early computers, I really started teaching myself software desktop publishing. Early on, I taught myself coding at my first job out of college. I've always enjoyed figuring out technical things. And then I've also always enjoyed learning and sharing and teaching. I used to make my brother play school when we were kids like, I would make worksheets and make him fill them out because I wanted him to be learning what I was learning and kind of get ahead of the game for his age group. And that's not much different from what I'm doing now with the blog and a book of creating worksheets for people to learn and grow and accelerate their life somehow.



**Matt Hunckler** 12:15

It's the new version of school, right? Like it's it's continuing education for us as people that were needed out when we were in school, right?



Jenny Blake 12:23

Totally. And you asked what makes me tick. And yes, it's reading and learning and growing. But also whenever I go through something challenging, or I feel that I've been through a really inefficient process, I love to synthesize whatever I've learned and figured out and try and somehow make a map that makes it easier for other people who might go through the same thing. So my first book life after college that came from reading hundreds of books, just trying to figure out how to be an adult in the world. And I found I felt it was inefficient. So I created this book that's, I call it a portable life coach for 20 somethings. Same thing with pivot I went through a time Multiple times where I felt like I was losing my mind trying to answer the question what's next. And so it was really rewarding for me to channel that those dips, those low moments in my life and as I figured them out, become really determined to improve and help people go through that process in the future.



Matt Hunckler 13:20

Well, and one of the things I really appreciate about how you describe that in your writing and even in your talks is that a lot of people could frame this as all glamorous and you know, stars and sunshine and rainbows. But one of your quotes that stuck with me was courage is a hot mess.



Jenny Blake 13:41

Yeah, that was from I spoke at the World Domination summit in 2012. And I said, sometimes courage is a hot mess. It's not always pretty, it's not shiny, but it means that we're afraid and we're taking steps anyway. And however it looks however, you know, it's not always Just the shiny, perfect image of perfection that gets translated through social media. And yet, it's so it's so to not take it personally if you feel anxious or fearful or uncertain, as you're starting a business growing a business pivoting a business, that courage is to continue. It's not about looking good all the time while you do it.



Matt Hunckler 14:21

Absolutely. I think that makes things much more not only relatable, but interesting to read. It's educational, if we're not willing to share our failure or share our struggle along

the way. You're not getting the whole learning.



Jenny Blake 14:35

I agree. There's nothing interesting to me about a sanitized version of success. And even when I'm on stage, I recently got feedback as a speaker that a lot of people loved the speech that I gave, and then one person said she didn't spend enough time establishing credibility. I wasn't sure why I should be listening to her because I tend to focus so much on what my challenges are and my struggles and what's not working. Because that's what I find most interesting and what people can relate to. And so I found that feedback interesting. Now I kind of going into an event I kind of have to go out of my way to room to establish for people. Oh, yeah, and this is why I'm up here. But it's not as interesting for me to talk about that side of things.



Matt Hunckler 15:16

Sure. I can tell that you love and are eager always to kind of get into the lesson get into the story. And I'm curious you mentioned that your mom had an apple two was that the apple to see



Jenny Blake 15:29

if that one was before the apple two even Yes, we got the one and then upgraded. Nice.



Matt Hunckler 15:34

I remember I remember the upgrade to the E as well. My mom was a teacher. Was your mom, a teacher as well?



Jenny Blake 15:40

No, she's a landscape architect. But funnily enough, she almost majored in computer science at UC Berkeley in 1969. And she shows looks back she's like I could have been reached by now. Like right in the heart of the valley. But she pivoted to history and landscape architecture.



Matt Hunckler 15:58

Okay. I wasn't sure Because we always had our apple because apples were in the schools that my mom worked at, which is the only reason we had a computer at home. Was all teachers had an apple two at the time was to see, you know, we played number munchers and word munchers in Oregon Trail.



Jenny Blake 16:18

Oh my gosh, that's so fun. I know when I used to make newsletters on the the typing software I forget, but I just all I remember is a lot of stars and weird symbols. And that's how you would divide the page up and making two columns was a really big deal. Anyway, so fun nerding out on all this stuff.



Matt Hunckler 16:36

Totally, totally well, and I'm curious to know how that sort of prepared you for some of your early careers. I know even before you Google, you were working at a startup, right?



Jenny Blake 16:48

Yep, I took a leave of absence. I was at UCLA and one of my professors was going to join this online political polling startup. And it happened to be in Palo Alto, which was where my mom lived at the time and where I went In middle school in high school, so kind of on a leap of faith, I took a leave of absence from school, went home, moved home to Palo Alto and started work as the first employee at the startup, as it later grew to 30 employees and got acquired. But it was such a great experience. Because as the first employee, I was the office manager, marketing assistant and webmaster and they kind of would just throw anything and everything at me that was entry level. And so I really love just learning from experience and hands on. And also partly, I thought, I think they expected that I was just going to file papers, but the more that I took on and improved myself and taught myself new things, the more responsibility they gave, so it was really good training ground. And one of one of my many tasks was managing our Google AdWords accounts. So I was I developed a relationship with our customer service rep at Google. And when I hit a plateau at the startup after about two years there, I later went back to graduate with my class at UCLA and everything so I finished school. But when it came time to move, you know, I wasn't I loved at the start up, I had stock in it. I wasn't going to leave for nothing. But I thought Google, Google's worth the jump. So I reached out to our rep and ended up moving over to Google to become an AdWords product trainer. So it was, it was my experience as a client that helped me get that job on the training team.



Matt Hunckler 18:21

Wow, that's amazing. And what year was that, that you moved over to Google? 2006. What a time to be at Google. What was that? Like?



Jenny Blake 18:29

It was great. It was amazing and crazy. I was there as the company grew from 6000 to 36,000 people. And because I was in a training function, I met a lot of those new hires. I was training, I trained over 1000 people in my first year and a half at the company. And so I got to know a ton of people. I still when I go back to Google, I'm still working with Google today, just from the outside as a consultant and still I'll be at a training now and someone will say you trained me 10 years ago on my first day at the company, so it was really rewarding. And wild I mean the best business school to be at the heart of Silicon Valley, the heart of one of the most innovative companies, and then watch even the infrastructure. How do you scale to, by the time I left 36,000, now 60,000. But it really taught me how to be efficient, how to communicate, how to create things with global scale in mind. And I never thought I was cut out to be an entrepreneur, I really didn't. But once I left, I realized how many skills I had acquired from working there that served me now today.



Matt Hunckler 19:31

And I want to make sure we talk about scale, but I'm curious to know what were some of those soft skills that you learned as you trained 1000 people at Google that you use now today, with the work that you do as a consultant and career and business strategist?



Jenny Blake 19:49

Well, on a physical level, I actually used to get hives when I would speak in front of a room. Even in college, I would get nervous in a I forget what they call the breakout club. But whereas the TA on my 12 students, I would get nervous just the same, I need to go around the room and say my name. And I. And yet at the same time, I knew I wanted to be an author and a speaker someday. So having this training job at Google, I kind of took it on purpose to inoculate myself against the spirit of public speaking because I knew it was something I wanted to get better at. So being in front of the room every single day and troubleshooting tech problems and keeping people awake and entertained and learning was really good practice. To the point where when I gave my very first public speech, it was at TEDx CMU, I was the first speaker of the day. 500 people in the room 3000 streaming, and slides started going haywire.



Matt Hunckler 20:43

And I think I watched that one. Is that one on YouTube?



20:47

Yeah, it is.



Jenny Blake 20:50

I would say we could link to it in the show notes, but Oh, god, this one is so long ago, but like I could have panicked and just stopped all together, but because I had been so Through the trenches of already being in front of a room every day, I stuck it out and it wasn't perfect. It's definitely awkward. But I finished it and I gave the speech, you know,



Matt Hunckler 21:08

you crushed it, you crushed it. First public speak that was that was that's pretty amazing and very impressive. public speech?



Jenny Blake 21:17

Well, I have to share too. One of my favorite quotes is from a book called Confessions of a public speaker, and this has helped me ever since. He says, anytime you're an animal standing alone on an open plane, with no weapons and nowhere to hide, and dozens, if not hundreds, or thousands of eyeballs staring at you. evolutionarily speaking, you're about to die. So if any of you listening tend to get nervous when you're giving a big presentation or public speaking, it's normal. It's our body's evolutionary response to fear from being an animal standing alone on an open plane with all these people looking at you. So once I learned that I started to get into the physiology of calming the body, yoga, breathing Then clenching and opening and closing your fist. That's why some speakers pace before they get on stage. Some make the mistake of pacing well on stage, that's less desirable. But I'm just you just need tricks to get the adrenaline out of your body. So that alone was a great soft skill that I learned in my time at Google.



Matt Hunckler 22:18

I've definitely made the pacing mistake and then watch myself in video later and was like, I look like I was lying at the zoo, just like pacing the bars there. Try not to do that again.

Talk to me more about some of these physiology tricks, because I've heard a few of them, you know, some of the things like focusing on breathing, maybe you could talk me through a breathing exercise that you do before you do one of your talks.

J

Jenny Blake 22:42

Well, one I do. It's called controlled breathing. And the original name for it is pranayama. But you can do so counting to three on the inhale or five on the inhale and then five on the exhale, really slows your breath down. So it's just like inhale. You know, 12345, hold, exhale 54321 hold that flow. And sometimes when I'm waiting for the person to introduce me, I'm doing that. And if any of you have taken a yoga class, they call it Ooh, Jaya breathing where you construct the goddess glottis muscles at the back of your throat. And you make the sound of the ocean with your breath and your breathing and just through your nose, that really filters the breath and calms the system. But another breathing technique is you take an inhale, and everyone listening now can do this. You take an inhale and just give a sign. Like that kind of a breath says, I am relaxed. I'm not being chased. There are no predators. It activates your parasympathetic nervous system. So you can even do one more just to really feel the effects of it deep inhale and just shake out your hands and your arms. And so that You know, if you're being chased by a lion, as you mentioned, it's not that kind of breathing. So it's good to notice when everything gets tight when you construct the muscles in your face. But let's say you still have adrenaline and I often do and it can manifest as a shaky voice, shaky hands, even shaky leg syndrome is, and this one I always get laughs I was the speaker coach for TEDx Bushwick. And one of the things that I told the speakers is, the biggest muscle in your body is your butt. So when you're on stage, if you get really nervous, you can clench your butt cheeks, and no one will know no one will see them you're not pacing, you're not doing yoga breathing while you've got the mic in your hand. And so at the TEDx run through then the day of the event, everyone would come up to me like Jenny, clenching my butt. I think it worked. So so you may laugh now, but try it sometime when you're nervous. And the bottom line the goal is you've got to give that adrenaline something to do And then the other thing is a lot of people make that fear magnified by taking it personally. So, oh, I'm doing it again. I'm nervous. Oh my god, they're gonna notice I'm freaking out. So I started to learn. And I this year, I spoke six times in front of 1000 people. And I've never done that before. I've never spoken to a room that big. It's pretty overwhelming to look out and see 1000 people and that's 2000 eyeballs now. person on the stage. And so I would notice myself getting nervous and just keep going. And I it wasn't a problem. It wasn't like, Oh my god, I'm going to botch this. I'm going to ruin it. I can't believe I'm nervous right now. You are going to get nervous expect it and therefore you won't magnify it. When you're in the moment. You'll just accept it and keep moving. And then then you're not producing extra adrenaline on top of the initial adrenaline.



Matt Hunckler 25:54

That makes a lot of sense. And I want to I want to get back to yoga because I think Discovered yoga in 2015. I say discovered I knew of the of its existence, but I actually finally tried it in 2015. And that has been a total game changer for me. But I wanted to share it the breathing side of things is something that our team has started to do together now, where we all do the pranayama breathing. So there's actually an app on iTunes. Have you heard of this, Jenny?



Jenny Blake 26:23

I don't know. what's what's it called?



Matt Hunckler 26:24

I think it's literally called pranayama. Oh, so you can download the app. And it has different breathing patterns that you can do. So one, if you want to get like more excited. So say we're about to go to a networking event together, we might do that breathing pattern together before we go to that event. And we don't do it for a long period of time, or like, we try not to be too weird about it, right. But there's also sort of the midweek you're starting to realize you're not going to get the whole To Do List done during the week. It's like let's get together and do that similar that same breathing pattern you described like Let's just all get back to calm baseline again to where we can just approach and everyone be in sync again, and, and bring sort of those cortisol levels down so that we can approach our work from a creative mindset. And that's, that's been a huge, huge help. And I would recommend to our listeners to start by using your exercise that you recommend here. And then, you know, if they're open to taking a leap of faith with their team, they're more forward thinking team members anyway. Maybe try the the breathing exercise as a group.



Jenny Blake 27:31

That's awesome. That's so cool. There's an app for it.



Matt Hunckler 27:33

Yeah, it's awesome. It's awesome. It's my go to now if I start to feel overwhelmed. You know, I saw in your bio, you mentioned you've always got some sort of a soundtrack going in your headphones if you're walking around New York. My go to now is to have that

property on the app. Just to kind of get myself into sort of a more meditative state because I used to always listen to podcasts or music or audio books, but at a certain point you're I found that for me, I was just always filling my time with content, as opposed to allowing myself to just be present and be with myself and be with my thoughts.



Jenny Blake 28:12

Yeah, totally. Especially if you're a creative person or an entrepreneurial person. It's so easy to fill our minds with other people's ideas. And I just bought a book called How to be bored. The School of Life put it out as a small little booklet really. And because I agree, I think it's so important to take the time that we have to breathe and slow down and silence can be so beautiful and and have our be able to hear ourselves think or not think if the goal is to slower right now, but either way, I noticed the same thing. I haven't listened to a podcast even though I love doing them and being a guest on them. I really have taken a break from listening because I'm just appreciating more quiet right now.



Matt Hunckler 28:57

I love that. That makes a lot of sense. I wonder is yoga part of that intent for you?



Jenny Blake 29:06

I don't know yoga almost 15 years now. So Yoga is just a staple of my sanity and and it's definitely serves a function I you know, I meditate every day I would say meditation is more directly related to creating that space and silence. But so when people will sometimes say to me, oh, yeah, I don't meditate, but I do yoga or but I go walking but I run but I fill in the blank, those things are all amazing. And they're still different from meditation, which is sitting still, your eyes closed for five minutes or more I do 25 at the moment, but I've done 35 in the past. Some days if I only have five, I'll do five. Because meditation is really where I find myself able to slow down. And a lot of people might feel Oh, I don't know how to meditate or I'm doing it wrong. There's no such thing, just think of it as stillness. Just sit in stillness with your eyes closed and do that slow breathing that we talked about. And that alone can help calm what I kind of use the metaphor of a beehive in our mind, like just bees as thoughts buzzing all around. And if you can drop down below the mind into, let's say, your heart center, deeper into your body, that's where things start to quiet down. And, you know, you can I writing haikus lately? One of them starts as melt, soften, release your grip. So just in that stillness Can you soaked in, can you mouth can you release your grip on the day on stresses, you know, another breathing exercise is called tonglen. And it's you breathe in on the inhale any stress or tension or fear. And on the

exhale, you picture yourself releasing it or breathing out, you know, as you breathe out all the toxins all the stress and tension, or you breathe in here. Breathe out love and just do it. This exercise, it's almost sometimes I picture myself as a tree, photosynthesizing the day so why breathe in the day and things that are on my mind and by the time breathing it out and transforming it, and creating oxygen from whatever toxins have arisen.



**Matt Hunckler** 31:18

I really like that imagery of photosynthesis. I don't know if I've said that word since junior high, but I really liked I really liked the imagery of it. I'm gonna have to try that I'm one of those people that I you know, tried to get into meditation, you know, probably back in in 2012, or 13 or so. couldn't really stick to a habit. And I think it took something more physical like yoga, to get me to a point where I could let go and now I find I can do the sit still thing. But it's only after you know, having done yoga for the year plus, that I have that now I can actually be alone with myself thoughts and then allow those dots even to drift away and get to that sort of meditative state.



**Jenny Blake** 32:05

Totally. And I love that you're willing to get into yoga too, because I think at first with something like yoga, it's easy to feel inflexible or a little bored or restless. But ultimately, it is such good lengthening and strengthening for your body. It's such a good mind body spirit integration. It just serves a really nice function that can complement any other aspect of a person's workout or kind of active activities.



**Matt Hunckler** 32:31

It was actually another podcaster Chris Ducker who finally convinced me to do it. I was visiting him in the Philippines actually, a couple years ago. Yeah, I mean, he's living the life out there for sure. And he is he was kind of what what he is reframe for me that got me to try it was the reason I could play basketball as late in life as I did and do is because I discovered yoga and I was already beginning to feel some of the aches and pains of I play basketball at a time, right? Like I'm an Indiana Hoosier, right? So it's in my DNA. And I'm 64. So that doesn't hurt to. But what does hurt is playing basketball in the post, you know, a couple days out of the week and not doing any sort of stretching or physical therapy or mobility work and adding that in, made that difference there. But I would, I would say, looking back now the mental effects of it are are even even more than the physical effects.



Jenny Blake 33:32

That's so awesome. I know. And the thing about whenever when I first started politics, I hated it, I did a lot of class I hated it. It was so hard. I couldn't make it through five minutes set at a time I couldn't finish each of any of the five minutes sets. But the fact that I hated it so much made me keep going because I was like, I had no idea these muscles existed. So clearly if it's this hard for me, and I can barely even make it through five minutes at a time. I must need this thing. And I think with yoga can be very similar. I mean, I love you describing how you play basketball. And I noticed such a difference. When I haven't done yoga for two weeks, my whole body feels creaky. And just like, it's like the whole, but my whole body needs some wd 40. And, yes, you could stretch at the gym for 10 minutes, but a yoga class will really bring you out like a sponge. And then therefore, the mental relaxation comes with it. You know, so a lot of teachers have said, Shavasana, the corpse pose, the very last pose of yoga that the entire practice is for that one pose, so that by the time you release everything, and corpse pose died at the moment died the day, you're you're so relaxed, and the only then would they sit for meditation after the body had been run out. Because no wonder of course, we can't sit still. If we're just caught up in our mind and we're so restless and haven't yet gotten out that physical energy that we have.



Matt Hunckler 34:55

That's that's my move right there. I'm not good at all the yoga poses, but I'm really good at Corpse Pose.



Jenny Blake 34:59

Yes, the best one.



Matt Hunckler 35:03

I wonder if sort of this sort of like letting go mentality, if you feel like that really sort of powers the way you approach your career and everything that you've done as a speaker and an author and as a strategist? Or if you see it as almost you do these, these sort of like letting go mental exercises, so that when you are in the mode of career mode, Jenny Blake, the author, Jenny Blake, the public speaker, that you can just be super focused and super engaged. Do you see it as almost a balance of the two or is it more integrated than maybe it appears at the surface?



Jenny Blake 35:42

Yeah, I mean, all of the above. It's very, everything supports everything else. And I find with meditation, I'm more strategic and clear and focused. So while part of it is about letting go and unwinding are relaxing, a huge part of it is also being very strategic about how I study in my time and being able to completely hear my intuition so much that I really take targeted focused action. And I don't waste time and energy running around like a crazy person that if I can just get centered answers will come to me about challenges or strategy, even launches. And even writing the book. I really kind of CO created that through meditating and imagining my book and imagining it connecting with people and what did it need and what's going to really reach people every day while I worked on it. And then, then a huge part of you know, People sometimes ask, how do you define success? Or how do you become successful like you want success to me is enjoying every day, that if I'm running my own business, and I'm miserable, and I'm running myself to the ground, and I'm burnt out and all these things, what's the point? So it's very important to me to on a day to day basis, take care of my mind, my body, my spirit, my business, they're all equally important, and I don't, I hate the phrases like, oh sleep when I'm dead, you know, like kind of common among maybe it's a some, I think it's a misconception among the only way to be an entrepreneurial ninja is you sleep when you're dead, that's just not going to work for me My body is too sensitive, I will get sick right away if I if I'm getting too little sleep or not taking care of myself. So a lot of these practices are to really treat my body like a well oiled machine so it can support everything I want to do in my business. And I learned that when I first left Google and started running my own business, I really realized you know, I'm my own my my main employee, and especially I'm a solo solo printer. I work for myself I have a few you know, VA and an assistant who are not working in with me directly or full time they're in they live in other locations. But but essentially if I'm sleep deprived or hungover or haven't exercised or I'm frustrated or impatient My business is operating at 50% so I really treat my body is my business I am My, my, you know my body is just as important to earning a living as whatever activities I'm doing on my to do list.



Matt Hunckler 38:14

But I find it interesting that you grew up in San Francisco which is you know, become Silicon Valley, the Silicon Valley that it is and is all about, you know, thinking big and growth and making a massive impact on the world with technology. But you currently reside in New York City, the city that never sleeps. And yet you are sort of other mindset that you know, it's not as I'll sleep when I'm dead. It's I want to enjoy this journey as I go. Do you find yourself at odds at times with sort of the culture and vibe of New York



Jenny Blake 38:52

I The reason I love it is because I may be quiet and have my own little sanctuary in my studio apartment during this But I love being able to leave the house and feel so invigorated. Every day is an adventure, the serendipity of being here, the the type of people that New York City attracts. I love it, I thrive on it. So I just find a way to create my own container for living here where I really don't feel burnt out because of the city people have asked, isn't it overwhelming, but I kind of, I want this level of energy and chaos, and serendipity. That's what really brings me alive. So I just make sure to have the personal practices that support it.



Matt Hunckler 39:33

That's cool. That's cool. It's like you know that you want it, but only when you want it. So it's, it's cool. We've kind of designed the sanctuary, you know, in New York, but then you can walk out the door and you're in the energy and getting that hit of probably adrenaline.



Jenny Blake 39:49

Yeah, it's so different when people come through and they're just visiting. So kind of tourist mode and even if it's not tourist mode, I used to come here for a week at a time when I was working at Google My manager was based in New York. But if you're only coming in for a week, those trips are so packed, you're meeting with people, you're going from meeting to meeting, and then out to dinner, and then you're going out for the night or having cocktails having alcohol. And then it starts all over the next day. And then you want to get in some see some sights and touristy things. And oh my gosh, of course, by the end of the week, like that you're absolutely dead. And you might have had the best week of your life, but you're dead. And that's what I think a lot of people say, Oh, I could never live here. But if you do live here every day is like that. You can really find yoga classes, meditate in the park, go for a walk, you know, yes, sometimes things are crowded and a little crazy, but it's not like you're on that 100% on mode the way that a person would be if they're just coming through for



Matt Hunckler 40:48

sure. I imagine having that that sanctuary space and that personal practice, of giving your time to reflect and be with your thoughts and then be maybe even without your thoughts and In a meditative state, it's almost like the first couple steps. So sort of the plan, scan pilot methodology of the pivot method. Is that intentional, I mean, I love I love that you

actually do the things you recommend in your book, first of all, but second of all, it is that sort of what you mean. But in that sort of like planning and scanning



Jenny Blake 41:23

phase very interesting. No one has ever connected those two phase method and missed a way of living. Love the question, let me think about this. So in the pivot method, which is essentially a method to map what's next. So if you find yourself at a pivot point, and you're saying what's next, I developed this four stage cycle that you can go through and even for pivoting a business or pivoting the strategy on a single project. So plant is about what's already working, doubling down on that, what are your strengths? What are you most enjoying? And what does success look like? Where do you want to end up a year from now? So yeah, and the context of living and day to day life 100% like what personal practices are working? And then how do you want to feel and if it's different from what you are experiencing now, you know, then the second stage scan is for people skills and projects that are compelling. So people who might you want to connect with that can also go for your local community or online community skills. How do you want to learn and grow in the coming year projects? What small experiments might you want to tackle? And that's really the third stage pilot is about small experiments. So for example, when considering moving to New York, first, I would travel here for work, then my friend Julie and I rented out an apartment for one month. And that was our pilot to see could we really hack it here? Is it different when you're maybe we're just, you know, in love with it, because we're only here for five glamorous days at a time. What someone's gonna be like, we loved the month so much that she and I moved together later, later that year, and I've been here ever since we would call New York on yellowbrickroad Road to happiness. So the pilot worked. So piloting is all about small experiments to help you test three E's. Do I enjoy this new thing? Can I become an expert at it? And is there room to expand? Well, in the context of a living experiment, we enjoyed it. Yes. Can we become an expert? Can we like get get into the New York swing and make it here? Not 100%. Sure. But we damn well knew we wanted to try. And then as the room to expand, could we see ourselves here longer than a month? And the answer was, yes. So whether it's where to travel, where to live, or what you want for your project, or your career or your business, you can repeat plants can pilot over and over until you get enough momentum, that the fourth stage lunch is more clear. And you've reduced risk enough so that when you pull the trigger on the new direction, it's a smoother transition.



Matt Hunckler 43:50

I love that and I must have missed the fourth stage of the book because I didn't have it in my notes. I always take notes when I read books. And it's been a while since I've read

yours. So I must not have gotten the The fourth stage lies,



Jenny Blake 44:01

the first three are like 90% of it. Okay, I would say, if we were going to at 20, the first three stages are the bulk. And I almost always want to call it a three stage method, because that's where you really get the momentum going. And then just every now and then the launch is pulling the trigger, like quitting your job, folding the business, you know, shifting the business. So that's kind of where launch comes in. So you're not it's, it's just as accurate. So really think of it as a three stage model.



Matt Hunckler 44:28

Well, I think it's interesting that your book, the pivot, or you know, the pivot method, your book pivot is very much focused on the process of planning the pivot and whether or not it's the pivot to make because in the startup and tech world, it's sort of like, Oh, it's not working, just pivot. And it's sort of this like, we're gonna do it really quick and we're gonna move fast and we're gonna move fast and break things because we like, quoting Mark Zuckerberg, and we're gonna we're gonna do And we're going to make it the right choice. And if it's not the right choice, we're just going to pivot again. But what I hear you saying is 90% of the pivot should be in the planning of it, and planting scanning pilot. And if the pilot works and you feel you know 80% good about it, then maybe go and launch is that am I hearing that correctly?



Jenny Blake 45:19

Yeah. And and that, you know, the the plant and scan stages are about planning and piloting is about get out there at Google, we had a motto, the mantra, basically launch and iterate or be scrappy, do not wait until you have the perfect thing to launch or to try and monetize your business or, you know, if we wait until things are perfect, we're never going to do anything at all. And that's where we feel a sense of paralysis. And so piloting is about taking action, but small action, small steps, small experiments that did get things rolling. And so that's what it's about. It's the planning and then the experimenting because none of us have the answers up front. Especially not in an economy like we're in. So that just take the pressure off to have to know. And that's what I felt I'd beat myself up for so long because I didn't know how to answer that. What's next question? And really, when I started doubling down on what was working, and rolling that into new and different but related experiments, that's when things started to take off again.



Matt Hunckler 46:20

I imagine you have a lot of readers and people in the community because I know certainly in the entrepreneurial community, we have this of people that get stuck in the planning stage. And I feel that resistance of between them and actually launching a pilot, or, you know, or piloting or launching. And so they almost get into this perpetual, separate self-perpetuating cycle of entrepreneurship. At which means that they're always in planning stage and they've always got some amazing plan, because that's all they're spending their time doing. Can you talk to me about what you do? Consider like Minimum Viable planning or what? What needs to go into planning before you have a viable pilot.



Jenny Blake 47:09

The most important part of planning is not the business plan, even like the most intricate way things are gonna unfold. The part that most people skip, when it comes to planning is looking at what's already working, and what their strengths are and what has worked in the past what has gotten clients in the past or customers? What do people saying, putting your ear to the ground listening? What are your customers want? What are they actually signing up for? What are they struggling with? How can you be most helpful? That's the planning that's really important, and that people often skip because they're so focused on kind of sexy ideas that you would read about or, or how to how to grow something or how to follow some new business template that someone's written about online. But the real key is once you know your strengths and what's really working, you can change Shift very naturally and very methodically, right from where you already are, instead of stretching too far outside of yourself, especially with too much planning, that's not anchored in anything that you're doing currently.



Matt Hunckler 48:12

I imagine that's when things can start to feel a little bit out of control, when nothing, nothing is anchored to what you currently do or currently do. Well,



Jenny Blake 48:22

exactly. Yeah, that's I mean, out of control, or here, they're just not working. There's no attraction happening, and someone might feel stuck and like, why isn't, you know, why aren't I getting any momentum here? Well, it's most likely because it's not can and well enough connected to existing strengths and relationships and experiences.



Matt Hunckler 48:41

I like that a lot. I like that a lot. That that makes a ton of sense to me. And I think if people just had this framework of the plant, scan, pilot and launch, people would be piloting a lot more frequently, and the launches would be a lot more meaningful and therefore have a much bigger impact? Absolutely. Have you had some success stories come out of the talks that you've given and the work that you've done with the book and with your coaching that are some of your favorite transformations.



Jenny Blake 49:13

One of the biggest things is, for myself included people who just say, I thought I was crazy, or Oh, I'm pivoting my whole life. And I always thought there was something wrong with me. But now through this lens, they're the pivot Pro, they are the one that's the most agile because they have been shifting dynamically at every turn. And for me, too, I remember feeling like when I was hitting my head against the wall every two years wondering what's next. There was something wrong with me and I must be destined to be unhappy for the rest of my career. But actually, what I've discovered, especially since the book came out and talking to people is, pivots are much more often a product of our success. You know, in the startup world, pivoting is kind of plan B, the initial strategy for the company is failing and now you have to pivot to stay in. But when it comes to our careers, and if you're a solopreneur, entrepreneur, pivoting is often a product of success that you've outgrown some previous direction or previous idea or career incarnation and you're ready for something new. So while it is intimidating, it doesn't have to be taken personally, that you've done anything wrong. And that alone frees us up to be much more creative and eliminate some of the fear of the unknown. I think the other thing is just recognizing that some amount of uncertainty is a good thing, because that's how we know we're engaged. And we're learning and growing. And in the book I call the people I wrote the book for high net growth individuals, that money is important, but it's not everything. And ultimately, we're asking how am I learning and growing and once those needs are being met, or simultaneously, and how am I making an impact? So growth and impact are two sides of a coin, that I call them impactors for short, that's what we really care about. So of course, we're going to have some more uncertainty because we would be poured otherwise, if we knew exactly what we were doing, and what's next and how to get there, and how to monetize the shit out of our business or, you know, like, like crush it overnight we would people were so lucky is that we get to play this game of business and entrepreneurship and, and problem solve and troubleshoot and go through dips and go through failures and successes and keep learning. I mean, that's what Joseph Campbell calls the rapture of being alive.



Matt Hunckler 51:29

I love that you just quoted Joseph Campbell. That's awesome. That's awesome. And I love the high net growth individuals phrase as well. I'm curious to know if there's one person in particular that helped you become a high net growth individual because Jenny, I would, I would absolutely say that you're you're a high net growth individual that has achieved some amazing things. And I would venture to guess we have we've seen nothing yet compared to what what's what's to come.



Jenny Blake 51:57

Thank you, Matt. Well, same to you. I really I have to say I've had been fortunate to have many amazing mentors and friend tours and friends in my life not to my family to loves learning. And so that's always I'm fortunate to have that always be part of the conversation. I would say authors, just books, the availability of books where an author has poured years of their life and you get this thing you get to just unpack all their wisdom for \$15 or however much you're gonna pay for their book. That's magic to me it's absolute magic. Some it's complete bookworm my book, my apartment is overflowing with books here. And I love it. I love always being able to, and I like following author, rabbit holes. So like so once I find an author I really like for example, lately, it's been Byron Katie and a guy named Gary Lakoff, who Oprah read his book seat of the soul in 87. And it completely changed the game for her. Well, once I read one book and I resonate so deeply with it. I'll read everything the author has ever written. And so there are some authors like that where I just go to town on their whole body of work. And in that way, they become a mentor from afar and it's fine if I never get to meet that person in person or talk to them live I've already they've already changed my life in countless ways. And then now at the podcast, that is actually a small possibility that I could talk to them. So that's that's a mind blow beyond belief, but the books alone are what are what feed me their soul food, brain food, as a high net growth individual.



Matt Hunckler 53:31

I think that's pretty good philosophy and perspective to have and I would highly recommend as a reader, although I clearly didn't take good enough notes on it. Please go read and pick up a copy of Jenny's book pivot. Jenny. If people want to find more about you, or your book, where should they go?



Jenny Blake 53:50

The best place is pivot method COMM And if you go to pivot method.com slash toolkit,

there's a bunch of free resources and templates and even a pivot ability index to See what kind of pivoter you are. And then I also have a private community called momentum for side hustlers and solopreneurs where I do twice weekly q&a calls. And there's just it's just an awesome group. And if a team of six pivot coaches now so if any of you listening really would love, one on one support, you can sign up for two session jumpstart. And that's a pivot method comm slash coaching.



Matt Hunckler 54:22

Oh, so cool. So cool. I didn't check that out yet. So I will be going to that. Immediately phones interview. Thank you so much, Jenny for taking the time to share your story, and share a little bit about pivoting and learning along the way.



Jenny Blake 54:36

Thank you so much, Matt. I loved all your questions, you get an A plus, because you didn't just read the book, you also checked out all the latest greatest stuff. So I really, really appreciate it. You're great at what you do. And big thanks to everybody who's here listening to



Matt Hunckler 54:50

Thanks so much, Jenny. Looks like we got you done before 230. So



Jenny Blake 54:55

really thank you for like making that you. I'm so blown away and it makes it so fun for you to have done all the extra research that you did, it was so above and beyond, but I really, really appreciate it.



Matt Hunckler 55:05

Well, I really enjoyed it. And I really do enjoy your stuff. So I hope we can stay in touch. And yeah, please let me know how I can help as you continue to pivot and launch new things.



Jenny Blake 55:15

Thank you to you as well. I would love that. Keep in touch and enjoy. Are you in New York

trip coming up soon, right?



Matt Hunckler 55:21

Yeah, I do. I don't. Yeah, we've got some some cool things lined up. They're actually there. I might send you an invite to something too, just to kind of a connecting of a bunch of different people from the city. I'm sure you already know some of the people that are that are coming. So I'll make sure you get an invite to that. As long as we finalize it. So cool. Standby.



Jenny Blake 55:43

Sounds great. Well, thank you again, Matt. This was so much fun. And if you have a great Friday and weekend.



Matt Hunckler 55:49

Thanks, Danny. Likewise Happy Friday. Okay, you too. Thanks. Bye. Bye. That's it for today's show. I know so sad that we had and so soon, but I want to say thank you for You're listening, and I hope you're doing well. Hope your families are doing well. I hope your teams are doing well. I know there's a lot going on right now in the world. And I hope Jenny brought some new tools or maybe reminded you of some old ones that you can practice in your own day to day, whether it's at work or at home. If you're looking to learn a little bit more about what Jenny does, and I highly recommend you following her on social media, check out our show notes over at Powder Keg calm, you'll find all the people, companies resources, you name it, if we talked about it, it's linked up there in the short in the show notes. If you're currently in the market for finding a new role or considering pivoting your career, you might want to be connected to some of the companies in our community at Powder Keg, we have thousands from all over the country and you can join for free our matches platform to get matched to a company culture that matches your preferences. It's totally free to apply it's powder keg.com slash jobs and we will send direct to your inbox. Companies based on what you told us what what might be a good fit for you. So to be among the first people to hear about these kinds of companies go on over to powder keg comm slash jobs, and to be among the first to hear the stories about entrepreneurs, investors and other tech leaders outside of Silicon Valley like Jenny Blake. Subscribe to us on iTunes at Powder Keg comm slash iTunes. We'll catch you next time on Powder Keg igniting startups.