

#185: Melissa Shares End of Year Reflections



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Melissa Shanahan

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I'm Melissa Shanahan, and this is *The Law Firm Owner Podcast*, Episode #185.

Welcome to *The Law Firm Owner Podcast*, powered by *Velocity Work*. For owners who want to grow a firm that gives them the life they want. Get crystal clear on where you're going, take planning seriously, and honor your plan like a pro. This is the work that creates *Velocity*.

Well, well, well, here we are, the end of 2022. This is the last episode of the year and it matters to me to be really thoughtful with the last episode. And I got to tell you, I've been extraordinarily unwell lately, and I almost just moved up some episodes that I have already created for January. Move them up so that they would start sooner. But that is not how I like to end the year. I like to end the year by slowing down, by being very intentional, just taking the opportunity that this time of the year provides.

It's not just handed to us, at least I don't think it is. It's not handed to me, even though the world does shut down a bit for the holidays, it can still feel crazy because of obligations and the holidays, et cetera, et cetera. But it's important to me to slow down and be really intentional in this period and remind myself what it feels like to move intentionally through these two weeks, maybe more so than I do day to day.

So no, I'm not going to move up some episodes just to cover this week. It doesn't sit well. So, I have and I have had some notes of things I did want to dig into or share on this podcast, and that's exactly what I'm going to do.

The way that I'm thinking about this episode is sharing truths, things that feel like truths to me now because of my experience this year. And realizations is really what that is. It's like, "Okay, I've been through some things and I have solidified an opinion or a view that I didn't have before because of what has happened this year."

And so that's what I thought I would share. And there's three main ones and we'll probably dig into some side stuff, but I wanted to share these three. I think that they'll resonate with you, and so I hope that they offer

#185: Melissa Shares End of Year Reflections

something useful for you to think through for yourself. But the most important thing is I encourage you to sit down and get clear about this year for you. Can you close this chapter with meaning and really think back and take from it what it had to offer you and what did you learn and what feels like truth now that maybe didn't before or it wasn't a solid before.

And I think capturing that before you move into the next year can be really powerful and it sets you up to start the year from a different frame of mind because you took the time to reflect and be introspective. Well, the first thing I wanted to share with you, for me that feels like truth this year that was totally solidified is that space is luxury. I have mentioned this on a podcast before, I think it was the Reminders, Rest, and Rewards podcast. But this is something I had in my mind.

I had a realization of this. May of 2021, I was in Veil and at the time, they don't let you do this anymore, we had used Hyatt points to rent a vacation home and it was huge. It was 4,000 square feet, it was four bedrooms. Each bedroom had its own bathroom. The living space was so open and the ceilings were 20 feet high and windows in the main living area, just windows everywhere. And you could see these incredible vast views.

A side note for anyone who wants to look into this, if you use Hyatt points, which by the way, if you have Chase Sapphire Preferred or Chase Reserve, I can't remember, but Chase has ultimate reward points and ultimate reward points do one to one to certain travel partners. But Hyatt is by far the best bang for your buck you can get. So for example, even though your points transfer one to one, if you book a nice hotel room through Marriott, minimum 80,000 points a night, but it's probably going to be much more than that, especially depending on the season, et cetera.

But Hyatt, if you book the nicest Hyatt, like the level five category of Hyatt, those hotels and or accommodations are 35,000 points a night is their max. It's incredible. The deal that you can get using points is nuts. So these homes were 60,000 points a night and now I need to look again. I haven't looked in a few months, but I couldn't find a way to do it. I think they took it away because the deal was just so, so crazy.

#185: Melissa Shares End of Year Reflections

If you stay a night in these homes and you pay money for it was like \$1,800 a night or something like that. So this felt like such a gift to be in this space that we got. We used our points for it and it was such a cool time. So fantastic. I'm sharing that for anybody who's into points and wants to maximize all of that.

If you have ultimate reward points, you can look this up, thepointsguy.com, tpg.com. It is hands down the best return on your spend of points is used on Hyatt. And they have properties, not just hotels, they have condos, they have residences just look around. And so if you do some of the quick searches, you'll find it. Where we were staying was Cascade Village. They have condos and they have residences. We were in one of the residences. So anyway, if it's interesting to you, there you go. Look into that.

Okay, so back to this experience that I had, the amount of space that you felt in there, just the spaciousness of that home I loved. It wasn't the size, it wasn't the fact that it was 4,000 square feet, it was more about the feeling of the rooms that you were in. There was rooms to move to breathe, the kitchen had plenty of space and the dining room, it was just like you just had room and I loved being there.

This home had not been updated since the 90s and I was thinking, that's so funny because I've always identified with luxury. But there is a piece of this that someone would not maybe want to stay here if they were really into luxury. This doesn't have the opulence, this doesn't have the marbled and that's not really what I care about.

But I was just going through it in my head trying to figure out, "Why do I identify so heavily with luxury but I don't with a certain type of luxury." Not that I am opposed to it, but it's just not what I crave. So that was rolling around in my head for the first few days of that trip. I was also really, I unplugged on that trip mostly.

And so I was reading books and my head space was clearer and I had more space in my head. And there was a day on a walk where again, it's just you in this vast landscape. And I was walking and I just realized just

#185: Melissa Shares End of Year Reflections

how small you feel when you are in the mountains like that and there was no one around. It was cold, it was gray. The day that I had this realization, I remember it very clearly. I had this clear thought. It was like a new thought that was so clear that hit my brain and I love it when that happens. It doesn't happen that often. And it was, space is luxury. That is what luxury is to you. It's space. So that hit my brain and I almost just stopped walking because I don't know why it felt so important to know that that is what I was going for.

We all work really hard. That's a choice, that's a trait. And you want to make sure to line yourself up with and produce the life that you want, not just the business that you think should exist, right?

And so without a lack of clarity on what it is that you want to create for yourself, you can often be off by just a degree and your life will expand with success. And if you aren't clear about what matters to you, then the path that you're on will be off from what you really want by just a degree, even sometimes, which over time will land you very far off course.

You got to know what you want, you got to know what drives you. You got to know what compels you and you got to be honest about it. Maybe yours is opulence and that is fantastic. It doesn't matter what it is, it matters that it is yours and that it matters to you and that you're honest about it.

Because if you're not honest about it, then you're always going to be off because you're just not willing to embrace or admit what it is that you really care about. There's usually more than one thing that we all really care about. I don't only care about space, right? But it is a major thing for me. And the moment that I really got that, then I line myself up with it as much as I can, as often as I can. And sometimes that looks like to some people, some frivolous things that I do and sometimes it might not.

But you know what? I don't care. It's my life and I'm optimizing for what matters to me. And space is a value of mine that continue to find new ways to really line myself up with being able to have more of that in my life. And that can take many different forms, not just the spaces that I exist in, but

#185: Melissa Shares End of Year Reflections

really thinking about it as holistically as I can space in my calendar as an example.

So space is a thing for me, it's a value of mine and it just delights me that I cracked the nut for myself. Before I would always use the word luxury, that was the word that I used. And it's since been changed to space because of the story I just told you.

Okay, so now 2022, this year, there were a few things that gave me more space. But the thing that I love how I've been playing with the idea of how to infuse more space into my world and into my life. But again, it felt like playing around with it, which was delightful. Playing with space and how to give myself space when I travel or in a normal workday when I'm just in my office or the spaces that I choose to spend time in, whether it's a restaurant or just playing around with this idea of space.

Well, this summer we did not think we were going to be moving for a while. We had decided we lived in the city, we've always lived in the city. Since I left Indiana when I was 22, I have always lived in the city. I have lived in Atlanta, LA, Chicago, San Francisco, and now Denver and I'm not moving. But all of those cities, it's city living.

So you naturally don't have as much space. And we were in the city and we had a house that we actually loved. It was the first home we ever owned. It was built in 1883. It was long and narrow, but it was on a corner lot. We had a great yard, we had a great lot actually for the street that we were on. We did some updates to the house.

The people before we bought it had done some updates to the house. Not like countertops, kitchen bath updates. I mean, the external of the house looked really nice. And the yard, we did a lot of work to the yard and made it a bit of a sanctuary around COVID so we could be there and spend time there. And so inside though it was cramped, it was awkward, piecemealed together house is what it felt like.

#185: Melissa Shares End of Year Reflections

And so we eventually got to this place where we knew if we wanted to have another child, we were going to have to pop top on this house or we were going to have to move and still being attached to the city. And we lived so close to great restaurants and coffee shops and et cetera. We just always thought we would go that way.

Well, there was somebody down the street from us on our same block who was clearly selling drugs out of his home. There was constant traffic and really normal looking people kind of traffic. Not always people who were strung out, although there were some of those as well and they were down the block.

But people would always park by us and walk down there to go visit this guy for two minutes and then get back in their car. And there's just stuff that comes with that. Now that you have a kid. It would've been different if it was just Derek and I, but with a kid it's just all different. Everything changes. As many of you know who listen to this.

So for the first time this summer we entertained maybe moving outside of the city. And we have a lot of friends who have a lot of opinions and attitude about the suburbs. "So we thought, "Okay, we don't really know the suburbs of Denver. Let's go drive around and just get a feel for different places around Denver and then we can start to make a call. Does this feel right, does it not?" And so we did that.

And then we took it a step further. We found a couple spots that we really thought were great and it could be a home that we were in for maybe forever. Mind you, we're just still looking. We did not think we were moving. But we also realized we're looking at Zillow and we remembered from before, so many houses look so great in pictures, but they're not really that.

So let's just go check some of these places out and see is it what we think it is? Are these places what we think they are? And get a feel for what you get for what they're asking. So we booked an appointment with our realtor, drove around on a Friday afternoon to five homes.

#185: Melissa Shares End of Year Reflections

And one of the homes that we went to when we walked through the front door, I mean even when we pulled in the driveway, I was like, "Wow, I like this place." And then we walked through the front door and I was giddy. It had the same vibe in terms of decor with the nineties of that mountain home we were in when I realized how much space mattered to us. And when you walk in, it's this grand open, high ceiling room. This house actually is only a three bedroom house, so it's not gargantuan, but it does have a lot of square footage. There's a lot of space in each room, which is fantastic. And then there's an unfinished basement that was ready to finish and it was more than the size of the first floor. All right, well I'm going to speed this story up cause this is taking too long.

But basically that night we got everything together to put in an offer that weekend and figured we would lose it. This is right before the market slowed way down. And anyway, they said yes, they accepted our offer, but we had to have our house on the market in three days, which I was like, oh, okay, we got that. So went through all the hoops and one thing led to another when we got to buy this home.

And so we live in this now and here is what was validated or just really solidified this year for me, that space is important. And I have been putting it first in many ways over the last, almost by a year and a half. And this was us putting it first in a major way. It was the first time that we had made this value a permanent thing in our world, not just where we can get it here and there when we travel or on our calendar, we actually made it a permanent fixture in our lives, which is space and living in open and great space, which really is living in a value of yours so deeply and being committed to it so deeply. It feels very aligned, it feels good, it was the right move, just really happy with it.

And so I thought I would share that number one, maybe it's helpful for you to think about, is space luxury to you? Does that also feel true? And no matter what feels true for you, whatever you do value, whatever you do want more of, as your world expands with success and with your firm and with your life, what do you want to line yourself up with? What do you need

#185: Melissa Shares End of Year Reflections

to stay close to in order to make sure that it fits you? That to me has been really powerful this year is solidifying that.

Okay, second thing that I wanted to share with you that I heard, this one was more recent, but it has really impacted me it's been floating around in my mind in the same way that when I first realized space is luxury and it floated around in my mind and I experimented with it and I played with it.

Now I'm in that stage with this nugget. I was on a coaching call with Tara Granoff, who you are going to hear on the podcast in January. I've already done my interview with her. So I've hired her for some sessions to help me be a better leader inside of Velocity Work. And one of the things she said to me was, your job is to have the lowest heart rate in the room always. And that really struck me because I don't think that that is what happens right now.

So I've been playing with this and it has been a delight, difficult, but a delight to play around with how can I make sure that my heart rate doesn't budge, it doesn't spike. And so I've been experimenting with that and what's fascinating is it's bringing out the best version of me.

So if I want that to be true, I have to prepare before certain meetings to get myself centered to know what I want out of the meeting and to make sure I get it. That's just period. And so it's really about me being more proactive and less reactive. And the times that I'm more reactive is when I don't feel like I have any time or space. Space. There we go. When I feel like I'm running from one thing to the next is when it's very easy for me to be reactive.

And so playing with this idea that my job as the owner of this company is to have the lowest heart rate in the room. And if I can do that, I will foster a team that is cohesive and works well together and is fulfilled in their jobs and their roles. It all made so much sense to me. And it also can be applied to parenting. It can be applied to any relationship that you're in. I really love this concept. Thinking about it in this way has helped immensely with making sure I line up with that. That gives me something to line up with.

#185: Melissa Shares End of Year Reflections

Being a good leader is hard to line up with. And I put air quotes about being a "good leader". I don't even know how to do that, but I do know it gives me something to sink my teeth into to say, "No. What I am lining myself up with is to always have the lowest heart rate in the room." That is powerful to me. So I'm sharing that with you. I'm hoping it's just as powerful for you.

Another truth that I was reminded of and came back full circle for me this year, I was reminded of a quote that was one of my favorite quotes a couple of years ago and it fell off my radar, but it's a quote by Elizabeth King who is a sculptor. And the quote is, "Process saves us from the poverty of our intentions." I mean, come on. How true is that process saves us from the poverty of our intentions. We all intend to do well, to get a lot done, to grow our business the way we want to make sure our team is happy to deliver to the highest degree that we can, what we say we're going to deliver for our clients.

We have all of these intentions, but process, putting processes into place is what saves us from the poverty of our intentions. And this hits home for me in such a big way. It also makes me realize that it would probably be best if I went back to some of the early classes that I taught was about personal processes. And this is why, it was inspired by this quote, "Process saves you from the poverty of your intentions."

And so if you have personal processes in place that save you from just your good intentions, it actually carries you through to what you intended, then that's a tool that can be used to create velocity in your own world. Not just your personal life but as an owner.

So when I say personal processes, I mean the processes for you as a human showing up in the ways that you want to show up and being able to see your intentions all the way through. It takes process. So I think probably this year I'll be going back to some of that teaching to make sure that the people I get to work with, the law firm owners that are in my sphere, if you're a listener or otherwise, or a member, or a client, I think it feels like a duty of mine to help people remember how to stay the course.

#185: Melissa Shares End of Year Reflections

That is very difficult because we have human nature and things get busy, we get sidetracked, we have fear, we have doubt. We are disillusioned to believe that being busy is some badge of honor or the way it has to be, it doesn't and process saves you from the myths about all of that. Process is what will save you from the thought errors that will lead you down a path that you don't really want to go.

It's not lining you up with what matters to you. It's not leading to follow through with things. It's not allowing you to show up the best version of yourself. It really does come down to frameworks that you can have in your own world that set you up to win at whatever you want to win at.

All right, the third thing that I wanted to share with you today that feels more true than ever, and I've learned some lessons this year about is that something we all know intellectually? But I really think I'm getting it now. Taking care of myself so that I do what I can to stay healthy is of utmost importance.

I have gotten away with living and having unhealthy habits. I have a lot of healthy habits, but I also have a lot of unhealthy habits in terms of eating and phases where I'm not exercising the way that I want to and it feels like phases and I can get away with that when I was younger. But now it's less and less true. It feels less and less true. And maybe that's part of getting older. But it's very apparent to me that if my energy isn't good, then I'm not going to be able to fulfill anything else the way that I want to.

So going back to personal processes, I'm really focused right now on what processes I can put into place that save me from the poverty of my own intentions to take good care of myself, so that I am able to show up in the ways I want to show up for my marriage, my kid, my team, my clients and members, my extended family and my friends. And that's what matters to me. And if my energy is off, if my energy is low, I don't have the ability to show up fully as me.

So this to me, I think I've finally gotten my head around this and I don't think that means the journey's going to be perfect, but I do think that it's going to

#185: Melissa Shares End of Year Reflections

definitely, now with where I am, it's going to be more in full focus and more of a non-negotiable for me. It's not going to get pushed to the side first, before anything else like it has in the past when things really ramp with work, with travel or with stuff with our family.

It's the first thing that gets pushed out of my schedule and I finally understand now how important it is that that has to shift. I can't handle things the same way I have in the past and get away with it. So anyway, I'm taking it more seriously. I've hired a running coach, I've also gotten my head space back into geeking out on health. I used to do that. I used to know and take supplements and be really mindful of what I was putting in my body and less and less so these days, I mean, right?

Maybe I do better than the majority of America, but that's not saying much. So this is the other major thing from this year that it's just rolling around in my head, I'm playing with it, I'm digging into it, I'm giving some bandwidth to it and knowing how huge the payoff is going to be for that. So I'm really looking forward to that.

And also, many of you probably remember I did 75 Hard this year. So I cut out sugar entirely, didn't have a sip of alcohol for that whole time and I was exercising a lot and I felt great. It was too time consuming. That's not sustainable for me in my life with a toddler and all of that. If I was single, heck yeah, I'd probably live 75 Hard. I used to do things like that.

But now I do need a different approach. But I'm really glad I went through 75 Hard because it helped me realize how good I could feel and that I hadn't felt that good in a really long time and I deserve to feel that good. So I tend to live in extremes. I tend to be an all or nothing person. That's my default.

But that isn't what is most helpful, especially with something like this. And the more full my life becomes, the less I can be all or nothing with things. I have to find ways to have things infused and to have consistency, not just all or nothing. Flame up. Flame out. So these three things, these have been the biggest things for me this year, which is around space is luxury, which I

#185: Melissa Shares End of Year Reflections

made permanent for myself this year. I didn't just play around with that concept.

The second one is the concept I am playing around with, but I can tell it's going to lead to the same thing, the same realization, the same level of truth as the one about space and luxury, which is my job is to have the lowest heart rate in the room. And the third is that health is everything and I've got to take it seriously.

It feels very different in my head. It's more of a decision in my head that there's no going back. Health is important, it's going to be valued moving forward and I'm going to act like it. I'm not just going to think it, I'm going to act like it. And I have measures into place to help me do that. And I'm really looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to having the energy back that I once had and being able to contribute and show up fully for all the things in my life that I want.

To close out this episode, I would really like to share something that is most certainly true at the deepest part of me. What I have come to understand with Velocity Work and working with the law firm owners I get to work with, is that the people are what make the work worth doing, the people I get to work with, which is unexpected. That is not why I started this company.

I didn't start this company to connect with people, although sure that's a part of it. I started this company because I saw the value of the product. I saw the value of strategic planning and what it had done for business owners and I was committed to bringing that to law firm owners.

But now to my surprise, what has happened is the reason I want to continue doing the work is because of the interactions, the deep meaningful interactions I have with clients and with members. It is the reason I wake up every day. It is the reason that I just spit out a podcast every week. It is the reason that I stay committed to growing this company. And the fact that that has changed is wild to me because I just didn't expect it or see that coming.

#185: Melissa Shares End of Year Reflections

I started the company because I believed in it, in the thing that I wanted to bring to law firm owners. And now over time that hasn't wavered. But what has made this experience so rich is the interactions I get to have with my clients and members. And it's so deep and meaningful. And so I thought I would share it here that I think it's good to let people know when they have a special place in your heart.

And for real, this community of law firm owners that I have the privilege to produce a podcast episode for every week and produce content for inside of people who choose to become a part of the community, it is remarkable and fulfilling in a way that I did not anticipate. So thank you. Thank you for tuning in every week. And for those of you who are members and clients, thank you for showing up the way that you do quarter after quarter, after quarter. Sinking into the work and adding value to not just my life but those around you.

Just by being there, just by showing up and doing your work is inspiring to me and to the people around you. And that goes for every single person, no matter what stage their law firm is in, no matter how "successful" they are, no matter how big their team is or small, when you show up to do the work that we do inside of Velocity Work. And when you show up to implement maybe what you hear on this podcast, people watch.

People are watching you and they are inspired by you and you give people new thoughts and you give people an example of what's possible and you give people something to watch that they're watching, determination play out.

They're watching commitment, that is powerful. And the ripple effect that you all have from just how you show up is immense. And I feel it. And I feel it from so many of you because of the interactions I have and the fact that I get to witness it, it is a privilege and an honor. Thank you. Cheers, everyone. Happy, happy New Year.

#185: Melissa Shares End of Year Reflections

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