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Brit Morin, founder and CEO of Brit + Co, describes her path and motivation for launching a platform that aims to inspire women and girls to be creative through compelling content such as videos, online classes and do-it-yourself kits. Morin explains how creativity is sparked by rekindling that playful spirit from our youth and stems from the primal instinct to make things.



Transcript

Thank you.. Thanks for having me here.. I am originally from Texas.. I went to UT, so I didn't think that the first time I would be in front of a classroom would be outside of my home state, but it's great to be here.. Raise your hand if you've heard of Brit + Co.. or know of Brit + Co before.. OK.. Awesome.. Good-- before you even did that intro.. I'm going to have a pretty candid discussion with you guys today..

I'm going to tell you about my path to becoming an entrepreneur, the hard times, the happy times.. It's been four years now as of Monday that I've started Brit + Co.. I did it all by myself in the very beginning, literally alone in my apartment in San Francisco.. Now we have a team of over 80 people, have raised over \$30 million in funding.. So I'll tell you all about that.. I'm also going to talk a lot about creativity and why I think it's important, not just for us, as human beings, but for society at large, and how it ties into the Maker Movement, which is something I'm very passionate about, as well.. But before we get started, I wanted to paint the mission of Brit + Co, especially for those of you who might not have known about Brit + Co before to say.. And this has started as an experiment that we did.. I had the hypothesis when I was starting this company that adults, and especially adult women, don't think they are very creative.. My girlfriends all the time, and even myself occasionally would just say literally things like oh, I wish I were creative..

I wish I were an artist.. And I kept asking, why would you say that? When you were three, four, or five years old, I'm sure that if people put blocks, or LEGOs, or Playdoh, or crayons in front of you, you went to town, and you just dove right in.. So what happened between the 5-year-olds and the 25-year-olds? So I got a group of the five-year-olds, and put them into a room, and asked them to do a lot of creative things.. And then I got the 25-ish year olds, and put them into a room, and asked them to do the same things.. We caught it all on video, and here's what happened.. Emma, scene two, take one.. This is a really fun one.. OK.. I want you to pick any of those capes that you like, and I want you to think about and become a character.. And I want you to act out that character..

OK.. Ready, set, go.. Hi, Elizabeth.. Ready to go play? Want to jump rope now? We use our imagination a lot.. You can paint whatever you want.. I painted me and my dog playing.. It's almost morning time, and those are little pieces of the day.. And that's the grass.. That's the dirt.. And under it, it's just all color..

Hm.. Um-- Um-- It's just a bunch of slashes and dots.. I'm not an artist, but-- My life took a different path, and I rarely paint.. I love painting.. I considered going to art school when I was a lot younger.. My life took a different path and I rarely paint.. My former dream job, as a kid, I loved drawing, and I loved doodling, and animation.. What would you do in your life to be more creative? Just make time for it.. I have a busy life.. And oftentimes, that's something that can fall by the wayside..

How did it feel, just in general, to be creative today? It was very hard.. Now, we go play some more while it's cooking.. Now, it's done, and now we put it back on the table to cool off, and then we dance some more.. That was awesome! It was really, really fun.. Did anything scare you or-- No, no, no, no, no.. Not at all.. It was awesome.. It was the best day of my life.. So that went the way I thought it would, thank god, because we invested a lot into making that video.. But that, fundamentally, is our mission at Brit + Co..

And I saw the same pattern in my own life.. This was me, as a little girl.. I was a Girl Scout.. I loved making things, loved

creating things, took art classes as a kid.. This is my third grade masterpiece.. I was constantly doodling and drawing into my early teenage years.. And then I got a cell phone, and I became obsessed with technology.. I started taking computer science classes.. And I really just cared about getting straight to Silicon Valley.. I actually graduated college at UT early, almost two years early, and came straight out here..

All through college I was interning with Silicon Valley companies.. I ended up taking a job at Apple.. I was working in iTunes.. This was iTunes pre-anything but music, so that was a really fun job.. I was going to concerts a lot.. I was meeting with record labels a lot, starting to learn a little bit more about the entertainment industry.. And then I went to Google for about four years.. I started on the search team.. Sorry-- I started on the Maps team and then moved to search products, worked for Marissa Mayer, who's now become a great mentor of mine.. I was working in product management and product marketing..

And ultimately, they asked me if I would go over to the YouTube division and head up a new product we were going to be launching called Google TV.. Google TV was an Android based platform that really brought everything you love about the internet and internet video to your television.. And it was my job not only to launch this product.. I was given literally tens of millions of dollars as a 24-year-old to go do that, but I also had to convince content, networks, cable operators, all kinds of content providers to digitize their content and put it on the internet.. This is back in 2009.. And back then, that was such a foreign topic for them.. I would meet with people like ABC, and The New York Times, and CNN.. And they would ask, Google just wants to take over the world.. You just want our content.. You're not going to do this..

We didn't even know how to digitize our content.. No one's ever going to watch internet video.. They're only going to watch television.. And I was just shocked because I was like, are you joking? That's all people want to watch, especially if you can turn on your TV in your living and have the option to watch a New York Times video, or an ABC Family movie marathon.. Like who cares? Video is video.. So what I saw when I was doing that was that these traditional media companies were pretty behind in their thinking.. And even if they were forward thinking about digitizing their content, they were large businesses that were moving very slowly.. What they did have, however, was a lot of eyeballs.. These people actually wouldn't even want to talk to Google sometimes, because they didn't care.. They already had mass distribution..

They did have a lot of advertising dollars, as well.. And most of them cared mostly about the brands of their shows, and their characters, and their cast members.. When I thought about what I was doing, even working in YouTube, it was the same thing.. It was people connecting with people.. In Silicon Valley, that's a foreign concept, because you build an app and just try to make it viral.. You don't really think about the brand or really connecting with a community of people behind the screen.. But in the media world, that's all anyone cares about.. Its having that emotional experience and creating really high quality content.. Anyways, fast forward.. I left Google when I was 25, because I felt like after having a few years under my belt at Apple and Google, I was ready to try something new, and to take a risk, and to start a company of my own..

I knew I wanted to do it in the tech space.. That was where I was based.. I had a lot of connections at that point.. And being 25, there's not a lot to lose.. I was not yet married.. I had made enough money at Apple and Google to save up a little bit of money to get started, and I didn't have to worry about funding a family, or kids, or so forth.. But first, I took a few months off.. I decided I needed to just chill out a little bit.. I'd worked really hard.. I'd graduated college early..

My friends thought I was crazy for doing that.. And what I missed the most was actually doing things with my hands.. It had been years since I'd actually made stuff.. It just so happened the same month I left Google, this place, called TechShop, opened in San Francisco.. Who knows what TechShop is? Oh, not that many people.. So it's basically a gym for making things.. You pay about \$99 a month, and you can come in any time and use all of these really cool machines, ranging from 3D printers, and laser cutters, to digital sewing machines, and screen printers, and vinyl cutters.. And you really just get to go to town.. I had such a fun time at TechShop.. I ended up being there literally every day, and I had no idea how to use these machines when I started..

But after understanding that really what I was doing was creating designs in Photoshop, or Illustrator, pressing a button, and exporting it onto a laser cutter or a 3D printer to create a physical product, my mind was blown, and I just wanted to do it over and over again.. Everyone around me at TechShop were mostly men.. They were working in silos.. It didn't feel communal.. Yet at the same time that same year, Pinterest had launched.. And on Pinterest, it was all millennial women, and DIY was the top category.. All they wanted to pin were things about crafts, and cooking recipes, and all kinds of things to make.. And it seemed crazy to me, because while I was at TechShop and I was doing all this stuff, my girlfriends would come up to me, like I told you before and say, oh, you're so creative.. I wish I were creative like you.. And I didn't know how to do this stuff a few months ago..

It really wasn't that hard.. I just learned it.. There were online galleries and resources.. These machines actually did the making.. I didn't really do it.. And meanwhile, they were pinning all the things they wanted to make.. So it seemed like there was this delta in this gap between them aspiring to be creative, but not actually knowing how to be creative.. So Brene Brown says that.. "I'm not very creative' doesn't work.. There's no such thing as creative people and non-creative people..

There are only people who use their creativity and those who don't." And I fully agree with this statement.. And that, again,

is the point of my business.. And that's when the light bulb did go off.. And I was like, is this a business? How could I make this a business? Clearly, I'm really passionate about it.. I could see myself doing this for a long time.. It matters in the world.. It's a problem I see.. So I started looking at the industry.. And of course, I thought of Martha Stewart.. She was the leader of creativity for my mom and my mom's mom..

But it doesn't really resonate with today's consumer.. The stuff Martha would make would be beautiful cakes and table settings that might take you the whole day.. But it would be really amazing, and your friends would be so jealous.. And it felt really aspirational, but not really relatable.. Today's society has maybe 30 minutes, has never done it before, is totally freaked out about doing it in the first place.. So what are the hacks to get them there faster? I also thought about the retell world of crafting and arts and crafts.. Michael's is the leader of that space.. They do \$5 billion revenue a year, followed closely by Joanne's and Hobby Lobby, who each do multi billion dollars of revenue as well.. The whole craft industry at large in the US alone is a \$34 billion dollar industry, which has not been disrupted in a very long time.. Then I started, of course, going to data..

So I looked up terms on Google search trends.. "How to" had been growing over the years.. "3D printing," of course, was the new technology.. That was starting to grow as a search term.. And the "Maker Movement," which I've found the most interesting, was a term that didn't even exist before about 2007 or 2008.. So the Maker Movement is about this new cultural shift in how people, especially young people, want to be making and creating, and how these types of machines and internet resources are helping them do that.. So why is all this happening now? Why are young people really interested in this? I have some hypotheses.. I think a lot of it is cultural.. So we're seeing each other do it a lot.. We're seeing trends of artisanal..

We're backlashing against packaged food brands.. We don't want to buy frozen dinners anymore like I know my parents bought me in the '80s and early '90s.. We want to shop small and support our local communities.. We also have a research report that says if I had the right resources, I could make products that are better than the ones I buy in stores.. And this is from about 20 to 50-year-old consumers who said that.. I also just think we're tired of screens sometimes.. Sometimes we want to disconnect.. And we haven't been able to do that.. This is the first generation that's really grown up without being forced to take home economics or shop class, who's had two working parents while they were growing up as children, and really just never learned to do this stuff before.. Finally, it's just our human nature..

Look back at our ancestors.. They literally had to create to survive.. They had to build things.. They had to cook for themselves.. It was a part of society.. Now, of course, we can outsource all these things if we want to.. We can Postmates our dinner over if we want to.. We can have people do all the building and making for us.. But inside, we are literally made to be creators.. So I decided to do this as a business..

I really didn't know exactly how I was going to do it, but I knew I had to just start.. And I went back to my Google roots, especially the Google TV roots.. I thought if I'm going to attract a large audience, I don't have to pay for that audience, so I'm going to create a lot of really amazing content that's going to get them to come to the site.. Then I can market whatever it is I end up wanting to market to them for free.. And hopefully, I can actually teach them some things as well.. So I literally did this all on my own.. I spent a few months just making content.. I was the photographer, the editor, the writer, the CEO, the accountant-- everything.. I did have an outsource design agency.. I think I paid \$5,000 to make our now now-looks-ghetto website..

I did all my press alone, actually scored an LA Times article on the day of launch, which was huge, in my opinion.. I try to pretend I was a 10 person company when I was a one person company.. And I just kept deciding to like keep going.. It was really hard at first.. I actually said this in the launch blog post I wrote, which was "Creating things-- businesses, products, software, and crafts-- is my life's destiny.. It's my true passion, and I couldn't be more excited about putting my knowledge and skills to use to help others live a more creative and efficient life at home." It's nice to look back at that.. I actually found that on Monday, which was our four year anniversary, like I told you.. And to see that your mission hasn't really changed in four years is something a lot of startups can't say, so I feel proud that that leaves that still intact.. Hiring team is the next step.. So again, I was bootstrapping this for the first few months..

My first two hires were that guy.. He was our first engineer.. His name's Paul.. Then the girl in the back behind him, that was a cooking off site for our team, was our first writer, content creator, creative director all rolled up in one.. The other girl was a freelancer who helped create content, as well.. And the goal, at first, was to continue to create a lot of content, but to build these ancillary apps that we would use to create utilities in people's lives.. And we were starting with all the life stages.. We wanted to do a wedding, and home, and baby, and pets, and create ways that people could be creative through software.. That's what our team ended up looking like after the first year.. We've had about nine people..

And we ended up actually raising over \$1 million as our seed round about six months in.. We raised from mostly Silicon Valley investors, a lot of big names, as well as some angels, as well in that round.. But it was really, again, to launch our first app and to create the content around it that would help drive people to that app.. Just to touch on this, being a woman, this is a question I get asked about in Silicon Valley quite a bit.. Especially every reporter asked me about it all the time.. And my response is this.. I think it actually can set you apart.. Clearly, there are a lot of men in this room, so I'm sorry.. But if you are a woman, you're thinking about starting a business, I have had the opportunity to not only create a business for women

mostly by women-- about 3/4 of our staff are women-- but women by the most things.. They're the biggest consumers on the internet..

They consume the most content as well.. They're hopefully going to be President one day, and it's a great way to set yourself apart from what everyone else, especially in Silicon Valley, is doing.. There are far too few women, and I think those who actually are starting as entrepreneurs really can stand out.. So the first year-- these are some images.. That's us taking out the trash in the office.. It was a scrappy year.. Again, we had about nine people by the end of the year.. This was in 2012.. We would also do photo shoots that were really-- I'm going to use the word again, ghetto.. We would go up to the roof and pretend like we were in some fancy city or something..

And they actually ended up looking nice.. That was in the SF Chronicle, on the far right.. But it wasn't that glamorous behind the scenes.. We didn't have a professional photographer.. We were really faking it till we were making it.. So in summary, again, over \$1 million raised, 19 members.. We did actually have a small pivot.. So a few months in, like I told you, we were creating these apps and thinking about this whole strategy as content marketing for the apps.. The content itself was becoming really popular, and we paused halfway through the air and decided, let's actually just focus all of our effort on growing this company as a media business, instead of an app business, and see what happens.. We actually started testing commerce as well, so DIY and creativity are the essence of what we do..

We decided to create DIY kits as a subscription business like Birchbox for DIY.. So every month, people would get a different project with all the supplies and components they need to put it together in a kit.. We, right off the bat, had hundreds of subscribers.. So it was going pretty well.. Started going on television.. I put my name in the company, primarily because I wanted people to understand that I was authentic as the person behind this brand, that I cared about it, that I was the target consumer and could relate to our demographic that we were reaching.. But I called it Brit + Co, and the Co stands for community.. And I wanted everyone else to feel like they were part of that community, as well.. So our community today consists not only of all our users, but of designers, makers, artists, all kinds of creative people who we highlight around the site, and I'll talk more about that later.. Anyways, it did help me though secure different types of press opportunities, because there was a face to this brand..

So The Today Show called up midway through the first year and asked me to come on, and it was crazy to think that my childhood dream of going on The Today Show could come true.. And it happened, and I was so nervous about it.. And then they kept asking me back.. So that was a big highlight of the first year.. I think overall though, the first year of a startup is just ups and downs.. Every single day, I'm a very numbers driven person, I would constantly be tracking our analytics.. And if it was a bad day, I literally wouldn't talk to anyone the rest of the day, didn't want to go out to dinner at night.. I would just go home and sulk.. If it was an amazing day, I would have dreams about selling my company and thinking everything was going to be amazing.. So it was just like this all the time..

And of course, we were scrappy.. I remember fond memories of ordering the toilet paper and thinking, why didn't we have an office manager yet? Why am I, the CEO, doing all of this? And that's just how it has to be in that first year.. So my learnings, data, data, data.. We use that data to understand that our content business was by far and away, growing faster than the app business, and decided to really focus our efforts there.. That leaves to the second point of keep your mission.. Don't be afraid if your execution tactics need to change.. And if you think you should fire someone, it's already too late.. I had to make my first fire that first year.. We had an engineer.. Literally, he brought in a six pack one day to work, and just kept drinking..

And I was like, what is happening? And he was a really amazing engineer, but had a really terrible attitude.. And in Silicon Valley, amazing engineers-- there many of them.. But it's really hard, when you're small startup, to attract them.. So it was a really hard thing for me to have to let that person go, but it was right for the company.. And be a waffle.. There's this book called Women Are Spaghetti, And Men Are Waffles, which is basically about how our emotions interact with each other.. So the point of this, from the author's perspective-- the women have all these emotions, and they're loosely framed, and men just compartmentalize things and can easily move from one thing to the next.. And I learned in that first year that you really have to control your emotions, and you have to be able to fire someone one minute and step into an interview with The New York Times the next minute and be extremely positive and happy about everything going on in your life.. And that's just the way that business works.. The second year, we were starting to outgrow our space..

We literally had conference rooms and bathrooms.. Again, the scrappy theme.. We did double in size though, and we raised a series A.. So we raised over \$6 million, continuing to secure really great press, about 20 team members.. We ended up killing subscriptions, the business I was talking to you about, not because it wasn't working, but because our customers really wanted to customize all of their products and their projects.. So they wanted to make jewelry instead of home decor.. They wanted a baking project.. And operationally, it was just not possible.. So we decided to put a can on it until we rethought commerce and what that meant for us.. Instead, we upleveled our content..

We finally hired a professional photographer.. We hired more editors.. We hired a sales team so we could actually start making money.. We launched a New York office.. We launched Re:Make, which Tina actually was able to speak at this year.. This is our third year doing it.. The first year, Re:Make is a conference and a festival.. The conference is focused on all of the

biggest influencers in the Maker Movement, ranging from neuroscientist, to artist, to musicians.. And the festival is a place for the general public to come and actually just get their hands dirty learning how to make stuff and shopping for makers and artisans.. So that was a really big deal for us..

We did secure major partnership deals.. I became a spokesperson for companies like Target and even Velcro.. And we were beginning to really get into the process cycle more and more, continuing to do television and things like that, as well.. So this was really a good growth year for us.. Biggest learnings-- hire a sales team as soon as possible.. I was probably about a year too late on this.. Learning that I could do \$1 million in revenue in a year was shocking to me, and it really just took a small team of sales people to go make that happen.. Shake them haters off.. Especially when you're the face and the name of a brand, you're going to get haters, and you're going to get people critiquing you all the time.. That was probably one of the hardest lessons I had to learn in 2013, the second year..

It's difficult.. Celebrities talk about this all the time.. But everyone has an opinion about you, and the work you're doing, and why you're doing it, and what your motives are.. Now my response to this is that if you believe you're truly a good person who is really kind to people, and you have a good mission, you just want to help people do more of what they want to be doing, I don't know if anyone can actually bring you down.. So that's been my response to all the haters.. And then content quality is king.. So as soon as we level, we up leveled our content, traffic just exploded.. We had amazing photography, amazing journalism, and writing, and we really saw that payback for us.. The third year, our team-- we didn't actually have to fundraise, which was a big deal.. If you don't have to fundraise, you shouldn't..

We doubled again, so about 40 people.. This is last year, 2014.. And I would say this is the year we really, truly found product market fit.. We were tripling, if not quadrupling in growth year over year, both from a revenue perspective and a user perspective.. We did reenter commerce again, and we started by really testing.. We did two weeks sprints, which we put a new product out there, meaning a software product, and a different variation of commerce.. And in two weeks, or maybe a month max, we would understand if it was successful.. So we had parameters set up to understand and gauge what do people want to buy from us? What do they not want to buy from us? And let's do more of that and less of the things that they don't want to do.. We ended up finding that people really wanted to come to us to learn.. They wanted to take classes about how to do this stuff, because they didn't know how..

So we started launching classes ranging from calligraphy, to coding, to cake decorating, to digital photography.. We started giving them the kits of all the supplies they needed to take those classes.. So if you want to take calligraphy, you can get the inks, and the pens, and the papers, and everything you need.. And we found that they also wanted to support artisans and makers, that they felt like going to place like Etsy was a little overwhelming.. There was so much supply of product that no one was really curating it down.. What we are really great at, especially being a media company was curation and editorializing things and products.. So we launched a marketplace, a curated marketplace of different types of makers and their products.. I was pregnant last year.. That's me on stage at Remake again last year, literally 37 weeks pregnant.. And that was really crazy..

I literally could have been in labor if I hopefully-- I didn't.. I was actually a week late, which is another story.. But it was nuts.. I had a lot of women, entrepreneurs that I knew, but not many that had been in the thick of their growing their business while they're having their first child.. And it's hard.. You think what are my employees going to think? What are my investors going to think? We do have to raise another round of financing soon.. What do we do about that? Can I walk into a new venture capitalist office 37 weeks pregnant and go raise money? And so it was difficult, made it through, but decided to fundraise in January instead of in Q4 of last year, which meant that I basically had a month or two after having a baby to pull myself together and go pitch investors.. Meanwhile, I was writing a book, our first book.. I was hiring our first adults, so people over 40 is what I qualify as adults, which really can shake up the culture of a startup when you're all people in their 20s and early 30s.. We also were testing retail businesses..

So we launched a pop up store in San Francisco, which was all based on experiential retail.. So people could come in.. They could take classes.. They can sit down and do free projects.. They could also buy goods from our makers.. So it was a combination of traditional retail and experiential retail.. And we also tested wholesale.. So we are making all these kits and products, and we wanted to test if they would sell in other stores.. So we put them into different types of retail stores all around the country.. So it was a big year..

Learnings from that year, product market fit is crucial.. This is something that you should, if you're an entrepreneur, strive to get to as soon as possible.. It's what your investors we'll continue to invest money in, and if you aren't there, they will not.. Company cultural changes should be expected as you scale.. We had a lot of pushback from our 25-year-old engineers who are like, why are we hiring an adult? That's a suit.. We had to explain why it would be good for the business and why the culture wouldn't get super process heavy.. Pregnancy bias is a real thing.. I did have to rethink our fundraising schedule because our board didn't want me walking into a venture capitalist office eight months pregnant.. It's conquerable.. We got through it, but it's not the greatest thing..

It does detract if you're a female entrepreneur who's young and wants to have a family.. The fourth year, we continued to grow.. So this is this year, to catch you up.. We raised \$20 million.. So after going through that labor and delivery process, I

went right out onto the streets met and started pitching and got a lot of really great interest, brought in some amazing investors, raised \$20 million, which has now enabled us to hire 80 people.. The book launched a couple months later and made the best seller list.. That was a big highlight of this year too.. At Re:Make this year.. We had over 10,000 attendees come out, which was huge.. So we've been doubling attendance at that event every year..

We now have tens of millions of people every month coming to our sites and all of our different platforms that we're on.. We have made a deeper investment in commerce and online education.. We now have close to 50 classes online.. We have thousands of products in our marketplace, continued TV, and major press.. Got invited to the White House to interview our CTO, Megan Smith.. The White House has also invested in a Department of Making, which is a new initiative to get more people into making.. And they truly believe in the Maker Movement and what it can do for STEM education in America.. We actually just a couple weeks ago, put our first real product into all Target stores, which is actually a coloring book for adults.. And I'll get to that in a second.. We launched a foundation, which for a startup in it's third or fourth year, is unheard of..

But it's called the I Am Creative Foundation.. And we're giving grants up to \$15,000 to women and girls for their big, creative pursuits.. Of course, that's not millions of dollars.. But it is something, and it's pretty meaningful, and we've been able to now fund five different women-- one 13-year-old is part of that-- to go out and open photo studios, to teach after school programs to girls and teach them how to create fashion tech hardware, and then go sell that at different Maker Faires around the country.. We've been able to make differences in people's lives, which the startup is really meaningful.. And then we launched video.. So up till now, we've been doing a lot of editorial content, a lot of written content, and we really wanted to focus on video, going back to my Google TV roots, again.. I'm going to show you just a couple quick videos that we have so you get an understanding what that means.. So again, just trying to bring to life some of these projects and ideas, and teaching people that they're pretty easy, and you can learn all of that under 60 seconds in a video.. We've also done more documentary style videos, and really starting to think about back to the Google TV days, how do we start creating digital video content that could maybe one day go to television instead of vice versa, creating television content that become digital? I'll just play a few seconds of this next video, so you see the dramatic difference of the type of video quality that we're producing..

-There's no real recipe of how I work.. My opinions and outrage slowly grow in me based on my everyday experience and things that I see.. The way the media portrays women and sexuality, that bothers me a lot; the importance of how you look, and the certain way of being feminine.. That is something that goes very deep in your self-esteem.. I think that has been the tool to keep us down.. That frustrates me.. So it goes on for a few minutes.. But the point is that we're doing a variety of different types of creative directions with video.. By the way, that woman, she was working at an ad agency, hated all the way that the media was stereotyping women in advertising, and decided to start vandalizing their content and putting up pictures on top of it.. It's a different story about creativity and about art that we really wanted to tell..

It's a little deeper and a little bit darker.. Anyways, our brand is expanding though to think about all the different ways we can tell stories about art and creativity that aren't just practical how to projects.. We really are trying to be fairly mass in understanding the world of creativity.. So my last year, what have I learned? Moms are superheroes.. It's true.. I feel like a real superhero.. There's literally a point in my day when I was out there pitching, doing press interviews for the book launch.. I was breast pumping in the back of a car like an Uber.. And the guy was like, what's happening in the backseat? And it was totally nuts.. So I've had to completely change my life and my schedule..

And randomly, this has been our best and most successful year yet.. So I don't know.. Maybe there's an alignment there.. Don't be afraid to hire expensive people.. They do the job of two or more people.. So this is the first year I really up-leveled our executive team.. I hired a CFO, which I wish I would have hired three years ago, because I hate everything related to the CFO job function.. I just hate spreadsheets, and having her here has given me so much more free time to go and do the things I love to do and to focus my time on building the vision of the business, the product, an engineering organization, the content organization, the video organization.. So anyways, that's the second one.. And the last is two most important company traits have been communication and focus..

So there's a period when you're under growth, between 15 and 150 employees.. This is a pattern that happens to all startups where you go from this team that everyone knows each other and everyone hangs out together to there being clicks that form, to hiring your first real HR person, your first lawyer.. There's more processes, and everyone starts getting upset, and clicky, and passive aggressive.. The thing that you have to do the most is overcommunicate why you're doing the things you're doing, why you're making the changes you're making that reinforce how important everyone is on your team, and reinforce the focus of the business.. You can't be doing a million things.. You have to really focus on the things that are working and do more of those.. So what's next? Well, for Brit + Co, we're going to continue to really scale.. As a media business, we're going to keep doing more video, more editorial.. The media has really beautifully aligned into this online education platform which is another version, an adaptation of video, in my opinion, and then continuing to create products and to help other makers sell their products.. And that's what we're up to..

But more importantly, I'm interested in what's happening in mass culture.. And there are two trends that I'm really seeing.. The first is mainstream creativity.. Literally, as I was driving down here today, A New York Times reporter called me wanting to interview me, because she's under the pretense that creativity is the next meditation.. And that's exactly what I've been

starting to think about this year.. That's under the same pretense of why we met.. I'm fascinated with the neuroscience behind creativity and how it really can impact your brain.. This is me at Burning Man this year.. It was the first time I ever went.. It was a crazy experience..

I was there for two days, and I thought it was this crazy rave in the desert.. But what I found was that it was this beautiful place where people were making art.. And they weren't afraid to express themselves.. This woman is dressed up all in tutus.. Literally, that's all she's wearing, which is really crazy.. Celebrities even are starting to go to this festival, and they're experimenting with their own creativity in the way that they dress and the way they act.. I look at my son, who's now one.. His name is Ansel, and he wants nothing more than just to do creative stuff all day long.. And again, I keep coming back to this.. Why is this good for humans, adults and kids alike? And we tend to find that there's a lot of data about how creativity can be good for your well being..

So it can reduce cognitive impairment as you're aging.. We also find that anxiety disorders, which are the most common mental illness in the US-- is the most common, is helped by creativity.. Coloring books-- and back to my point there-- are one of the things that are helping people with anxiety and depression relax and distress.. 4 of the top 10 Amazon products from this year are adult coloring books-- all of Amazon products, 4 of the top 10.. 30 million globally are affected.. Sorry, 350 million are affected by depression.. So imagine the impact that we can make if more people are participating in creative projects that can help them release stress, anxiety, and tension.. More about the brain-- we're really working to understand what's happening with the brain.. There are actually people here at Stanford who we're working who are complaining, research studies that have lasted for five years and are understanding how the brain is impacted by creativity, and if it's a muscle that can actually be trained similar to muscles in your body, and how they're trained when you're exercising.. Sneak peek-- yes, it does get stronger as you practice more..

This was an example of the coloring book we launched just to start proving the stuff to the mainstream culture.. We did it in partnership with Crayola.. And we're continuing to scale our online classes, like I said.. I really think part of the reason when people aren't participating in creative projects is because they don't know how to start.. They literally don't have the skills that they needed that other past generations had.. The Maker Movement though is what's more exciting to me, and this is something that will continue and to get bigger and bigger every year, like you saw on that Google search graph.. It's about everything from the analog world of making and creativity, traditional arts like letterpress, which are coming back, but also all the benefits that technology is bringing to how we're making and creating.. We're able to open source our designs so that others can freely download them and access them.. There are online learning platforms not just from Brit + Co, but from others, as well, where people are able to get educated if they don't live near a college, or university, or any type of workshop that offers classes.. 3D rendering is so cool right now..

This is a new startup called Modyso that launched.. You can literally take a picture of any room in your house, and they'll 3D render it and show you what real furniture looks like in that room.. They're importing products from West Elm and Crate & Barrel, and letting you swap things in and out.. So from an interior designer's perspective, this is a new way to think about creativity.. Smart devices, of course, and machines that are helping us learn things faster.. This is a favorite example of mine.. It's called the gTar.. It's an iPhone connected guitar.. It literally shows you the cords from an app on your phone that you should be playing, so it teaches you how to play the guitar just from looking at your phone.. Crowd funding, of course, is what's enabling all of these small entrepreneurs and startups to actually get started..

We've seen some amazing new products launched because of Kickstarter and Indiegogo.. There's only more of that to come.. 3D printers, which has not yet gone mainstream, for sure.. They're still very expensive.. Quality isn't there yet, but they are getting way better.. People are using them to create human tissue and bone, to create all kinds of food.. I'm an adviser for a company that's actually using 3D printers to create real clothing and textiles through a process called electronic spinning.. And in the future, imagine going into your closet, downloading a blouse design from J.Crew, pressing print, and having it export for you in a glass machine.. This is a real future that's literally years in front of us.. So what does this mean? This is all just a few years out..

We're in this moment before when inkjet printers were only able to be found at Kinkos, and we're in that moment with 3D printers right now in a lot of the Maker Movement.. But soon we're all going to have access to these devices.. They're going to be just a couple hundred bucks.. We're going to have them on our desktops, in our kitchens.. They're going to be the way that we produce and manufacture on our own.. And so what implications could that have? It's something I'm thinking a lot about.. Maker spaces right now are the FedEx and Kinkos of the world.. It's where people are going to use these machines and devices.. I think these will continue to be popular for the next two years until we see those price points fall.. The cost of prototyping, because of these maker spaces, has gone down significantly..

You used to have to prototype things in China for tens of thousands of dollars.. This is the DODOcase.. It's an iPad case.. You guys might have seen it before.. Literally, it was made in just a couple weeks for about \$1,000.. Apple saw it, decided to pick it up in their online store.. It sold \$1 million of product within its first month, so all for just \$1,000 and a guy who was tinkering with a laser cutter.. I'm really excited about customization.. Think about the idea that if we have this long tail manufacturing, you're able to make stuff on your own.. You can add your name to things..

You can add colors that you like.. You can scan your body and make things perfectly fit you the way you want it to.. Customization is going to be a really big option for us in the future.. But it does open up to copyright issues.. Think of this a lot like the music industry.. If we're all able to download an open sourced file, what does that mean? Does the designer who made the JCrew blouse get credit when you download it? Does he get paid? Can I legally send that file to someone else? It's going to get really interesting with the way that digital files are transferred for product designs.. The whole nation, like I mentioned, the White House is behind this, is incredibly excited about STEAM, Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math.. And I say STEAM because art is included in that, and the White House are starting to use that term, as well.. But we're seeing kids, especially those in their early preteen years really embrace this.. I mentor a group of 12-year-olds who actually know more about CAD design than me..

And it freaks me out, and they also speak Mandarin.. So the future generations are definitely in this.. But of course, it all comes back to play.. Regardless of how this affects our economy, our different industries, I hope that people will also just take time to participate in creativity in their daily life.. One exciting note to end on is that with all of these changes with the Maker Movement, people are predicting that the self manufacturing in homes could equate to a \$55 billion industry by the year 2020.. That's just five years away.. This is on top of the arts and crafts industry that already exists.. So this industry is only getting bigger.. It's getting bigger very quickly, so pay attention.. That's the end of my talk..

I have a few minutes for questions, but I hope everyone in here will also just take away not only my story and what I think is exciting about the future, but the fact that all of you, I don't care how old you are, were that kid one time who played with LEGOs, blocks, paint, told stories, and you're still that person today.. Thank you.. Any questions? So we have eight minutes, if anyone has a question.. Yep? Yeah? What would you change, if you were able to? You know how you said, I wish I had some people earlier who helped-- would you change anything in the-- Yeah.. So she asked, what would we change about the way we hired and the order that we hired? I think coming out of the tech industry, I was very serious about hiring engineers at first, which is always a good thing to do.. Every company today is a technology company and needs engineers.. But I think a salesperson from the start would've been a really smart hire.. The sooner you can start creating and generating revenue in your company, the more freedom and autonomy you have about whether or not you want to raise more money, whether you have to, and how investors are valuing your company.. And on that note, if you're going to be generating revenue, hiring a CFO who can really manage those budgets and maximize your profits and losses is a really great thing to hire early on, as well.. Yep? In the back? Well, some people say with great series A comes more responsibilities to more people..

I'm wondering how you balance all of this stuff; the needs of the venture capital, needs of people in your company, the philanthropy, and of course, stuff that's healthy for yourself.. It's a good question.. How do I balance everything? So I have investors.. We have a foundation.. I have a real life, sort of.. The answer is that it's an ongoing challenge.. Especially now that I have a family, I am constantly torn between whether to hang out with friends, or to go home and spend time with my son, or to go to an important business dinner that may or may not lead to a major partnership for future round of financing.. And I have to make these trade offs all the time.. And it sucks, because you think about in five years, if my company completely crashes and dies, am I just wasting? Am I wasting my time by not spending it with my kids or my friends and going to that business dinner? But it puts the pressure on you to make sure it's going to work.. And for me, this isn't a company that I started just to try to make a lot of money..

It's a company I started because I'm genuinely passionate about it, and I genuinely believe there's a problem in the world, and a big opportunity coming as a way to fix it.. And I wanted to be part of that.. So I'm just excited because my life and my work are almost one in the same, and that makes it easier to create that balance.. Yep, right here.. Can you tell me more about how did you find growth market fit? Sure.. He wants to know how we found product market fit.. It goes back to data.. And for us, primarily being a media company at the start, we are creating tons of different types of content.. And I wasn't even sure what type of user would want to ingest that content.. I had a hunch it would be women similar in age to me in their 20s and 30s..

But I didn't know if they wanted beauty content, or knitting, or cooking, or technology content.. And so as we created more and more of it, every day, we're looking at the numbers and understanding what to do more and what to do less of, and it's become a really iterative process.. These days too, as a media company, you're putting your content on all these social platforms.. And every social platform responds differently.. So that's been a big awakening over the last year.. We have over 40 million users a month on Pinterest alone, and that audience loves cooking, crafting, beauty content.. We do a ton of that type of content just for that audience.. The Facebook audience, we have over 20 million monthly users on our Facebook channel.. They love trendy, pop culture content, how to get someone's purple hair.. Like Nicki Minaj just dyed her hair purple, how to do yours like that too..

So it's a little bit more celebrity infused, a little bit more pop culture.. And we've learned through understanding analytics of all these platforms, including our own, how to program content for different channels and different audiences.. Yep? I think it's really interesting watching Blake Lively's Preserve brand that had just such a short longevity, and I think that there's a big change in capitalizing upon this DIY movement.. And so I'm just wondering, what really do you think distinguishes Brit + Co's success in comparison to other startups like Preserve that have failed in this space? Sure.. So Blake Lively launched this site, and it was an artisanal marketplace, sort of similar to part of our commerce business.. Her price points were really high, and that's the trade off with this industry is that people that are making things by hand, they are spending literally a month

making an intricate embroidered leather bag, they're going to charge \$1,000 for that bag, because they need to generate revenue for them to live.. Yet most consumers that live in the fast fashion world want to only pay \$50 or \$100 for that bag.. So it's hard, because I think their price points were a little bit higher.. And also again, I think it comes back to how do you get that audience to engage with you on a daily basis? For us, instead of having to pay to acquire them through Google AdWords or social channels, we create content.. We keep them coming back and give them fresh new things to look at..

And regardless of whether they're buying something, hopefully they're learning something, or they're inspired to want to do something.. So I don't know that at a commerce business in this space that's selling high priced products is always going to win.. It's just a hard market with high price points, so different consumer.. Yep? You talked about how in your first year, that you learned how to be a waffle and to-- Compartmentalize-- --compartmentalize your feeling as a woman entrepreneur.. Yep.. So as you're going and you're in your fourth year, is that becoming harder or easier? So she asked, I was a waffle.. I learned that my first year.. Is it becoming harder or easier? Definitely easier.. I've gotten, I think, even better at it.. My husband calls me a rock and just hard to break..

Anything can happen to me, good or bad, and I just try to stay solid and level about it, because I know in the startup world, everything's temporary.. You raise a \$20 million round of financing, and everyone's giving you high fives, and press are writing about you all the time.. And in the back of your mind, as an entrepreneur you're thinking, will we raise again? Is this going to last? Everything-- you're thinking about the end of the world, yet you just secured runway for two years.. So your thoughts are always going to go back and forth, and you just have to find that middle ground.. I've gotten a lot better just through experience and practice.. Yep? How are you planning to globalize your company? How are we planning to globalize? I should have-- did you notice the hands on that what's next slide ? So we are definitely thinking about that, probably preparing for it in 2016 and actually starting to globalize in 2017.. The Maker industry is happening worldwide, the Maker Movement, the DIY kind of culture.. It's not just in the US, so we're really excited to bring it to other countries.. I'm sure you'll agree this was totally inspiring.. Hopefully all of you will go out to do something creative today..

Thank you so much.. Thank you guys...