



Callie: Welcome to Behind the Membership episode number seven. Today I'm talking with Holly Gillen about the Business Cinema Academy. Holly shares a lot of great tips for us in this interview, including how she uses challenges to attract new members, her experience with using Kajabi for her membership site, and how important it is to only attract members when they're ready for your membership. I'm sure you're going to learn a lot of great tips from Holly, so let's dive straight in.

Speaker 2: Welcome to Behind the Membership with Callie Willows. Real people, real stories, real memberships.

Callie: Today I'm joined by video gal extraordinary Holly Gillen from Holly G Studios and the Business Cinema Academy. Welcome to the show Holly and thanks so much for joining me today.

Holly: Awesome. Thank you so much for having me, Callie. This is such a pleasure to chat with you today.

Callie: It's always great to chat with you. Your membership site is the Business Cinema Academy.

Holly: Correct.

Callie: Can you tell us a little bit more about the membership, who it's for, what it offers?

Holly: Yeah, absolutely. I say it's a community for people who understand the value of video and the power of a community. It's all about video marketing, video

promotion, video creation, and I provide support, training, and community. It's basically all the stuff that you need once you overcome your fears of being on the camera and you're good, you're feeling confident, you're ready to go, and now you're like, "Wow. How do I make my videos look better?" It serves all of that extra stuff at the end of that. Basically, it's for anybody who is ready to elevate their video creation and take it to the next level, grow, thrive, enjoy creating video content, but really need somebody to fill in those missing pieces for them.

Callie: Awesome. I love that name, Business Cinema, as well. I think that's such a great name. Presumably, your members are predominantly entrepreneurs, business owners looking to uplevel their game [inaudible 02:10] and things.

Holly: Absolutely. Specifically, yeah, I focus on people who are running online businesses because video is just such an important aspect of running an online business. When you're marketing and would like to work with people from all around the world, it's difficult to be in the same room with those people and establish like, "Hey, I really do know what I'm talking about. You can look me in my eyes and I can shake your hand and you can see my body language and understand that I am an expert in what I'm talking about and I can help you and I do care." The next best thing to that is by using video in your business to establish that know, like, and trust factor with your audience.

Callie: Yeah. I think that know, like, and trust, any way you can create that is brilliant. Video's definitely the main way these days.

Holly: Absolutely.

Callie: What actually inspired you to create a membership site as part of this?

Holly: I would say ... Back in January of 2014, I put together my very first video challenge. When I put it together, I had zero idea. It was just some crazy idea I had, and I had no idea what to expect and how it was going to turn out. What I did was I created a 30 day free video challenge where every day everybody created a brand new video based on a prompt that I provided for them. It was called "Zero to Video Hero". One of the things that was a game changer for me was the community, was how everybody was so supportive of one another. I get the chills every time I think about how amazing and extraordinary and transformational it was, not only for the people who were participating, but also for me. I fell in love with having a community and being able to help train and support people through their video journey at that moment. I was like ... Eventually, that's what really planted the seed to start a membership community, but I waited until ... I didn't start my community until ... I've had it about 15 months now.

- Callie: Awesome. It sounds like the community is quite a big aspect of the academy for you.
- Holly: Yeah. It's something that I absolutely love being a part of. Once I stopped hosting those challenges, I really, really missed it. I really missed being part of the conversation and watching people transform. It was literally like watching roses bloom. It was one of the most beautiful things, watching somebody who came in really uncomfortable and not ready to be on camera turn from being in that position to being like, "I love video! It's so amazing. It's so fun." That was so powerful for me.
- Callie: Yeah. I love that. Those results that you got there and that feeling, I think that's like one of my favourite things about doing anything online, but especially a community or membership. You mentioned it's been going for about 15 months now, so you're just over that one year hurdle. Has there been any challenges along the way while you've been growing that site?
- Holly: Yeah, definitely. I would say one of my main challenges was determining whether or not ... Finding the right community and right forum and right way to communicate with everybody that worked for them and wasn't kind of complicated or you have to sign into a million different things so that we can have a conversation. I originally started with a Facebook group with the intention of moving that over to, I use Kajabi for my membership platform, moving that over into Kajabi as Kajabi kind of branched out and had the ability to instal forums and things like that to keep track of the community conversations. In the interim, I opted in to use something called Mightybell. I tested that out and I would say it was kind of not really ... It didn't really work out, but I would have never know if I hadn't tested it. I would say the challenge for me was just finding that sweet spot between not being complicated, being easy, being friendly, and something that people were actually going to use.
- Callie: Yeah. What did you settle on in the end? Are you using the Facebook group still, or did you-
- Holly: I went back to Facebook, yeah. It just seemed to be the right choice. I polled everybody. I asked. I was looking at all of the different angles. At the end of the day, I just went back to Facebook because that's where people were hanging out and that's where I was getting the most engagement.
- Callie: Cool. I actually want to take a little bit of a detour here because one of the biggest challenges a lot of people have or worry about when they're thinking about setting up a membership site is the tech side of things. You know myself and Mike, we're big fans of WordPress and using that for your

membership. As you mentioned before, you're using Kajabi. I just wanted to see how you've actually found using that platform for your membership.

Holly: Amazing. Absolutely amazing. Kajabi in general, as a company, has probably been one of the best experiences I've had since I started my business back in 2013, and I've worked with lots of different companies and different platforms and tested out tonnes of different things. By far, there is really no other company quite like Kajabi. You really feel like part of the family there. They are so invested in making sure that the platform is a success. It wasn't something that they just created and were like, "Alright. Let's make millions of dollars and just whatever."

They are invested in not only making it the best possible platform it can be, but they are constantly updating and listening and taking advice or suggestions from the people who are using it day in and day out and making it just a better platform, and just really invested in seeing people succeed on the platform. It's not about like, "Hey, great. We've got your money. You're paying our monthly fee. Good luck with everything." They are invested in seeing people succeed.

Callie: That's great to hear because there's a lot of platforms out there for courses these days, but less so that are more geared towards more of a membership structure. It's great to know there's a good option out there for those people that don't want to use WordPress.

Holly: Absolutely. I feel like on the technical side, it is like the best of both worlds because you can keep it kind of as is, they provide templates and things like that, or if you want to, and you have the ability, you can get more into the code and really customise it based on what your needs are.

Callie: Awesome. What's been the highlight of the membership so far for you? What's your favourite thing about running the site?

Holly: The community, the members, by far. The conversations, just watching people grow and blossom and succeed with what they're doing and continually putting in the time, the work, the effort to make their videos the best that they can possibly be and really enjoying it. That is like ... I have something called the Business Cinema Production Planner, which is a planner that I've created for the members of the BCA, soon to be released to the public. It is all about how to plan your content. It has different calendars and systems that I used.

Every month, we have a Business Cinema production planning meeting where I meet with the members. Yesterday was our meeting for August. I was literally just giddy, so giddy, because one of the members was showing

me how they were using this stuff and just how they were really getting a good plan going. I was like, "This is the kind of stuff that just makes me so excited." I just love it. I just love it when somebody can take something that I've created, a system or tool or process, and really embrace that and then succeed with it and then even modify it and adjust it for how they want to use it. That just makes me so excited.

Callie: I love that. It sounds like you're doing live calls and things there as well to help with that engagement and community feel and things.

Holly: Yeah. There's a lot of live stuff. I just started last month with themed months. Last month's theme was YouTube. I walked people through ... I have a course called "The YouTube Channel Makeover Course" where I go through how to redesign your YouTube channel so that it's optimised for YouTube and what you're trying to do, so adding in playlists and optimising your metadata and custom thumbnails and stuff like that. Each week of the month, we went through a different aspect of that course, so it was like a walkthrough, a live walkthrough, version of The YouTube Channel Makeover Course for my members.

Callie: Awesome. You mentioned that that's something new that you're doing, that monthly theme. Was that based on member feedback or was it just something you wanted to try out?

Holly: It's something that I wanted to try out. I feel like with video, it can be kind of overwhelming because there's so many different aspects and so many different directions that you can be going, that I feel like sometimes people come in and they're just like, "I don't know what to do! I'm so overwhelmed", like, "Do I just make videos? Do I have to buy all this expensive equipment?" I feel like people get confused about where to start and where to end, so going through these themed months was my way of just saying, "Let's just focus on this one thing right now." Each of these things just kind of builds on each other and you just keep building your skills so that you're able to create better videos.

Callie: Can people jump into that anytime? Is the site open for people to join whenever they want to or just-

Holly: Yes. Yes. I'm thinking I may or may not change that in the future, but for right now, yeah, it's open all year or all the time.

Callie: Awesome. Let's change gears a little bit now and talk about what you're actually doing to grow the Business Cinema Academy. In terms of bringing in new members, over the last 15 months, what's something that's worked really well for you for getting those new members?

Holly: I've been doing this thing called the #oneminuteonetake video challenge. That works very well for me to convert members, people, from the challenge into the membership group. Basically, the #oneminuteonetake video challenge came about as I was participating in Amy Schmittauer's SSS VEDA, which is a vlog every day in either April or August. I was like, "I totally want to make a video every day, but ain't nobody got time for that." I don't have the time to create these really long, highly produced, edited videos every single day because I am not Casey Neistat.

I have just limited amount of time that I can work on my videos every day, so I was like, "I know. I'm going to create like a short version with no editing. I'll call it One Minute One Take." I was like, "Perfect." I was like, "I'll just do these quick One Minute One Take videos and it can be like a rant, a tip, a tactic, or whatever the case may be, and it'll just be super snappy, easy, fun, quick, #fthefluff type videos for my YouTube Channel." Then I was like, "You know what? Other people might enjoy doing this and I would love to be able to share this with other people so that they're able to create their own One Minute One Take videos and then create iterations of that, like my friend Elyse Sparks who is in the fitness world." She created a series called One Minute One Move. A woman by the name of Diane Cargbaren, who's a member of my BCA group, created One Minute One Tip, and she's a jewellery designer. She would share a tip in one minute or less.

I loved that, creating this challenge for everybody. What I did was I upped the game and said, "It's five days. You have five days. Whoever makes the most videos in five days wins a pass to the Business Cinema Academy, which is basically the sponsor for the #oneminuteonetake video challenge."

Callie: I love that. That's a great idea, kind of essentially sponsoring that challenge and then offering that prize. I've not really seen many people do that approach to a challenge before. Love that. Do you run that challenge all the time then? Is it kind of evergreen, or do you just run that at set times?

Holly: I run it at set times because it's something that it's over the course of five days, you're going to create as many videos as you possibly can, so there's a set start date and a set end date. Then I announce the winners. It's really pumped up with the community and people participating. I feel like it wouldn't be the same if it was evergreen.

Callie: Yep. Cool. One thing I actually love that you do as well, and again, this is a little bit of a different take on something we quite often see on sales pages, you actually have a quiz on your sales page for how to tell if the membership's right for you essentially, and-

- Holly: Yeah, because it's not going to be right for everybody. You have to be in a certain position. You have to be ready to work. I can provide you the tools and the information, but I can't do the work for you.
- Callie: Yeah. I love your approach to it to making it into that quiz rather than just the usual kind of, "This is for you if ..." steps. What made you decide to take that slightly different twist on it?
- Holly: I started using the tool that I was able to create that quiz in. I was like, I just thought like, "Hey, this is fun and different. Let me just do it this way. Here's a quick way to tell whether this is going to be something that's right for you." I don't really, and I don't know how this is going to come off sounding, but if you're not ready, I don't want you in there because it's just going to be a waste of time and money for you if you aren't ready to start implementing some of these strategies and systems. If you haven't even ... I shouldn't say ... If you haven't even made your first video yet, this really isn't the place for you. It's really for somebody who's overcome their fears a little bit. You could be still kind of fearful, but you're ready to conquer that and move forward with your video journey and step your game up. If you don't have time for video in your business, or videos not really a strategy you want to work on, or any of those things, it really isn't the place for you and I don't want you in there.
- Callie: Yeah. I totally agree on that. I think doing anything you can to make sure people are in the right place to actually benefit from your membership not only works better for them, but it works better for you as well because you want people to get results and things.
- Holly: Exactly. It's really for me. I succeed when you succeed. If you're not ready to succeed, then I can't help you succeed. I take so much pride in making sure that it's something that you're using and it's working and you're not just collecting dust.
- Callie: Yeah. When somebody joins your site then, what do you do to ensure they keep coming back month after month and actually making use of the membership and getting those results?
- Holly: Through a lot of live stuff. There's a lot of live things that are going on all the time. Constantly keeping the community flowing with lots of conversation and trying to ... I'm as engaged as possible just to keep everybody else as engaged as possible. With my new themed months, I think that'll be something that really keeps people coming back, especially if it's going to be a theme that they're specifically interested in or something that they're struggling with that they're looking for a little bit more training on.

Callie: Awesome. Is the membership your full time business?

Holly: Running Holly G Studios is my full time business. The membership community is an aspect of that, yes.

Callie: Awesome. Is it just you or do you have a team helping you with the membership?

Holly: Right now, I handle most of all the day to day stuff, but for special projects or bigger things, I usually hire people on as needed. I am the man behind the curtain, the lady in front of the curtain. I am the one pulling all the strings and makes it all happen.

Callie: In that case, what does a typical day look like for you with the membership then?

Holly: I feel like that's a trick question. There is really no typical day. Every day is different, depending on what I have going on. Granted, there are some things that constantly need to happen as far as keeping content updated and making sure everybody's engaged. I just started sending a lot of personal videos out to members just to check in on them and just say, "Hey. How's it going? What can I help you with? Come on over the community and let me know." Every day's a little bit different. Really, I don't feel like there is any typical day because there's so many times, so many moving parts.

Callie: There's some things you can get into a routine for I think, but then, as you said, if you're in content creation mode or things like that, it's completely different.

Holly: I feel like I always am coming up with the next crazy idea, like, "Crazy idea. Let me work on this crazy idea", or like, "Oh, I have a whole pipeline of crazy ideas. Let's see which one of these is going to work." I like to think of myself as mad scientists and I'm always experimenting and testing out new things. Sometimes it works and it's amazing and the best thing ever, and other times, it's like cricket, cricket, and I'm like, "Alright. That didn't work. Let me quickly wipe this board clean and start all over again."

Callie: Yeah. I think memberships are great for that though, for actually giving you a way to experiment with different things. As you said, sometimes it works great, sometimes it doesn't, but I think because you've not got that do or die with a membership that you might have with course launches and things like that, it kind of gives you a little bit of extra freedom for doing that kind of experimentation, I think.

Holly: Yeah. I think my members enjoy it, that it doesn't stay stagnant. There's always something. I'm always coming up with new ideas for stuff.

Callie: Yeah. I think, as you said, I think that stopping the site from getting stagnant is really important, especially as your membership grows and you're in that second year and things like that. It can be easy to sit back and just let things go, but I think that kind of experimenting that you're doing is good for you, it's good for your members.

Holly: Yeah. I like to constantly be pushing myself. I love learning. I always have. I'm always testing new things and learning new techniques and just expanding the base of my own personal video knowledge. I've been in video production since 2008 and worked as a videographer, producer, and editor, but there is still stuff I learn every single day. That was part of the reason why I got involved in video production was because it was going to be something that I knew was going to be challenging for me and something that wouldn't get boring because there is always something new happening, whether it's new gear or new techniques or new tools or apps or platforms. The landscape is constantly evolving. Now as video just becomes more and more popular, and more and more people are paying attention to it, there's always so much going on and it just never gets boring.

Callie: Yeah. I can imagine that. It's so much more accessible, video now, as well. The last few years, anybody can start doing video, but doing it well is a different story.

Holly: Yes, but you know what? I can teach you how to do it well with what you already have.

Callie: Yeah. That's where the Business Cinema Academy comes in useful.

Holly: Yes.

Callie: Upping my video game is definitely on my list for the next few months. Especially with live video and things now, I think that adds an even bigger element into the mix.

Holly: Absolutely, because live, like as [inaudible 22:57] from a livestream process, "live doesn't lie."

Callie: Yeah. I wanted to go back for a second to ... You mentioned that you're doing personal videos at the moment. How are you finding that's working with members? Are you finding that they're enjoying that extra personal touch?

Holly: Yes. Who wouldn't? It's just such a ... I really enjoy sending those messages to people and just reaching out and making sure that I'm touching base with everybody. I think so far they've been pretty well received. I also do it with other things. If somebody buys a product from me, I send them a welcome video and say, "Hey, thanks. Welcome to the product. If there's something here that you can't find or something missing that you need, please feel free to reach out", because I'm always looking for ways to improve things that I have going on so my products don't get stagnant, especially with my Go Live Like A Pro training area. I don't call it a course, I call it a training area, because the live landscape is changing at a rapid rate and people are updating apps and platforms and different tools and techniques and all of these different things. I'm constantly in there just making sure that the information's up to date and that everybody's getting exactly what they need.

As a member of the BCA, you get access to all of my courses. That's part of making sure that the BCA people have the latest and the greatest information when it comes to creating live stuff for them.

Callie: Awesome. As part of the Business Cinema Academy, then you have access to all your courses.

Holly: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Callie: Are all of those courses separately as well or just some of them?

Holly: Yeah, no. Really, right now I have the YouTube Channel Makeover Course, which teaches you how to makeover your YouTube channel and optimise it for the content that you're going to be creating. It's like having a house that's dilapidated, but you start moving furniture in. No. Your house is going to crash. Your house is going to crash on you, you're going to mess up all your furniture. Make sure your house looks good before you start moving in your video furniture [inaudible 25:01].

Callie: Totally not guilty of that.

Holly: What?

Callie: I said, "I'm totally not guilty of that. Honest."

Holly: If you have a channel that you're embarrassed to show people, the YouTube Channel Makeover is where you need to be. Then I have my Go Live Like A Pro training area, which is all about systems, tools, platforms, apps, breakdowns, training for using live video in your business. As a BCA member, you get access to both of those courses.

Callie: Awesome.

Holly: I also sell them separately.

Callie: Awesome. Overall then, what impact would you say having the membership's had on your life and business so far?

Holly: It's been amazing, amazing. I would say it's had a super positive impact in the ... I love being able to ... I've been running this business since 2013, so I've experimented with a lot of different ways to launch things, run my business, try courses and one off things or live things or all the different things. I would say, by far, the membership and having that community and having a place where I can watch people grow, because back in 2014 when I did that first challenge and I had the ability to do that, I knew that that's what I love. I loved being witness and being part of watching people grow and transform.

For me, that's been ... The biggest impact for running the membership community is just watching that happen. I didn't really enjoy like, "Hey. Here's this course. Good luck with that. Don't report back. I don't really care what happened to your results." It just felt empty to me and hollow. I was like, "I don't like that at all. That's not what I want to do." This is really fulfilling for me and makes me feel really good.

Callie: Awesome. Do you think that ... You mentioned you've obviously had the business for a while, you've done lots of different things, so do you think you would have had the same feeling if you started the membership earlier, or do you think having done those separate things first enabled you to embrace the membership model a bit more and find that that was what you enjoyed the most?

Holly: No. I would say that was the biggest lesson learned. I should have started this membership community after that original challenge back in January 2014. I wish I had. At the conclusion of this free challenge, which had, at the time, no conclusion, there was nowhere for anybody to go. I was frantically trying to build a course while the challenge was going because I was like, "What am I going to do with these people at the end of this?" It was just an experiment that I was trying and it just turned out so well that people were like, "We want to work with you more."

I ended up creating a course, and the feedback I got was, "This is so disconnected. We had so much interaction with you during the free challenge and so much connection and conversation and community that the course was just like didn't work." If I had had the foresight that ... If I had created the community then and moved everybody from this free challenge into the community to continue that conversation, to continue that support

and training and transformation and all of the things, that would have been boom, game changer.

Callie: Interesting.

Holly: I don't like to say I make mistakes, but I have learning experiences, so I learned a lot.

Callie: Yeah. Definitely you learn from anything like that, I think.

Holly: Yeah.

Callie: Other than starting earlier, if you could go back to when you did start the Business Cinema Academy, what's one thing, if anything, that you would do differently?

Holly: I don't think, other than starting it sooner ... I wish I had started it sooner. That's the only thing. That really was like, "I should have started this like ... " That's because I love it so much.

Callie: If anybody's listening to this and they're thinking, "Well, I kind of want to start a membership, but I think it might be a bit too soon", what one piece of advice would you give to people to know whether it's the best thing to do?

Holly: Does it feel good? Is it something that you really want to do? Do you think that your audience is ready and are you ready? Because once you start, you can't stop, so you have to be ready to be fully invested in it. It's not like, "Oh, I created a course and now I'm just going to put it up on the shelf and we'll see what happens with that later." No. When you have a membership group and a community and people who are investing in you every single month, you have to be ready to invest in that group and invest in them. If you're ready, do it.

Callie: Yeah. It's a marathon, not a sprint definitely.

Holly: Absolutely, absolutely.

Callie: Definitely. What's next for you and the membership? What's the future have in store?

Holly: Oh man. I guess the only thing is it can only go up from here because I'm continually striving to learn more and improve what I'm already doing. Like I said, I never stop learning. I never stop growing. I take everything that I learn and put it back into that group. I would say, for the future, things could only go up.

I'm actually also working on a new course that will lead into the membership group, which is basically the foundation you need for creating videos for YouTube. It's a full strategy from beginning to end. It's really everything that you need to know to get started. When you're like, "How do all these pieces fit together? I'm going to do this, or I'm just going to start doing that." It is a full MAP. When I'm saying MAP, I mean like an acronym for a massive action plan to get you going on your video journey and really have a strategy in place and create business cinema for your YouTube channel, so reverse engineered content, knowing your four pillars of pre-production, understanding all the aspects that go into creating good video, and then optimising that so people are being able to find it through search on YouTube, which is the second largest search engine, and then having it actually work for you while you're relaxing on the beach. How do you get those videos to be your sales person, your greeter, your everything while you're doing your own thing?

Callie: That sounds absolutely awesome.

Holly: Thanks. It's something that's been in the works for years. I'm finally now just bringing the pieces together in a way that I feel like is easy for people to understand. Not only easy, but fun, because I like to do things that are easy and fun.

Callie: Cool. It sounds like from there, after they've done that initial course, that's when you're going to lead into the membership.

Holly: Yeah, because it's a perfect marriage. Once you've concluded and you have that foundational information that you need to move forward, there are other aspects of video production that you will still need help and training with, like creating videos for your courses or social video or just staying on the cutting edge of all the things that are happening. The membership area would then be a place for additional training, support, community, and accountability.

Callie: That sounds great. I'm really looking forward to hearing how that's worked for you and seeing that course up and running.

Holly: Yeah, me too. Thank you so much.

Callie: Thank you so much for joining me, Holly. It's been great talking with you and hearing some about your membership journey so far. Before we go, if anyone wants to find out more about you or they're sitting at home thinking, "I really need to up my video game. Where can I find this membership?", where's the best place to connect with you?

- Holly: You can come on over to hollygstudios.com.
- Callie: Awesome. Yeah. Thanks again so much for your time. It's been great having you on the show. I'm really looking forward to seeing what the next year of Business Cinema Academy has in store for you.
- Holly: Awesome. Thank you so much for having me on, Callie. This has been an absolute blast, so thank you.
- Callie: Thanks for listening to this episode of Behind the Membership, and huge thank you to Holly for sharing her membership journey with us. I hope you've picked up some great tips throughout this episode, and I would love for you to let me know over in our free Facebook group, talkmemberships.com. You can also connect with Holly over at hollygstudios.com. If you'd like to pick up the show notes and any links mentioned in this episode, then head on over to themembershipguys.com/btm7. Thanks for listening, and I'll see you next time.
- Speaker 2: If you've enjoyed today's episode of Behind the Membership, we invite you to check out the membersiteacademy.com. The Member Site Academy is the essential resource for anyone at any stage of starting, growing, and running a membership website. Whether you're still figuring out what your idea's going to be, or whether your website is already up and running and you're just looking for ways to grow it and attract new members, then the Member Site Academy can help you to get to the next level. With our extensive course library, monthly training, exclusive member-only discounts, perks, and tools, and a supportive, active community to help you along the way with feedback, encouragement, and advice, the Member Site Academy is the perfect place to be for anyone looking to start, manage, and grow a successful membership website. Check it out at membersiteacademy.com