

Ep #453: Boss Lady Erika Royal



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

Ep #453: Boss Lady Erika Royal

You are listening to *The Life Coach School Podcast* with Brooke Castillo, episode 453.

Welcome to *The Life Coach School Podcast*, where it's all about real clients, real problems and real coaching. And now your host, Master Coach Instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Brooke: The one, the only boss lady, Erika Royal. And we are catching up with my CEO Erika to find out what has been happening. She's been with The Life Coach School for two years now. She is the most amazing boss lady in the world in my opinion, and I think people want to know what it's like.

What's happening? What have you been up to? What's it like going on year two of being a CEO? So why don't you just give a little tiny bit of background and update?

Erika: Well okay, the last time I was here, we were making our big announcement. And I would say that we were very, very much ensconced in our honeymoon phase. Anybody who's listened to that podcast and just the love and everything, we were very much in our honeymoon phase and I would say that two years in, I feel like we really know each other now.

Brooke: And you still don't know how to hug me properly.

Erika: Yes. And you are still complaining about the quality of the hugs, yes. I'm working on it, Brooke, I'm working on it.

Brooke: So we were in the honeymoon phase. What does that mean, the honeymoon phase? We were just like, the possibilities, everything...

Erika: Yes, we were like, anything is possible, and I know that on my end, I was like, I don't know what the hell is about to happen. So I will say this; thinking about that woman then and how optimistic she was and all of that, but also terrified, I am so much better at this.

So much better at understanding what the job is, what is needed, understanding the company, understanding the employees, and who they

Ep #453: Boss Lady Erika Royal

are, and what they need. And so yes, I look back on her and I'm like, "Oh, she was adorable. She was all bright-eyed and just it's going to be amazing, and definitely not you're going to fall on your face repeatedly in front of people."

Brooke: Which is so fun, right? That's what we do.

Erika: Yes, which is so fun.

Brooke: So I just had this meeting with Trudi, my coach, my DEI coach, and we were talking about all of this and how I personally as the founder of this company get a lot of advice. And I get a lot of input on what we should do and how we should do it. And there's kind of this theme that Erika and I have as women running this company that I would say, I say, "We don't really know what we're doing and we need supervision, and where are the adults?"

And I kind of kid about it, and then I go to these mastermind meetings and our results just speak for themselves. So it's kind of like, yeah, I may not be doing all of these sophisticated things that you're telling us to do and we may not have the experience that y'all have, but I mean, we're still turning it out.

And so I'm so proud of us. I've been taking a minute to just be like, "This is insane." With the team that we have and the knowledge that we have and the lack - not even the experience we have. The lack of experience we have, this is actually happening. We have actually done this. So I would love to hear like, for me it's astounding, but what is it like for you?

Erika: So yeah, I mean, it's incredible knowing the behind-the-scenes of how the sausage gets made, and then seeing the results and how amazing they are. But also realizing as I talk to more and more people, part of being in this role, like you said, you get a lot of advice from people and I've joined some organizations where people have all the success and their CEOs and all these things, and they've got these companies they've been running for all these years and everything.

Ep #453: Boss Lady Erika Royal

And I talk to them and I'm like, I mean, I feel like I'm as good as you. I don't feel like what you're doing is so incredibly complex and sophisticated compared to what we're doing. A lot of what we're doing actually is pretty sophisticated and yeah, we keep it simple, but it doesn't mean that it's not really well thought out, really complicated, really intentional. And so I hear what you're saying about us not knowing what we're doing, and I feel like that's working to our benefit.

Brooke: Yeah. I mean, that's actually super interesting. When I think about how naive I've been my whole life with this company and how much some people will say things to me like, "Well you know, you really need to do this, this, and this, and to get it right, you need to do this, this, and this."

There's just a part of me that's like, but do I? So what would you say are the most important things you've learned? Let's start with about business, or mix them together, about yourself and about business over the past couple years.

Erika: Okay. So I have been representing companies for a million years before doing this, and so I had been on the outside of business before, and I understood intellectually that you can give your client, the business, very good advice and they may or may not take it. And the reason that they give you is always needs are the business, business considerations, cost-benefit analysis, things like that.

And so when I was a lawyer, the way I approached this was, okay, I'm just going to tell you the best thing and you can do it or not do it. Now being on the inside of that, being the recipient of that advice, and then making the decision to do it or not do it, it's very interesting. But understanding, really understanding what drives the business, what success looks like means that there are certain risks that you're willing to take because that's just what makes sense for the business.

And coming from a very risk-averse background, it was interesting for me to be in a position to move forward. Nobody likes to act in the face of discomfort, but that's what is required. So being willing to say, "Yeah, no,

Ep #453: Boss Lady Erika Royal

we understand the risks, and we're going to do this." So that has been really, really interesting.

And then also, since I've been here, the company has literally doubled in size in terms of employees. And so learning how to take a situation where everybody was a high-level employee, kind of running their own department that was comprised of themselves, and bringing in people to create real departments, real managerial relationships, and managing people through becoming managers, and still doing that right now, that's been an interesting challenge as well.

But one that I hadn't really thought about before coming here but have grown into since I've been here and we've done a good job of putting together these departments now that function very well and that are being led by people who are used to working on their own. So that's also been a very interesting thing.

Brooke: So one of the things about our company that I think is so unique and way more challenging than a lot of roles that corporate CEOs have is the rate of growth that our company grows at. And the speed at which we require our employees to respond in order to grow that fast.

And every single time we have this huge leap of growth, it seems like the fabric of the company changes. What we know and what we understand and what we need to do and our knowledge all changes. And so as we've grown, everybody has had to keep running.

There's no like, "Hey, I'm going to sit down over here for a minute." We give six weeks of vacation but that's just necessary. I'm going to catch my breath and then get back to it, right? So along the way, a lot of people can't grow with us, they can't keep up that momentum, and so we're constantly bringing in it feels like, because we're growing, adding new people, losing people, adding people, and kind of throwing them into this world of ours I think is one of the most challenging pieces of it.

And then we have this new employee and I'm trying to really teach our new employees not just what to do, not just how we do it, but how to think. How

Ep #453: Boss Lady Erika Royal

to think about business, how to think about tactics. So how have you handled that? It's a lot.

Erika: It is a lot. I think that one of the ways that we're able to keep things simple is that we ask people to think about not just what you are doing but why you are doing it. Because a lot of times, we have procedures and processes that we like to use here and people will try to master them from a point of view of I just want to comply.

So it's like a checklist. I completed the checklist. But if you don't understand why you're doing the thing, then the thing probably doesn't make sense. And so that to me is just really encouraging people to say okay, but why? Just stop for a minute. Why are we doing this?

Because if you think about why, one of the things that I have recently told a new employee is, "Listen, before you come to me with all these questions, put it in a filter and see how many of the filters you just throw away because you work it out yourself. You don't need to come to me." That's the beauty.

And so if you don't think about why you're doing something, it can seem very challenging and often seem like it doesn't make sense. But if you understand why, then a lot of these things are a lot easier and more intuitive.

Brooke: So for example, we do filters and narratives and processes. So filters are our communication tools, narrative is our customer journey tool, and processes is our everyday repeatable processes that we do. And you can understand all three of those on a very basic tactical level.

If you don't understand why we do each one, what the difference is, and the point and the beauty and the genius of those three tools, you're going to take something that should be a process and put it in a narrative, or take something that should be in a narrative and put it in a filter. And I think people are like, do we have to do all of this bureaucratic kind of stuff, not understanding that it's all set up to create a company that can kind of manage itself.

Ep #453: Boss Lady Erika Royal

And so I'm curious, I know we get resistance to this, especially people coming from corporate, other corporate structures that are like, no, I know better, I know how to do this, this is how I do it. So how have you - maybe you don't know the answer, but I'm just curious, from your perspective, what is it like and how have you helped them transition into our culture?

Erika: Well, one of the things that I remember, when I was just on my trial at contracting here, I remember learning about filters and immediately taking filters back into my world as a lawyer. You know something, you ask me too many questions and we're going to cure that with this filter. This is the best thing I've ever seen.

And so I think that once they start to experience it and really understand why we're doing it, then they catch on. And also, at the end of the day, I'm like, I understand that's how you used to do things, that's not how we do things. So I really kind of need you to let go of what you used to do, stop telling me why it's better.

If you learn this and then you tell me it's better, I'll entertain it. But if you don't know yet, it's like when I told my kids, "If you don't learn how to play the piano yet, you can't quit. If you learn and you still hate it, fine."

Brooke: That's amazing.

Erika: But you got to know first. They come around.

Brooke: So what would you say is the most personally challenging part of your job as a CEO?

Erika: I think that it was not unknown to me that we move very fast around here. I think also that we change a lot. And so helping to manage other people through a lot of the changes and everything can be challenging. It's gotten easier because I feel like I've gotten better at anticipating those things, and also anticipating how people are going to react. And so it's gotten easier to just move everybody, like yeah, we're going this way now, no, turn around, it's detour, we're going this way now.

Ep #453: Boss Lady Erika Royal

So that has been really interesting. I think that just being willing to try more and more and put myself out there more and more, I mean, people don't believe this but it is not intuitive to me to do that. It has gotten easier. I think it's helpful that from the first conversation that we had, I feel like we have a good relationship in that we're both just really very direct, have a really interesting sense of humor.

Might not be for everybody but it works. And I do see how we make each other better. And so I think that through my relationship with you, people have seen a side of you that they might not have seen before, which I think is really interesting for them. And I know that coming in here and trying to meet very high expectations, I personally have grown in a way that I think has surprised people who know me. So I think that is a really fun piece of this.

Brooke: Yeah, I mean, listen, I just talked at this mastermind. I was like, I mean, if we're exploring what our capacity is as women, as human beings, I know we both feel like very privileged to have this opportunity to create such value for so many people and then to make so much money doing it. It really is such an incredible privilege.

When I think about the women that came before us, I've thought a lot about this the last couple weeks. I'm just like, we did it. It's like I'm talking to all of them. I'm like, look what you all did, look what you all created for me as a woman to be able to do and to be able to talk about. It's so profound.

Erika: I have that experience right now with my mother. My mother is like, really? Just really? And I think about her mother also just sort of being like, wait, what is happening right now? So I think about that a lot and I see it also with my own children who think that this is all normal but one day will realize it's not.

Brooke: Why do they think it's normal? I want them to normalize it in their brain so they'll do it too.

Erika: Yes, so they will just - yeah, I can go out and do all these things also, so yeah. But I absolutely experience that. I mean, I think that also, coming

Ep #453: Boss Lady Erika Royal

from very, very humble beginnings and getting to a place where I'm on these stages and talking to these audiences and really having an impact and making a difference and representing something for people that makes them think, "Oh, I can do that too, this is for me, and this work is going to help me, and this work is going to help me grow," all of that is beyond anything for me. So that is just incredible.

Brooke: Yeah, and you know, for us, my style is very - for all of you who listen to this podcast, you know my style is very much direct, ambitious, create huge possibilities, go after them. And a lot of times, when we're in this environment, it's intense, right? I'm like, "Yo, what is going on? Why isn't this working? And let's get this together, and come on team, these results aren't great and you need to get on with this."

And working with me for a year is sometimes enough for the people. Working for me for two years is a lot. And I've always kind of had this - I don't want everyone to stay forever. I want fresh energy and excitement and then we'll use it up and then we'll send them on.

And I just got this most amazing handwritten letter from one of my employees that had worked for me about three years ago, and he worked really hard when he was here. I pushed him really hard, my expectations were ridiculous, and since he's moved on, he wrote me the most beautiful letter and it's really made me think - these are from people I fired too. People that just couldn't keep up with us.

And just the amount of growth and involvement you have being in an environment like this, I don't think people understand what it's really like to work as me because I work for me too. Let's not forget that. Everyone's like, "It's hard working for you." I'm like, no kidding. I work for me too.

But also, to be able to stop and just be like, wow, because of that intensity, because of our expectations of our employees, and because they step up and just produce at the highest level, we get to have a moment where we're just like, heck yeah, look at how far we've come and look at what we've created.

Ep #453: Boss Lady Erika Royal

So I was thinking about this year, what we did this year, and a lot of what - this is kind of what it looks like. I have an idea, what do you think Erika? Sounds good, and then I'm like, let me know how it goes.

Erika: Let's do it. It's done. Is it done yet? Is it done yet? We just talked about it five minutes ago Brooke. Yeah, but is it done yet?

Brooke: What's happening? So I was reflecting on it just this year, I didn't even go back to the previous year, but this year we introduced a brand new program called Reinvention. We introduced it very quickly and it included an in-person component that we hadn't reserved a hotel for, anything like that.

And that was one of the most extraordinary successes that we've had. We put that together, I taught it, and then we did an in-person - I don't know, what would we even call that? Extravaganza?

Erika: Extravaganza. And also a boondoggle.

Brooke: A boondoggle.

Erika: It's an extravaganza boondoggle. Like, why was there a golden swing in the room?

Brooke: It was amazing. So it's like, we did that, but we did that on top of our regular work of doing Scholars and Certification.

Erika: But it wasn't even just on top of our regular work because at that same time, you were also redoing Scholars. And so Scholars was reimaged and recreated this year too, and so that was happening simultaneously, and we were also planning mastermind at the same time.

Brooke: So let's talk about mastermind. Have we only done one mastermind since you've been here?

Erika: Yes.

Brooke: Okay, we've only done one. So you put on the entire mastermind.

Ep #453: Boss Lady Erika Royal

Erika: So epic.

Brooke: You and Courtney. And I mean, obviously our whole team, and that was amazing and epic and you'd never put on an event before.

Erika: Nope.

Brooke: Turns out you can just put on an event.

Erika: It turns out, yeah. It turns out that I can just put on an event. We hadn't had mastermind since September 2019 so people were very much interested in attending another one. And yeah, I'm really proud of what we created there. I thought it was incredible and we invited a bunch of new voices because it had been so long, we've had so many people come through the school and so many people teach Scholars, teach in Certification.

And so we had so many more people to invite to the stage, so I loved our diversity, I loved the different topics, the different approaches. I thought the event was amazing.

Brooke: And for me, walking out on to that stage, I'm like, oh, we're at a whole 'nother level now. We have now become The Life Coach School at a whole new level. And that was amazing. And to have you on the stage speaking as the CEO for the school was awesome. And then we decided, oh, let's completely redo Certification live.

Erika: Just for fun.

Brooke: And so shortly after mastermind, we put together Certification, we taught it live to a live group, plus a virtual group, reimaged all the content, taught it in a new way, made it so much better. And you have to remember, we did that live and then we turned it all into the online class that now everyone can take.

Erika: And that was our first real hybrid event too. So, we learned hybrid events at CCP Live, so that was great.

Ep #453: Boss Lady Erika Royal

Brooke: Right, and you have to remember, this is like true woman boss power. If you really want to appreciate, I think, the power of women working together, it's like, Erika really took all of the pressure of, "Where are we going to have the event? What's the stage going to look like?" All the details, she and her team really took that out of my mind.

You have to remember, I used to do it all. I used to get the stage and create the curriculum and talk to the people on email and sell the event. And so, I was able to step back from that and really focus on the curriculum and really focus on the coaching and then us coming together and creating that was just amazing.

And then, I feel like our certification program is so much better now and so much updated because of that.

Erika: Yes.

Brooke: Oh, by the way, let's do Life Coach Live.

Erika: Which was so funny because coming out of the Certification Live in June, it was like, "Oh, Life Coach Live, that's in November. That's months away."

Brooke: So far away.

Erika: And then, all of a sudden, it was July and I was like, "Wait a minute, that's four months away." So, then we immediately focused on that, and that was interesting because we had never done an event like that before. And so, we were really learning, in real time, how to have an event of that size, how to structure that and run it and put it all together.

And yeah, there were some moments in there where I was like, "I hope this works out. I hope this turns out okay." But it was, again, an epic event.

Brooke: It was crazy. And so, if you think about Reinvention Live, Mastermind, Certification Live, and Life Coach Live, those were all live events with thousands of people that were our very first time putting those on. So, we just needed to be like, we're some pretty badass motherfuckers.

Ep #453: Boss Lady Erika Royal

Erika: Yeah, I mean, I'm there.

Brooke: And we produced at the highest level in terms of revenue and really focusing on producing, I think, what are the highest caliber events in our industry. I don't think anyone even comes close.

Erika: Absolutely. And even though we had a lot of, you know, fails, the successes are just so much greater than any of the fails. So, we absolutely learned things, and yet the success speaks for itself so clearly that it's just like, "I know you say you're failing, but it looks like you're winning."

Brooke: And I think that's an important message for everyone to hear. Because I think a lot of times, people – you know, you're not all here when I'm like, "Erika, what the hell? What is going on with this?" And I'm frustrated, like, "What is going on? Why isn't this..."

It's, "Oh, we dropped the ball on that." Or, "That didn't work," or, "I shouldn't have done that," or, "This was a mistake," or whatever. And it's not like we had our successes in spite of those fails. I think it's because of them. It's like the weaving through of all of the hard work that we are willing to do together.

And I wanted to have you on the podcast and I wanted to call the podcast Boss Lady because I feel like, as women, you and me as a team, as women running this company and building what we're building and doing what we did this year I think is an extraordinary example.

And I think, a lot of times, people think that women aren't collaborative and we can't work together and we can't build each other up and we can't support each other. And we have a very dominant woman team too of really badass women, respecting for each other, caring for each other, being super honest with each other and laughing hysterically together, all the way through this year and creating magnificent things.

And so, I wanted to congratulate you and thank you for everything you've done and everything your team has done. And I give you a lot of credit for how you've managed them. But also, just to us as really being willing to

Ep #453: Boss Lady Erika Royal

work as hard as we do to be an example, and not just an example, like we said, to the women coming behind us, but like a nod to the women who came before us.

Erika: Oh yeah, absolutely. And just to offer a little behind the scenes, because I know that's what the people really want, "What is Brooke really like?" I will say this. Coming in here two years ago, I was, even though it was the honeymoon phase, I was definitely feeling a little intimidated.

Not so much by you, but by – I don't know. It's intense here. It's intense. And what I have come realize is that, even when like you said, sometimes you're frustrated, I don't take that personally.

I'm not like – well, first of all, I stay out of your Model. That's your Model and you handle it over there. But also, I just think that it's a lot of pressure. I feel a lot of pressure and I can only imagine the pressure you feel.

So, even when you're coming to me with frustration or whatever, I am usually able to say, "Oh, that's because of this." And it's, "Okay, yeah, listen, let's get it done. Let's fucking go." It's whatever. We're just here to get results.

You never hear any women here tearing each other down. That's not what we do. And I think we all really revel and enjoy each other's success. And we know, I mean I know for a fact, nothing gets done at this company that is not built on the foundation of the work that everybody is doing.

There are no individual contributors who are just knocking it out of the park alone. So, I appreciate every single member of the team because I know that, without this, none of this is possible.

And I always want to be very respectful and say, "I know that even if I didn't name you by name," or whatever, "I know you're killing it and I appreciate you and I know that's why," like you said, "These amazing live events." Every time, we're like, "This is brand new, how do we do it?" And then we're like, "Oh, okay, we did it."

Ep #453: Boss Lady Erika Royal

Brooke: “Let’s figure it out. Let’s see what we can do.”

Erika: We say that. I don’t know if people believe it. When it’s like, how are you going to do it? “The way we did it.” It really is true.

Brooke: We’re like, “Oh, we didn’t know how until it was done,” right?

Erika: Yeah.

Brooke: And I think too, for me, one of the things that I’ve really come to understand and realize about this company and me is like, I go to work. I work hard. I work towards the results that I want. And the people that make it in our company are at, I think, the highest level of production of anyone in any industry, period.

And I think that’s just a nod. Anyone who’s here in this, they’re like, “This is intense. This is hard.” To me, that’s a compliment.

Erika: Yes, it’s intense and you’re in it.

Brooke: Yeah, and you’re in it. And the fact that – I’m going to do a podcast on the financial goals that we’ve hit, but it’s like going back and reviewing what it has taken to get this far and what it is still taking, I just think is such a cool example of, if you do it with The Model and you take care of yourself mentally, like you were saying, “That’s your Model, this is mine,” what you can create is like – it’s kind of like the honeymoon period; anything really is possible.

Erika: It’s pretty impressive. And I will also say, just being able to be on the inside and be a part of creating this and knowing that we’re going to create so much more and knowing that the work that we’re doing is getting out there and just having this ripple effect and changing people’s lives has been such an honor and a privilege for me.

It has been one of the greatest honors of my life. And so, I know that this work works because it worked for me and so being able to be part of changing just a few lives even, but knowing that we’re doing so much more,

Ep #453: Boss Lady Erika Royal

is unbelievable. And I will always be very grateful, and thank you. And maybe years from now, I'll write you a letter to that effect.

Brooke: Or we'll have a conversation that will start with, "What happened this weekend that we had to stop recording our Zooms so that would never become public?" Because I tell Erika all the things, all the details.

Thank you, my friend, for coming on. Thank you for being such an example to so many other women of what being a true CEO leading other people through a wild ride can be like. And I know that you have so much respect from our team and you keep us all sane. So, thank you so much. And you guys should follow Erika on Instagram because she posts some boss-lady stuff over there.

Erika: Now, that feels like a challenge, okay. I'll get right on that. Well, thank you, Brooke, for being the pioneer that you are. I mean, everybody already knows, but thank you for being the badass that you are because, but for you, this would not exist...

Brooke: But for you, we're not even here. Alright, my friends, have an amazing week. Thank you, Erika. Talk to you all soon.

Hey, if you enjoy listening to this podcast, you have to come check out Self-Coaching Scholars. It's my monthly coaching program where we take all this material and we apply it. We take it to the next level and we study it. Join me over at the TheLifeCoachSchool.com/join. Make sure you type in the TheLifeCoachSchool.com/join. I'd love to have you join me in Self-Coaching Scholars. See you there.