

## Ep #331: Amber Vilhauer - No Guts, No Glory



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David Phelps: Good day, everyone. This is Dr. David Phelps of the Freedom Founders Mastermind Community, and Dentist Freedom Blueprint podcast. Today with, gosh, a really good friend of mine. We've become great friends in the last year really, and it was through a connection, which is something I want to talk about today, through a connection through other people, which is a little tip here in thinking about how do you take your life's mission and purpose and move it forward or find new ways to fulfill what's in your heart? And you have to do it with other people. My guest today is Amber Vilhauer. Amber, how are you doing?

Amber Vilhauer: I'm so happy to be here. And I will give that praise right back to you, David, because knowing you has been an incredible honor, and watching the way that people talk about you, and what you've built, and knowing the impact that you're having from the inside of your organization out. As a book launch manager, I work with a lot of different people and the operation on an inside of an organization doesn't always match who they are on the outside. But one compliment I can give you, sir, the highest praise that you are full of integrity, and that you are in alignment in every single way. Every time I've ever seen you, you're kind, you're professional, you're intelligent,

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you're about service and people. It's an honor to be here having this conversation with you.

David Phelps: Well, Amber, I appreciate that very much. We have spent a lot of time with our respective teams, and I said the same thing about your team. I've said it over and over. I saw the same thing. So here's a person, Amber, who is so full of joy and exuberance about what she gets to do in life, and no surprise, but you also have created around you some amazing people who also believe in the mission. They're not just there to get a paycheck. Heck no. They are totally ingrained and indebted to the cause of helping your team do what they do, which we want to talk about a little bit today. So NGNG, no guts, no glory. So where did that come from?

Amber Vilhauer: My mom.

David Phelps: Really?

Amber Vilhauer: It was 2007 and a mentor of mine at the time said, "Amber, you should probably file an LLC." And I said, "What's that?" I had no business experience, David. And yet, a few people had reached out to me online wondering if I could help them with their website because of having set up my own. Now this is back in 2007. So this mentor said, "You need to file an LLC." I needed a business name. I had no clue what that should be because I didn't even know if this was going to turn into a serious business. I mean, I was just taking some projects on the side.

So I'm pacing back and forth in my kitchen and remembering my mom as I always do when I'm confronted with something and I don't know what to do. And I remember as a kid, she used to say, "Amber, no guts, no glory." All the time she used to say that. And I thought, wow, what better phrase to remember every day as I face my fears and then get my message out online or

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face myself and try to figure out what message I even have to share. Should this be a business? And NGNG was born back in 2007.

David Phelps: I'm just curious. What was it about your mother that she had developed that mantra? Because like most people, most of the majority, Amber, as you well know, tend to trade freedom and exploration especially after we get past our childhood years, right? It's a time where kids explore everywhere. You have to put them on a leash to pull them back. But as we mature in life, we tend to gravitate towards what we think is safety. So we want to find a safe career. We want to have safe relationships and don't want to rock the boat. Where did your mom come from with this NoGutsNoGlory? I'm just curious what experience that she had in her life where she had to maybe push through some areas in her life. Was there something there that-

Amber Vilhauer: That's a great question. Yeah, my mom was born on a tobacco farm in West Virginia. She had very aggressive sort of abusive parents. They moved out to Arizona when she was young and near Tucson, pretty small town. She met my dad in high school. They got married. Now my dad was the safe one that you just described. So they were married 15 years. They had myself and my older sister. When I was about five years old, my mom initiated a divorce with my dad. He never really did anything wrong, but she's a very spiritual, conscious person, and something was nagging at her to explore life and to live a bigger life. So she did the hard thing, especially with the family dynamic back then, it was not popular to divorce and she risked it all. She started her life at 35.

So I think it was something that innately was already in sight of her, and she just knew that she had to dare to be different. She had to dare to see what life was really about. And boy, did she

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do that. Brilliant entrepreneur. She has conquered so many challenges in her life and she's a world traveler. So she knows about personal freedom. She has really worked hard to achieve what I consider to be a pretty fantastic life.

David Phelps: I love that. That's really cool. See, I didn't know that about you. That's why I found out about you today, but I couldn't ask you before because we're live here on a podcast. So thanks for sharing that. Obviously that seeded to you back in 2007, remembering what your mother said about no guts, no glory. And you said you were doing projects. I know you have this great creative side. So now the technical side too. So you were able to deal with projects like online websites. Was it branding? Tell them a little bit about what you were doing. And you were just getting started with a... You said to see if this would go somewhere. What was it you were seeing in 2007 that you were enjoying and getting good feedback, but I don't really know if I have a business yet.

Amber Vilhauer: Yeah. It's kind of a fun story. I'll take you back a little bit further when I was growing up. For whatever reason, David, I was a very different person than you know of me today. You mentioned I'm very joyful and I've got lots of energy. I was not that when I was growing up. For whatever reason, I was not very well liked. In school, I never really had friends from kindergarten through graduating from high school. I had an older sister who had a very big personality that overtook the room. So I just started to get smaller. I didn't really have a voice, and I think that's why I wasn't well received in school is because I was kind of the awkward one that hung out by herself on the playground.

And it wasn't until about 17-18 years old that I got a job selling Cutco cutlery. So the high-end kitchen knives, and it was random that I would even get that job because I was always the

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one busing tables at restaurants before this. I didn't have great communication skills. I didn't have confidence, but it was a good opportunity. I liked the product, and that company woke something up in me. It woke up my entrepreneurial spirit, my drive. I loved recognitions, so I wanted to do whatever I could do to get more of that. That felt really good. I started to be well-received for the first time in my life. That moment also woke something up in me where I wanted to help other people feel seen.

And so fast forward, about five years into working with Cutco, I had kind of gotten as far into the journey as I could go, where I was willing to go. I didn't want to open up my own district office. I was already helping to manage a division of 13 offices as a young 21 year old. I was managing 32 receptionists. I was doing weekly trainings for a hundred kids every week, three days of training. I was speaking on stages in front of 300 people presenting. That's where I learned public speaking. So five years in, I thought, what else is there to this life thing?

And I randomly got this one-off job that was event planning for a conference in Denver that would teach entrepreneurs how to grow their business online. This was about 2005, 2006 at the latest. So I was in charge of speaker management. I was learning a little bit about websites for the first time and marketing online, which just activated something else in me. And I thought now this looks like a challenge. I was learning from the speakers who are some of the most brilliant internet marketing experts of all time, even to this day, were speaking on the stage. Like people who created Google AdWords were speaking on that stage.

I went home from that event, David and I taught myself code and I built my own website. It was a terrible looking website, and I started researching on my own about search engine

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optimization, funnels, webinars, affiliate marketing. I started blogging about the things that I was learning. And randomly this woman from Canada reached out to me and said, "Oh, I see that you do website work. Can you help me with mine?" And I thought, I guess. I mean, I don't know anything about that, but sure. I'll just do whatever I just learned and see if it works. I was terrified.

And what also happened, interestingly enough, out of the audience at that event, there a woman who owned a publishing company in California. I guess she observed my project management busy work. She contacted me and said, "Amber, can I pay you to teach you how to launch books so you can do that for my company?" And I said, "Yes, I guess." I just was a yes person, David. I had no clue that this would be what was possible out of me saying yes in those early days, but we've now launched over a thousand websites. I've launched dozens and dozens and dozens of number one bestselling books. I've worked with some of the most amazing people on earth, and it just came from being a yes person, teaching myself and digging in and being a NoGutsNoGlory person.

David Phelps: Wow. Lots of lessons there, but I think being a yes person. So what I would I take back in a general summary of this is that you constantly were willing to explore a next phase, the next thing. You never stayed static. You were finding through other people, starting with Cutco, finding something that excited you, but you never stayed static and opportunities would come to you because you were putting yourself out there. You weren't afraid to try some things. Yet you admit, and I think everybody would who's tried something for the first time, speaking in front of people. Oh my gosh. Or taking on a project for somebody who wanted a website.

Amber Vilhauer: It was so scary.

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David Phelps: You go, "Well, I don't think I'm the best in the world, but gee, somebody thinks maybe I could do it." What I'm saying is you took a shot. You took a shot at something, and I think a lot of people, again, are afraid to do that. Well, I don't think I have the degrees. I haven't studied enough. I need a certificate or something on the wall that says I'm... No. Why wait? You put yourself out there by blogging, being in the event planning arena, managing all these other people, finding skillsets that I'm guessing you didn't take specific courses to learn how to do any of this stuff. You were just finding some innate skill sets that were there with you that just needed to be able to blossom. Would that be fair?

Amber Vilhauer: Yes, and I'll tell you where it comes from. There's a critical piece to this story that I left out. And honestly I forgot, which has never happened before. I was very lonely growing up, as I mentioned. I didn't feel like I had a voice and there was a depression that started to build. And when I was in my teenage years, starting in high school, it reflected in my grades. I started failing classes. I just started hanging out with people that were quote good enough to match what I was feeling on the inside. And it was like my world got darker and darker and darker and everything culminated on this one night when I was 16 years old and I went to a party. But what I didn't realize is that that party was set up for me. And it was that night that I got jumped by five girls and I was laying on the ground as these girls were beating up on me.

And I remember everything got really slow and still, and I remember looking around, David, there were probably 50 kids at this party and I thought, "Why is nobody stopping these girls? Who are these girls and what's happening?" And I thought almost like from a conscious place, like what is up with humanity? But in that moment, David, I realized that nobody was going to save me, that I had to save me. And it was really

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out of that experience, that rock bottom moment, that scared the you know what out of me that shook me so hard that I realized that I had to turn my life around. It was decision by decision day by day that I started to look at who would I be proud to be? And that was literally what it came down to, David. Who would I be proud to be?

Would I be proud to be a person that hit the snooze button in the morning, or would I be proud to be somebody who bounced out of bed and tackled the day head on? And I started to look at the contrast of my choices and I just kept focused on who would you be proud to be? I graduated from high school with honors, and I think that's what gave me the courage to then continue that path and I got the job at Cutco. And then that's when I kind of opened up to that next level. I stopped looking for other things to save me. I stopped looking for the answers out there and I started looking for the answers in here and now that's sort of carried me forward. I can't believe I forgot that part.

David Phelps: Wow. So yeah. I mean, I think most people have been at points in their life, maybe not exactly like yours where you're literally being pounded on, but maybe they felt like they've been pounded on or they're in a hole of adversity or challenges, circumstances, whether they could control them or not, that make us feel not worthy. I think the other part of that, Amber, if I could say so is that today, social media for maybe the benefits of connection and things like that and marketing, there's certainly aspects. But there's also, I think, a tendency, a big tendency for a lot of people to put themselves out there like they're killing it. They're crushing it. Life is so good. There's no baggage behind me. Look at me, look at me. I'm armor.

And for those of us who look at ourselves from that standpoint, yes, I think we all have certain metrics of success and we have

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certain achievements, but is life ever really you're just killing it, crushing it? I mean, there's always something-

Amber Vilhauer: Totally.

David Phelps: That we know that it's a place that we haven't taken care of and that could be self care. That could be people we care about like family. It's really hard to have it all together. But we measure our success against what we see out there.

Amber Vilhauer: That's true.

David Phelps: And I think that can be a very inwardly-

Amber Vilhauer: Dangerous.

David Phelps: Self defeating, dangerous place to be. Right?

Amber Vilhauer: Absolutely. I couldn't agree more. I think that we have a responsibility in our marketing to be honest. Now, it doesn't mean you have to air your dirty laundry. You don't have to be negative, right? But just also be mindful of the other side of it and that we can be more honest and transparent in our communication that creates a benefit and creates more service to our following, which is what people want online right now, David, they want real.

What I observed as an internet marketer last year was a massive change in social media and marketing. Because before that, internet marketing was taught in a very dangerous way. Automation, just come up with cookie cutter content and put it out there, automate it, set it on autopilot and move on with your business. Well, when 2020 hit, people didn't know who to trust. Information overload, decision fatigue, and everything just seemed fake. And people, it led to isolation. It led to a separation. It created so much friction and so much emotion and depression in our world. And so I, in some ways, was

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grateful because it woke us up. And now, what consumers need more than anything is people who are real, they're willing to lead. Again, there's a way to do it that's conscious. Right? You might need some conditioning there perhaps, but we need to be real for our people and educate them on what's really happening because that's... I don't know. You see where I'm going with this. People need leaders now more than ever before.

David Phelps: Yeah. No doubt about real leaders that they can trust who are willing to share the ups and downs and the same issues in life that we all face. I mean, that's who we can believe. Not people that just seem like it's always been good and they have it all together all the time.

Let's talk a little bit about what you enjoy and what you see your purpose with the current Amber and the NGNG team. Because we started talking about how this started to develop. So the person reached out to you and said, "I'd like to pay you to teach you how to launch my book." That was back in, I don't know what year approximately that was, but-

Amber Vilhauer: 2007.

David Phelps: Okay, 2007. So obviously you did that. You helped this person get their book launched. And then what?

Amber Vilhauer: Well, actually it was the owner of a publishing company who gave me that offer. So she said, "Let me teach you what I know about launching books so you can come do it for me because clearly you're good at project management." So she taught how to become number one on Amazon, which back then it was very difficult, much more so than it even can be today. But we started launching books for Lisa Nichols and Les Brown and Mark Victor Hansen, Brendon Burchard, these

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giants in the industry. And it was a phenomenal experience for me.

Now, what was interesting is by that point, I was so onboard with this website thing and I thought, well, that's the business opportunity. So I really focused in on saying that we were a web design agency and I kind of hid the fact that I launched these books. I don't know why I just was following the wrong lead perhaps, but the world seemed to want websites for me. They still do. Like I mentioned, we launched about a thousand over the years, which has been really gratifying.

It was actually about two years ago, three years ago when Mike Michalowicz came to me. Now, we had known each other for years through a mutual friend and really respected each other. And he just said, "Amber, you're the one to launch this book." I had dabbled it. I had done some book launches kind of behind the scenes over the years, but it was never a front facing service really. And when Mike asked me to launch his book for Fix This Next, I said, "Okay, I'll do that launch." And then Mike told everybody about me. So I couldn't deny it or hide it. Not that I was trying too hard to do that, but all of a sudden the cat was out of the bag. And since then, book launch has been by far the leading service and what the marketplace wants for me.

Now, what makes me different about book launches, David, is that most book launch managers have a pretty cookie cutter approach. So they'll say, "Go get your friends to promote the book, send them the sample email and a sample social post." And then the other side of it is, "We'll try to get you featured on a couple podcasts." And it's a pretty small service all things considered. I've worked with enough authors over the years where I thought, gosh, that's so short-sighted. I'm watching all of these authors launch their books. They'll sell maybe a

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hundred copies, 200 in the life of the title. That is the average is 250 copies in the life of the title, David.

David Phelps: I didn't know that.

Amber Vilhauer: It breaks my heart. So I'm watching these authors spend years of their life writing this book and who knows how many tens of thousands of dollars to get this book ready to sell 250 copies? And then there's nobody on the back end that sets these authors up for success, and I just couldn't stand by anymore. So with Mike telling the world, I designed a service that helps the author to build their whole business. They come to me because they have a book they want to launch. I look at their business and I say, "Wow, you don't really have a marketing operation. You have leaks everywhere in your bucket. Your bucket's leaky. You don't have strong monetization model. There's areas for opportunity all over the place."

So I come in and I create a stronger marketing operation that's largely outsourced to your team. And if you don't have one, I help you get one like a virtual assistant. Then I help look at the monetization model, where are the opportunities and how can we quickly get you a return on your investment with me so that I sleep better at night? And then we launch your book. Now that we have everything in harmony, that's when you launch the book, leverage all of that attention, and then pour it back into your marketing and sales operations so it actually grows the company as a whole. You can relaunch your book every year if you want to. There's no rules around it. It's just a dedicated promotional period. That's all a launch is.

Now, I see publishing companies coming to me, David, and wanting to partner. I'm working with Harper Collins leadership and other hybrids. Authors are coming in because they see that they need to get it together if they're going to get their message

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out in a bigger way. And honestly, it is my privilege and honor to be there for them. It's a legacy thing for sure for me.

David Phelps: Yeah. Your team and what you set up from a strategic standpoint to help authors or those who want to raise the platform and have their book launched and get into more hands and then have it to be a continuum. As you said, not just one period, the book's out there, and you get a couple hundred books sold. Yeah. I mean, that's so disappointing. But as you said, it doesn't have to be that way. You do have a brilliant strategic mind. It's what I've seen about you. There's no cookie cutter in you at all. You take each client that you work with, whatever you're working with them on, whether it's a book launch. Same thing with websites, and you dig into what is the overarching strategy here? We're not just doing a website. We're not just doing a book launch. It's like, what's the long game here? Right? What's the long game?

Amber Vilhauer: Yes.

David Phelps: And something quite honest here. Many people who are in a business or something that they don't quite know sometimes. Right? You just get involved in something and you kind of follow your heart, but haven't really figured out what the strategy is. What can I really do with this? And you're really good at pulling that out of people if they don't quite have that clarity.

Amber Vilhauer: Thank you.

David Phelps: I think it's one of the keys that we enjoy in life is we've got to surround ourselves with other people who can help give us that clarity. Sometimes we can be enthusiastic about something, but is it going to be profitable? I mean, it has to be profitable or you can't keep doing it. You can't keep doing what you want to serve the way you want to serve them if you don't have a basis

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there to make a profit. Yeah, I want to do a book launch and I'll pour thousands and thousands into it. Poof, what did that do? I'm in the hole instead of on the other side of it.

I think, again, the key is so much about who we know. And as you said, Mike Michalowicz who helped kind of jumpstart you into what love to do today. And then our connection came through Mike Michalowicz because I was in a Mastermind group with Mike. And all these connections, they seem to kind of connect here and there and there. And it's like, it's not by accident that these things happen. Well, particularly because... Going back to your story. You have to put yourself out there. You have to put yourself out there. You have to pay to play, meaning you need to put the time in, serve first and relationships, or invest in a tribe, a community, a mastermind, whatever it is to start finding these people. Because the right people that you create your environment around will help you. That's what you and I both learned early or relatively. Early for you, late for me. But nevertheless, it works. Again, I know that's a big part of what we talked about today, but any final words on relationship capital, I guess, is what I would call it?

Amber Vilhauer: Yeah. I mean, honestly for me, I know that to build a relationship, I first need to be open. Now, I don't say that lightly because most people are closed, right? We've been hurt. We've been burned. So we're closed off. We don't want to let people in, but I have conditioned myself. And that's the key word. I've conditioned myself to remain open because if I'm not open, I can't receive back. Right? I can give, and it's just going to burn me out. So first you have to be open, and in the act of being open and knowing what you value and then really wanting to develop a relationship with the person in front of you, all of a sudden, you can find these points of connection. By being open, I'm sharing things with you. Even today in this



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podcast episode, I'm sharing things that are maybe sensitive topics, but I'm doing that because that builds trust.

And now all of a sudden we feel connected in a way that we can't even articulate. It's just a feeling in our bodies like, "Oh, wow. She shared that with me. Gosh, well, I feel like I can trust her now. I feel like I should reciprocate and share something back." And now all of a sudden we're speaking this language that's meaningful. Right? So in any relationship, I always strive to be open. I always strive to create that deeper, more meaningful connection. And then I try to over-deliver everywhere I can. I'm always looking for the opportunity to go the extra mile to make it easier on the person in front of me and without expectation of a return. And I think that's a key too. I have no clue what's going to come from this podcast episode or the next thing that I do, but I'm going to give it everything that I've got.

I'm going to pour myself into it because maybe there's somebody listening somewhere that will ultimately refer my biggest client ever to me or whatever it is. I mean, for me, it's about the relationship and the connection and less about the return on the income because I know that's inevitable. If you show up and you're a good person and you give to others, it's inevitable it will come back to you tenfold. So I try not to personally focus too much on that piece of it. I want to keep my ego in check, but I think relationships will take you everywhere in this life, and I think it's the thing that can lead to the most fulfillment for sure.

David Phelps: Brilliantly said, Amber. Well, Amber Vilhauer, NGNG.com. You can find her at NoGutsNoGlory. Amber and her team truly, you live a mantra. By the way, I'm looking at your background and we both have a similar book. Are we buying the same books on Amazon? What's going on here? I just have to say-

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Amber Vilhauer: Look at this great book. It's such a good cover.

David Phelps: Gosh, it's almost two months ago, getting close to two months. And our whole team just enjoyed the process immensely. You were such a big help and a big inspiration to our team setting the stage and really helping us see what the long game could be, which you do so well, Amber.

Amber Vilhauer: It's just the beginning, David. I appreciate you so much.

David Phelps: Well, thank you. Thanks for being with us today and sharing really some key nuggets, but also be willing to be authentic in sharing your own story and what makes you tick and makes you the person you are today. It's really, really been a fun interview to do.

Amber Vilhauer: Thank you, guys.

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