

“Where Are They Now” Series: Julie Eickhoff

Intro: This is the Work-At-Home Heroes podcast, your host Caitlin Pyle, digs deep with people from all over the world who make money from home. Get ready to wake up to a world of possibility for freedom, flexibility, and a life you'll love.

Caitlin: Well, hi everybody. Welcome back to another episode of season two of "Work-At-Home Heroes." I am your host, Caitlin Pyle, and I have back with me today -- we're doing our season on "where are they now?" And I love those revival things that celebrities do with old TV shows. I just finished watching "Will and Grace" and I love it. Not as much as the original of course, but that's kind of what we're doing here. And so I have Julie Eickhoff; she's an audible approved voice artist. She's been a voice artist since 2011. You may remember her first episode and if you don't, or if you totally missed it and you're new to the podcast and you wanna go back and listen to the first episode so you can hear the difference, not just in her fabulous voice but in her confidence and in her story in general that we're gonna be talking about today. And just please pause this episode and go find the first one in season one. She's been a voice artist since 2011 narrating and recording over 120 audio books, e-learning courses, telephone systems, commercials, and many other projects. She also developed an online course that teaches others how to work from home as a voice over artist. When we spoke last, the online course was just getting off the ground and I remember that very, very well. Now there's been thousands of people that have explored becoming a voice artist with Julie. She loves seeing the progress of her students as they work towards their work at home dreams, work towards fulfilling them. And that's really what this podcast is all about. So we're really happy to have you back, Julie. Thanks so much for joining me.

Julie: Oh, thank you for having me. I'm excited to be here and I'm excited to talk about what we have planned to talk about today.

Caitlin: Yeah, me too. And to recap for the audience, you've been working from home, as well as being a voiceover artist, since 2011, right?

Julie: Yeah, since the end of 2011 was when I really sort of launched the voiceover part of my career. But I started sort of on the side. I didn't quit my full-time job right away. It was early 2012 when I did actually quit the full time job and just do voiceovers and like you said, the first podcast that we did, if anybody has interest in learning more about voice overs, go back and listen to that one 'cause I just read the transcript and there's so much good information in there. So it really is worth your time if you have interest to go back and listen to that. But like you said since then and I'm still doing voice overs, but I went ahead and developed an online course to teach other people how to do voice overs. So now I have kind of two different sides of the business that I'm working on.

Caitlin: That's great. And so you're still doing voiceover and regarding income, that's a question that a lot of people have in their mind because they wanna get to the point where they can quit their full time jobs as well. And the last time we interviewed you, you were earning about \$1,500 a month. And so where are you at now with voiceover work every month?

Julie: Well, to clarify that early on, the \$1,500 a month was working very part time. And I mean, I never worked more than maybe four hours a day. There were some days I didn't work at all. I was lucky at that point. I have a pretty big list of clients who just send me repeat business. So I'm not spending much time on auditioning and marketing and those kinds of things. Scripts come in, I record them. I send them out, I invoice. It's a very efficient way of earning an income at this point and the part-time nature was exactly what I wanted. I could do more auditioning, I could get more clients and I could work more hours, but that's not what I want. The point of working from home was the flexibility. It's being the family manager, taking care of life outside of work is my first priority, so when you look at the \$1,500 a month, that's just where I landed based on the amount of work that I'm doing. People with more ambition and more need can certainly audition more and book more work and make more money. That's just where I happened to land at that time and it was fine for me. So the voiceover part of my work is very consistent. It's probably not changed much since then, 1,500, \$2,500 a month, depending on if I'm doing books or not or whatever. The biggest change has been with the online course and the traction that I've been getting in the students that are going through the course. And so at this point I'd say my income is doubled or tripled and it depends on the month with what I'm doing both with voiceover work and with the online course sales and those sorts of things. So it's not super consistent. It's like I said, it could be double or triple on any given month, but it's definitely increased and it's really rolling in that direction, the growth direction to the point where I'm all of a sudden I'm going, whoa, this is a serious deal and now I might need to approach this in more full-time sort of way.

Caitlin: Yeah, I can definitely relate. I can definitely relate and I wanna thank you for clarifying that on your part time hours. And I think that's great that you did it before you quit your full time job because a lot of people want to do that. They're like, I don't wanna jump in and quit everything. Some people want to, they're like, I'm done, I have some savings. And I think if there's that fire under my butt, I can make it happen if I don't have income to fall back on. And I think that strategy works for some people. I'm not one of those people. And so your story actually sounds quite similar to mine when I was starting out with my most, or I should say, my oldest blog Proofread Anywhere, which I started in 2014. I did it just kind of as a side thing in addition to my proofreading income. And I also had repeat clients and I was working... Full time income, I was doing about 43, I think I did 43,000 in 2014 but that was for like 20 to 25 hours a week. Sometimes I would work more and it was just kinda even out. But I didn't ever expect to have my blog take off the way that it did. And so I have a feeling that yours is doing the exact same thing and eventually you're gonna have this sweet little business and a team. And just like me having to really have it set up in a way that it runs like a business instead of just a freelance service, which I completely identify as well with having that little system of you get the work, you do the work and you send it out and then you invoice at the end of the month or you can invoice

it immediately, whatever your method is. But knowing that that was the way it was, I was like, oh, this is reliable and didn't have to market that much at all really. And the work just kept coming and it was comfortable. But at the same time I was like, if I had to do this until I'm 80 because I don't wanna work for somebody else, I don't wanna work retail. I don't wanna only have two hours or two weeks vacation, which feels like two hours. Every year, I don't wanna do that. I need to be a free bird and I don't like routine. But I also don't like change sometimes. And so I need to be more in control I guess was the goal. And so a lot of people listening to this and listening to your story and now your followup are in the same exact boat. And so my story and your story, I think support this, the truth that it is possible to have this lifestyle and it's possible to ease your way into it. And it's possible for things to happen in ways that you don't expect if you're consistent and if you have the guts to start, which is really the whole point of this podcast to see a few people, some hope and some inspiration and some proof. I'm big on proof, proof that it works and that works for regular normal people who maybe feel like they can't do it or maybe you feel like that, it's not for people like them. And these limiting mindsets that we burst through as well on the show. And it sounds like you are definitely on the up and up with that as well especially with your online courses taking off, yeah?

Julie: You know, our stories are so similar. Everything you just said is 100% true and accurate. Everything from just having the guts to get started. You don't have to be qualified, you don't have to be ready, you just have to get to work and start working in the right direction. And if you can do that nights and weekends and keep the comfort of your job, great. Or if you have had it in the corporate world and you're just like, I have to make this work. And like, just like you said, you had a fire under you somewhere. Both ways work, but both of them simply involve, just do it. Just get started.

Caitlin: Getting beyond the I can't or it's too hard for me. Even now I struggle with it. The whole, it's too hard thing or I don't know how or it's too overwhelming. But there're strategies that I've used over and over again and the things that makes it so hard is that every single time it's something new and it looks different. And that's the scary part is that it's new and something you haven't done before 'cause once you get through it you're like, oh, okay, that was easy. And you tend to downplay it, but then something new faces you and you're like crap, this is not what I was expecting or this is different or I can't really, can't do it this time.

Julie: Or do I have the energy again? And you know, you and I both did it, learning everything on our own, developing everything. We even talked about this with our courses. We are one man bands, right? We wrote the script, we shot our own video, we edited and that's so great. We spent a lot of time learning and we did it all on our own and that's great, but you don't have to do it that way now because of online courses like yours and like mine and a gazillion others out there. If you wanna learn something, there are way faster, easier ways. And even at this point in my life where I've got my business set up and working and I'm ready to take it to the next level, I'm not sure I have the energy to slog through learning everything I need to learn about all the changes I need to make. I think I'm at the point where I need to find an expert who's one step ahead of me and learn from them. So it's different ways to proceed forward. You

can do it on your own if that's what you wanna do or that's what's in your budget. But if you can and you're willing, just find an expert, just let them lead you and teach you step by step, you'll still get there and it might be a lot easier.

Caitlin: Yeah, absolutely. And I love how I just combined yeah and absolutely into yeabsolutely. Well, if you're the smartest and most capable person in your business, that's your business, that's your own, and this goes for anybody listening, anybody who has ever had their own business or whatnot. If you're going beyond freelance, especially which many of the people that I've spoken to so far in this season, which has been a total of two, if I'm being honest, but I know that's gonna have that same trend is that they're moving out of freelancing and into starting more of a business with teaching others because that's just the natural flow of things. If you're going in that direction and you want to remain the smartest person or the most capable person, then you're not gonna grow because you become the bottleneck. And that was a huge lesson that I had to learn. And then now it's weird 'cause it's kind of flipped on its head as I am no longer the most skilled person or capable person or even knowledgeable person in my business. I've got my hands on a little bit of everything and I know who's in charge of what, but I could not do their jobs. We'll just put it that way. And I think that's okay. It has to be okay because if I could do all of their jobs and I would probably want to do all their jobs and then I wouldn't have any sanity left. But now I find that I'm struggling a little bit with shame in that, oh, I should be able to do all this stuff. But like, and through this I probably put my head down, but I don't have to. And people were like, are you kidding? If I'm struggling with feeling like I'm an idiot because I don't know how to do Jen's job or Brittany's job or Talia's job like with doing, she was handling our Facebook ads and stuff, then that's not a bad thing. It means I'm smart enough to delegate it out. And I've kind of delegated myself out of a job in many ways, but nobody can record the podcast but me. So that's why I get to do the fun stuff. Which is a good thing. It's good and people love the stories.

Julie: I don't wanna scare people thinking that success is scary and bad because both you and I could have just stayed freelancers just doing the proofreading. Me just doing voice overs, working very part time, making a nice income, having lots of vacations, lots of free time, family time, whatever. You can just stick with that. That's great that if that's your goal, just do that. But once you gain that confidence, you do start to think about, okay, what next? What can I add on? What else can I do? And that's just the next step of growth. But if that scares you, you don't have to go that far. Even just getting in and creating your flexible lifestyle, it can be the end goal.

Caitlin: Exactly. Some people really love service-based, they love working with clients and they are maybe not the most patient of people as teachers. And I honestly identify like that. I'm not really a very patient person when it comes to teaching, which is why online courses are great because I don't have to do, like, a one on one, or face to face with them every day. Like a professor would for example -- it's funny, I used to think I wanted to become a professor but it's probably because I thought PhD sounded cool. I don't know.

Julie: Yeah, well it does.

Caitlin: It does sound cool. But I never went that far. I just was done with school by the time that came around. But yeah, so it's been interesting because I wrestle with that. I'm like I definitely couldn't go back to being service based 'cause it's just, there's so much freedom on the other side. But at the same time when I see a service writer who's just like really digging it, I almost feel a little envious because like man, they're really digging their craft. And I remember those days and it was simpler 'cause you know more money, more problems, but you got more options as well. There's some truth to that. And so you deal with a whole different set of issues and I can definitely relate to wanting to keep things simple. And there's so much value in, and this is another thing that I think we should be clear for the audience on too, is just so nobody gets scared, is that you might be just starting out and nobody jumps from newbie in a skill to teacher in even a year and I did proofreading from 2009 and didn't start teaching it until 2014 and then I was really bad at it and then I got better and better and better. But it took some time. It took some time to be confident enough in your craft, you have to master it. And that's something I teach and I know you teach as well, is that you're gonna have more confidence with more practice. And that's something, especially with proofreaders and I'm sure it's similar with voiceover work is, is realizing that because you wanna be good right out of the gate, who doesn't, right? It's so fun. And nobody is, right?

Julie: I know it's no different than any other job. You have to practice everything, all your skills--

Caitlin: If you stop practicing then your skills can go away. Like if I had to go and revive my transcript, proofreading business, I'd be starting from square one when it comes to conditioning and focus and concentration for that many hours a day, I would have to start over. And so I remember, I know what my students are dealing with and when they're first feeling frustrated like, oh my gosh, like how did Caitlin ever do 60 something pages in an hour. And if they're really easy, 100 pages in an hour because you have to work up to that. And so just remembering those kinds of things in that brains can be adapted and brains can lose skills and brains can gain skills. That's important to remember. And it's gonna take some time and some willingness.

Julie: And you'll know when you're ready for the next step. When people start asking you questions, asking for your help, wondering if you could teach them something. You'll know at that point that you've reached a plateau stage where you are more skilled than others and you're at a point where you know what you're doing and you're confident in it. And that's a point where you can say, all right, if I want to grow and move onto the next level, what's that gonna be? So take the first step to get started and then just get good at it and see what happens from there.

Caitlin: Well, I think that's an important point is when it naturally starts to happen. When you are comfortable and confident in your craft enough to just answer questions and maybe

people start applying what you tell them and you see them get results with what you're teaching and they're getting something out of it and that satisfaction that you receive from them, getting something out of it. And then maybe, I know for me it was also the disappointment when they didn't do anything with it. It was like, well, geez, I don't wanna waste my time. And so it kind of combined into, I want people to be invested in this, but I also don't wanna waste my time. And that's when I was like, okay, well let me write an ebook and see what happens. But absolutely. So let's talk about lifestyle a little bit. What did your life look like? Just a short recap during the last time you were on the show and maybe what kind of stresses or annoyances you're dealing with and how you worked through those.

Julie: Okay. Well, when I was on the show last, I'd actually just moved to Minneapolis maybe a year before that. You know, having a flexible work-at-home jobs sure makes the transition a whole lot easier. My life was pretty darn good and the VO work was great and I had just put together the online course. Probably my biggest stressor at that point was just wondering if all my time and efforts putting the course together were gonna pay off and just wondering what to do next. There's a couple different rules of thinking when you develop an online course. Some people say you need to have your following first. You need to have the people who want your course and your email list and then develop your course. And that's not what I did. I developed my course first and I watched it over and over again. I told myself, you know this is really good. This really does teach what you need to know. And then I had to figure out how to find the people who wanted my help. So I would think I was just at a stage of how do I find these people? What do I do next? And that's when I found you and Work-At-Home Heroes and your Facebook group, which is by and large the best Facebook group for these types of people who want to learn how to work from home because it's not spammy, weird jobs, quick make a buck, just garbage that's out there. This is like real people offering real advice and real opportunities. And so I think it was a real turning point the last time I talked to you on the podcast and was able to reach out to more people in the Facebook group, people who said, you know, I wanna be a voice artist, what do I do? And finally we had an avenue that we could say, listen to this podcast and see if this sounds like what you wanna do and how you wanna proceed.

Caitlin: We've had a lot of interest in it as well. We've had a ton of people, Work-At-Home Heroes, that have been interested in that kind of work. And I'm always telling somebody like every week at least, I think either think or I say it out loud, that man, that person has a great voice. It'd sound great on a podcast or just on the radio or something like that. And that's an indicator that they'd be a good fit for doing voice work I'd say.

Julie: I do that too. I hear people all the time. It's like oh, if I could just have your voice for a few days. And not everybody has the desire to do that with their voice. And you don't have to have a great voice to be a voice artist because when you listen to audio books and things like that, you just need all kinds of voices. We need old ladies. We need young men. We need accents, we need motherly voices. We need inspirational voices. So don't rule yourself out if you don't have one of those booming radio voices that you hear because actually, what's most

popular now is authentic and genuine. Everything has a voice to it now. Videos have voices. You've got podcasts, you've got audio books, and nobody wants to hear the salesy booming announcery voice. We wanna hear genuine real people voices. Don't rule yourself out if you think you don't have that amazing voice. If you're a storyteller, if you're an actor, if you like reading books to children and being really animated or maybe you have character voices or something like that. There's just a million different ways that voices can be used. It's more about having the desire to be animated. And if you like public speaking, you like telling stories, those are good indications that it's probably a field you'd enjoy doing.

Caitlin: I'm glad I said that then. So you could clarify that for the audience 'cause that would be maybe a stumbling block for some people that they would think they'd have to sound like somebody on the radio to be successful at this, even though they really liked speaking and they've always had an affinity for that kind of thing. So, awesome. You had mentioned that you were just getting the course up and running the last time that you're on the show and that you were trying to figure out where to find your ideal audience. Where did you end up finding your ideal audience?

Julie: Well, most of my audience has come from Work-At-Home Heroes.

Caitlin: Nice.

Julie: Yeah. Yay! I started doing some Facebook ads and I probably need help with that. I didn't feel like I was really connecting with people, with the right people. Like I didn't feel like I knew who they were and I'm not sure they knew who I was. So I've had better luck networking with people in the work-at-home world, with other bloggers, people who are just in this space, always discussing work-at-home opportunities, because we tend to congregate and talk together and share ideas. And so with whatever business you're in, networking is so important. Networking's important for finding voiceover jobs. But it's also important if you're trying to sell a product. And again, when I go back to that, I've never enjoyed sales as in selling something. I offer this product to help people. My entire approach is, if this is what you really wanna do, I've created something that I think will help you. I think it takes you step by step and I think it'll get you where you want to be in the end. It's not buy this and you'll get this for free. And buy that, I don't know, I'm not into that. I've forgotten the question by now.

Caitlin: Where you found your ideal audience? You answered it is fine.

Julie: It's networking with people and because you're networking, you're helping each other and it just sort of naturally grows from there.

Caitlin: Yeah, and I think that's the biggest thing people don't really quite understand about marketing is that marketing has such a bad reputation. It's a dirty word to a lot of people, myself included. I just don't even like saying it because it just fills me with this anxiety. But it's really about connecting with people that have an issue that you can solve. And my book "Work

at Home" which is available on Amazon and has a whole bunch of five star reviews at this point, which I'm just finding out.

Julie: Five star ratings?

Caitlin: Yeah, we actually mentioned voice over in there as well. And it's really just networking. It's in my book, "Work at Home" and it talks about how you just connect with people who have a problem that you can solve. And a lot of people just think marketing is about how to make money. And if you put money in your mind first as the thing that you want instead of solving other people's problems, then you're gonna have a problem, your own problem to solve. And so the best thing to do is to make it help solving--

Julie: Help solve other people's problems. That's right.

Caitlin: Make it about other people. And then the money will follow naturally and it'll be more fun 'cause you'll probably find yourself with some friends.

Julie: It feels good and it is fun. So at the end of my course, my students have a chance to send in their audio files to me and I do a voice review. So I'm checking to make sure they have their equipment set up right and things are sounding right and I'm giving them critiques and things to work on. I can't tell you how excited I get when I get voice reviews in because here's someone who, prior to taking the course, had never talked into a microphone, never edited audio. They maybe had a dream or a wish or something like that. But here they did it. I mean I've got something in front of me that I'm listening to. It's a real accomplishment and it's so fun to hear that improvement and then I'll offer them suggestions and sometimes they send me a file back again a couple of months later and I can hear the improvement. Actually dealing with real people and helping them move along with what they wanna do is fun and rewarding and then if you get paid on top of that, that's even better. I got a message on email last night from one of my students and I just printed it to share it with you real quick. She says, "Julie, I'm gonna be your biggest success story. I am already your biggest fan. I used to be a professional singer and have done a great deal of acting. I'm now 59 and I've always felt that I never used the talents God has given me. I've been wanting to do voiceovers for a very long time and have been so overwhelmed with all the information out there that I've actually been paralyzed with anguish and fear. You brought it all together. Thank you."

Caitlin: Wow, what an email!

Julie: I know that sums it up, doesn't it? You can actually get paralyzed with fear because there's overwhelming information. You have an idea in your head and there's a hundred different ways to accomplish what you wanna do. But if you can find a way to go step by step to actually get there, it's such an accomplishment. And if I can help--

Caitlin: Like grass growing too, because that fear is like, well it's not gonna happen, it's not gonna happen. And then you're afraid to take that first step because you can't see the top of the staircase when you don't realize that you're doing something you've never done before. You're building the staircase and you see each step as you take one, another one appears or the ability to build another one appears. And so you actually brought me straight to my next question and we're gonna talk about that F-word, fear and I want to ask you, 'cause we talked about it in every episode towards the end especially, because there's people that are like maybe getting excited, but then they had that fear monster in the back of their mind. And so for our listeners, even after all this time, what I wanna know is, does fear still get in the way as your business is starting to grow?

Julie: I've never had a lot of fear. I've had the craziest career path in the world. I went from human resource management at a bank to doing the weather on the news on TV 6 and 10 news.

Caitlin: Wow!

Julie: Yeah. I don't know. I will say I did go back to school after I started the job for three years to become a meteorologist. But yeah, so I went from working at a bank to doing the 6 and 10 news. So I've never been afraid to take the jump. Partly because when you do that, people have really low expectations for you. You're not coming in as an expert. They know you're brand new and they cut you some breaks. So I've never had that kind of fear. My fear at this point is the growth part of it. It's like we said, all right, this is turning into a serious business. This isn't just work a few hours a day, bring in a little money and go on my happy way. I have a responsibility to my students. I have a responsibility to my affiliate partners. I have a responsibility to myself I guess. And so my biggest fear is, oh boy, how do I tackle this next step? My solution is going to be just getting help. Just going one level above me to someone who provides a service of helping people like me and just take their advice and have them take me along one step at a time. You can do that in the beginning and you can do that on your second step.

Caitlin: I think that's a great advice to get help because a lot of times we think, oh, you work at home, you have to work alone. You can't work with other people. But the reality is you can't do this alone. You can't. And it might kind of seem like, oh man, like I don't wanna have to deal with people. I just want to work from home. I get that, I mean that both some times, but we all have to work together. Humans are not meant to be alone. We are not meant to work alone. We're not meant to live alone all the time, isolating ourselves. We're not supposed to do that. And so even when it comes to growing your business, you have to involve other people at some point. And so I think it's really, really, really good advice. So, just to wrap things up here, what does your life look like now? What ways has your life improved since the last time you were on the show?

Julie: Let's see. Well, definitely my income has increased, but I think that more than anything it's sort of lit a fire on the creative side of course creation. I used to be a teacher. I went to school to be a teacher. So I have a natural inclination to do that. And so now as I am trying to polish up my course, reach out to more people, I'm thinking about other courses or possibly helping other people develop courses. I think it's such a viable form of income for people because everybody knows something they could teach someone else. And so I think that I'm on a definite growth spurt and a little bit of a creative area where I'm just tossing around some ideas, but I have to get real serious and hire somebody to help me automate some bookkeeping and stuff like that. You just have to take it to the next level. I think that's where I'm at right now is I'm willing to commit a little bit more time to my work to take it to the next level. So I think that's what I'm doing.

Caitlin: What is that next level? What's the next and maybe where do you see yourself in the next year or so?

Julie: With the online course, I want to reach more people and streamline it a bit. And I think that that can be done in kind of one big swoop and then I can sit back and monitor. So I think that's a big part of it. But my family is gonna be going through changes here, as daughter goes to college and things like that. So there's just gonna be a lot of family things that will require some time too. So it's not all gonna be about work, but I guess it was kind of surprise to me to see the course take off the way it has and I need to maybe spend some time even thinking about where it needs to go from here. So I may not have a complete answer to that question at this point, but it's nice to have the opportunity to think that way.

Caitlin: Yeah, absolutely. It's all flexible. And you don't have to know all the answers and the reality is we're never gonna know all the answers. Well, Julie, I'm so glad that you were on the show again with us and I want to just say thank you for that and for coming back and sharing where you've been and where you're going with us. Even if you don't know all the answers. You are definitely on the right track. You are growing and you're enjoying it and that's what the most important thing is, you're enjoying this journey because it is a journey, because it's not a destination. So folks at home, you can get the first five chapters of my book "Work at Home" for free by going to workathomeschool.com/book and if you like and follow this podcast, especially this episode with Julie here, please leave us your review on your preferred podcast platform. It really helps us reach more people and bring you more great content. Finally, you can find more episodes at workathomeschool.com/podcast. Julie, thank you again so much for being on the show.

Julie: Thank you, Caitlin. Thank you so much. I've enjoyed talking with you again. You always have these little nuggets of wisdom I take away and I hope everybody else does too. So thank you so much.