

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sarah Michelle

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May

Welcome to *Becoming a Stress-Free Nurse Practitioner*, a show for new NPs and students that want to pass their board exam the first time and make that transition from RN to NP as seamless as possible. I'm your host Sarah Michelle. Now, let's dive into today's episode.

Hey hey, friends, in the last few weeks since posting about my business coach and my CEO school mastermind many of you out there have been reaching out to me about how to start your own business in the nurse practitioner world.

Since the test prep scene is a little bit different from running your own practice or clinic, which is what I feel like most of you are asking about, I thought I would bring Corie May on the show to talk to you guys about getting started in business and also how to successfully manage that business once you get started.

Corie May is one of four co-owners of an esthetics spa in Lexington, Kentucky. And she is here today to not only share all of her business goodies with you in case you ever hope to also work for yourself. And so I definitely want to give a big welcome to you, Corie. Can you just kind of give us a little introduction to you and your nursing journey leading up to where you are now?

Corie: Thank you so much for having me on today.

Sarah: Yeah, absolutely.

Corie: So I actually started as an ER nurse about seven years ago. It's actually where I met one of my other co-owners. We worked there for about, like I said seven years together. And then we went all through nurse practitioner school together, studied for our boards together. And then we both got a job at the same esthetics practice. She actually helped me get the job there, which is kind of funny.

Once we were there, we kind of realized it really wasn't what we thought it was. And so we thought we could do it a lot better and we left and started

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May

our own practice. And we took the other two providers that were there with us. So that's kind of how we started our business together.

Sarah: Yeah, you kind of just made your own thing.

Corie: Yeah.

Sarah: That's really cool that you were able to work with someone that you worked with as a nurse and then went to nurse practitioner school with. I think that's kind of a special connection too.

Corie: Oh, absolutely. We, as nurses, build really strong relationships in the hospital. And so going into business with her was kind of a no brainer. And we were so fortunate to meet the other two people in our practice.

It's so funny, the four of us have such different personalities so a lot of it was just getting to know each other. And we're still learning things every day. But Katie and I are definitely on the front-end business. We kind of had the wild crazy dreams and kind of push us forward.

And then the other two girls are more of like the logistical. They run the numbers, they make sure that we're not overspending and stuff like that. So we really balance each other out really well.

Sarah: That's awesome because you definitely always need your visionary people that can paint that picture and paint the vision. And then you also need your integrators too that can kind of go behind the scenes and kind of bring that vision to life, so to speak.

Corie: That's exactly what we are.

Sarah: So it sounds like you just kind of happened into owning your own business. Was that ever your intent in school or did you think maybe one day?

Corie: It's so funny, I honestly never dreamed of working for myself. And honestly, had we not been kind of forced into it I don't know if I ever would have willingly taken the leap.

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May

When we worked at that other esthetics practice, we trusted the owner to kind of educate us and teach us about esthetics. And once we are there for about four or five months, we realized that it really wasn't a safe environment. He wasn't properly educated to then properly educate us. And so we got to the point where we were like, "We have our license to protect."

And so we were like, "We have to get out of here." And we just took the leap. We hired a business coach, which you know Becca, because we're nurses, we came from the hospital. All four of us did so we had no idea how to run a business. So we definitely needed help in that area.

And once we told her what we were trying to do she was like, "You guys are going to kill it. And you can totally do this." So, yeah, that's kind of how it started. I would have never thought that I would own my own company.

Sarah: I never in a million years, and I truly, genuinely mean like never in a million years would think that I would run my own business today. But now that I'm in it, now I can't imagine doing anything else. Like I genuinely love it so much.

And I love the time freedom as well and kind of getting to be your own person. Because I feel like in the hospital setting it's so different. Everything is so set all the time. But running your own business, there's just so much flexibility in that.

Corie: Oh my gosh, I know. It's so cliché to be like, "Oh my gosh, I could never go back to working for somebody else." But it's so true even though I probably work harder now than I did before. But it's just so different. I mean, we've definitely pulled 12, 16 hour shifts, if you will, working for ourselves. But it's definitely not the same as clocking in and out of a hospital for sure.

Sarah: Absolutely not. And for those of you out there listening, she talked about Becca. Becca is both of our business coaches. And it's such a steep learning curve to jump into business as a nurse or a new nurse practitioner and so I definitely think there's a lot of value out there to having that

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May

additional set of guidance. And I'll also add in too a Mark Cuban quote that I really enjoy, because he said on Shark Tank.

So to paint the picture a little bit, before I had a business coach, I was trying to find business coaching however I could. And so I watched literally every episode of Shark Tank that there was. And Mark Cuban one time he said, "I would rather work 100 hours for myself than 40 hours for someone else." And I was like, "Ooh," I was like, "I feel that so much because I work so many more hours in my business than I ever did as a nurse." But even if I'm working 100 hours a week my enjoyment factor is so much higher.

Corie: Oh, absolutely. I mean, they would run us ragged in the ER, right?

Sarah: I can't even fathom.

Corie: Yeah, I mean, it was a level one trauma center. So, I mean, I would come home some days and just like literally drop. And I still am super exhausted after those long days, but it's like a happy exhausted. It's like, "That was so fun. Let's do it again."

Sarah: Yeah, I always commend the ER nurses because I was an oncology nurse and that's definitely its own speed and pace. I did bone marrow transplant, which is a little bit higher speed. But those ER nurses, that's a whole different level.

Corie: Oh my God, that's so funny because I think the same thing about oncology. Yeah, it's crazy. Like, you know, everybody has their place in nursing, and they need all of us, but it's really cool.

Sarah: Yeah, absolutely. No, it is super cool. So, for people who are like ready to get going in business as a nurse practitioner what do you feel like might be some key things for getting started?

Corie: So I have like three big things that I would suggest. The first one I didn't realize it at the time, but we did this so well in the beginning that we were really fortunate to have done this kind of on accident. But really

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May

surround yourself with people who believe in what you're trying to do and encourage you.

And this has to be pretty intentional. We kind of did it on accident. And where there's four of us, I think we could lift each other up when we were having tough days. But if you don't surround yourself with people that believe in what you're doing, you're not going to take off the way you want to.

Even people that love you the most like your spouse, or your best friends, or your parents, they come from a place of love, and they want to protect you. But a lot of times when they do that, they are just scared of what you're going to do.

It's very hard to tell your family that you're going to leave a well-paying nurse practitioner job to go start your own company. Which is going to take all of your money and your savings, and you have kids at home and daycare and stuff like that. So even though they may not encourage you, because they love you and they want you to have the best outcome, it may hinder how fast you go because they kind of instill that scarcity mindset in yourself.

So definitely surround yourself with people like a business coach. Whether it's another co-owner that you're going into business with. Really put those people around you that are going to lift you up and tell you that you can do it even on the toughest days. Even when you have down months, because that's what's going to keep you going.

And then kind of on top of that, definitely get help with the things that you don't know. Like we kind of said earlier, we're nurses. We're not businesspeople. So making sure you have things like a lawyer and an accountant to help you go through your liability and your insurance, business coaching. Whatever it is that you're weakest in, definitely supplement that with somebody that you can hire out. Even if it's an investment upfront, because if you start a business on unsteady ground, it's

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May

never going to work. So definitely make sure that you have those people around you to help you with the things that you don't know about.

And then always, always, always educate yourself and then educate yourself some more.

Sarah: And again, and again and again.

Corie: And again, yeah. I mean, even esthetics, and it's like this in all of nursing and healthcare is that you never stop learning. And so especially in esthetics it's so important because, number one, you're working on people's faces. So that's always a big risk.

Sarah: Yeah.

Corie: Number two, when you own your own business everyone's kind of looking to you for answers. And you don't have a boss or manager, you're wearing those hats. So you kind of need to educate yourself first so you have the answers. And if you don't know them, you know where to go find them. Because people are going to ask you a lot of questions, and you're going to have to know the answers. So never stop learning for sure.

Sarah: Yeah, I'm thinking a lot of thoughts right now. So I definitely feel like you're absolutely doing it right. In business if people think your goals are a little crazy.

Corie: Absolutely.

Sarah: I know a lot of people looked at me like, "You're starting to test prep company? What are you doing? You made these review courses online?" But I do remember my husband very specifically, he was like, "If this is something that you feel called to do, then go ahead and do it." He's like, "Because I have utmost faith in whatever you decide."

And so having him always in the background being like, "Whatever you want to try, whatever you want to do, just go for it" really gave me that early momentum I needed. Because in the beginning of the beginnings it can be

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May

really easy to just kind of shut down when things get tough, because business is really tough.

And I definitely want to add in too, finding those right people was so crucial for me. My first stop before I even had an accountant was a lawyer. Because I'm like, "Oh my gosh, I have all this intellectual property, I need copyright. I need this over here. And I don't know how to do those things. And how am I going to keep myself best protected?"

And then as soon as I left the lawyers office, I went to the accountant's office. I'm like, "Okay, how do I protect myself? How do I get an LLC?" There's just so many basic pieces that you don't even think of.

And then I really started to tie things together once I started working with Becca. Because I had some of those foundational pieces down, like okay, now how do I grow my business and grow my reach? And that's been a big part of business coaching for me.

Corie: Oh, absolutely. Definitely once you kind of nail down those first initial steps, then it's like, "Okay, now I can take off like."

Sarah: Yeah, the ball is rolling.

Corie: Yeah, and we're protected. We don't have issues with copyrights, but where we do cosmetic injectables, like all of our consents and stuff like that, definitely all that was reviewed by our lawyer, making sure we had the proper liability insurance. And then you have to have liability insurance for your brick and mortar and stuff like that. So there's just so many things that I never even dreamed of thinking about until I hired a lawyer, and he asked those questions.

Sarah: And you're like, "Oh, I don't have the answers. Teach me your ways."

Corie: Yeah, exactly.

Sarah: What do you feel like, overall, is your favorite piece of being an entrepreneur?

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May

Corie: Well, you kind of said it before, and like I said, it is cliché, but the freedom is definitely the best part. I mean, just for example, just today I had a meeting with one of my business partners about this new company, a second company that we're starting. I wasn't in the clinic today, but I had a meeting with her. And then I had to do other admin stuff.

And we were sitting at Whole Foods doing it, we weren't like in an office. And I was able to in between two meetings I went to the Loft and went shopping. So it's like even though I'm working hard, it's in like chunks at a time. And in between those chunks of time I can go and do other things that I enjoy or get the grocery shopping done. You can ever leave the ER and go get your grocery shopping done during a 12 hour shift.

Sarah: Never.

Corie: Yeah, I hardly got lunch, you know? So definitely the freedom. I mean, don't get me wrong, a lot of people think that the freedom means lack of work.

Sarah: 0%.

Corie: Yeah, it definitely is not the same. It's like kind of what we said before, when you are doing what you want to do, it doesn't feel like work. But it's definitely not like clocking into the hospital.

But yeah, I mean, especially in the beginning you don't go into business thinking that you're going to be like taking eight vacations a year. I mean, maybe you are. Maybe you are, we definitely weren't. Things are tight in the beginning, but you kind of—

I saw a quote, I'm probably going to butcher it, but it basically was like, “Entrepreneurs are those who are willing to live a few years tough, basically, so they can enjoy the rest of their life living in wealth or whatever it is, the way they want to.” And I think that's so true.

Like the first couple of years, and we've been very fortunate in our business to have four business owners to kind of share the load. But definitely in the

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May

beginning don't think that you're not working hard just because it is going to look a little different than when you were at the hospital or working in a clinic. But yeah, it's hard work for sure.

Sarah: Yeah, I feel like on the flip side of that freedom for me as an entrepreneur, like at the end of the day if something's going horribly wrong, it doesn't matter if it's like 2pm or 2am. It all kind of boils down to me if something's really off. And so there's a lot of balls to juggle and that's probably my least favorite because it's just a lot of responsibility.

Do you feel like having co-owners helps with that? Like do you guys have kind of just designated roles? Or how does that look?

Corie: Yeah, so we've definitely matured in this aspect, partly thanks to Becca. But like I said, we were kind of, in the beginning, all doing a little bit of everything. And it definitely hindered it because I like I said, I'm not a numbers girl. So the money side isn't my forte. So we've kind of had to identify each other's strengths, and then put those roles with those strengths.

So for example, Krystle and Emilee, they are the money people. So one of them does all of our expenses, and the other one does all the profits and sales. And so once they combine their forces, then we get our profits and we're able to go from that.

And then Katie and I are kind of the dreamers. I work on more of like the sales side. So how we optimize our now employees, and how to increase their sales. Because that's another piece of the puzzle when you're just getting started.

You know, you come from a nurse, and you're always helping people, helping people, [inaudible] a product. That was kind of a big learning curve, is how to sell something as a nurse and coming from that medical education that we have. So that was definitely different to kind of wrap our heads around.

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May

But definitely the four co-owners overall, I think, has been way more of a blessing than a hindrance in our case. The first lawyer that we actually looked into hiring, he's like, "So there's four of you?" And we were like, "Yes, we're four 25% owners." And he's like, "Yeah, that's not going to work." He was like, "It didn't work for the Beatles. It's not going to work for you."

Sarah: It's not going to work for you.

Corie: Yeah, so we didn't hire him.

Sarah: I don't blame you.

Corie: Yeah, so it definitely took a while to know each other's personalities. But I think we're better for it, for sure.

Sarah: Yeah, it definitely sounds like you guys have figured yourselves out. You know, there's always like those initial kinks as you learn how to work with people, especially in that capacity. But once you've got your rhythm down, I mean, I feel like it can only take off from there.

Corie: Oh, absolutely. And just having strict boundaries if you do work with like a co-owner if you open a practice of some kind. Giving yourself very strict boundaries and not micromanaging each other. Having that trust, trusting them to get their job done was one of the key components for us in the beginning. Because, like you said, we would be texting each other, like friendly texts, and then it would be like business texts.

Sarah: Work, work, work.

Corie: Yeah, and so we had to get like— And there's four of us so you can imagine. I mean, you guys have all been in group texts, I mean, it's like all of a sudden, you'll have 50 text messages to look at if you're down for 15 minutes.

So now, for example, instead of sending texts about business we only email each other. Or we don't talk about business after a certain time, like when our office hours are done, or after basically about 8pm is when we

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May

really shut it off. And we will not talk after that about business, unless it's an emergency of course.

Sarah: Yeah, it's interesting you bring that up, because Becca talked about that on her podcast recently. It's what she does with her husband, because I mean her husband is essentially her business partner in a lot of ways. Even though he's kind of running her initial business now, and she's got this new coaching business that she's kind of really working on.

But even me and my husband, because we talk— Well, my husband works from home now, I work mostly from home. And so it's so easy to just talk about business all day long and let it be intermingled and everything else that we're doing.

But at the same time you've got to be a person and a human as well. I'm not a business owner every second of the day. I've got to take some human time and kind of decompress. And it doesn't have to all be about the business.

Corie: Exactly. Yeah, my husband's not in my business with me. So as soon as I walk in the door, I take my business hat off. So that helps a whole lot.

Sarah: Yeah, it's a lot different for both of us to mostly work from home.

Corie: I can't imagine.

Sarah: Yeah, we're together all the time.

Corie: Oh yeah, we would kill each other.

Sarah: Now, if you were to kind of like start your business over, start fresh, is there anything that you did in the beginning that you would absolutely be sure to do again? Like anything right off the bat that really kind of helped your success and growth?

Corie: Yeah, so aside from surrounding yourself with the right people, as soon as, and this is the first step we took because we came from a practice

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May

where we didn't feel like we were properly trained. So definitely the first big investment that we made was to get certified as cosmetic injectors.

Sarah: That makes sense.

Corie: Yeah, and not that you have to be certified. It's kind of like how they have a critical care certification or emergency nurse certification.

Sarah: Oncology certification.

Corie: I'm sure they had one too. It's kind of the same thing, it's not a job requirement but it just credentials you as a provider. So especially in esthetics there are a lot of procedures that are on-label or FDA approved. But I would say probably 80% of what we do is off-label uses of those products.

So esthetics is one big gray area. Which was a huge adjustment for us, because we come from evidence based, evidence based, evidence based.

Sarah: It's all the time 100%.

Corie: Yeah. And then you go into esthetics, and we were just constantly searching for education. And I'm like, "Wait a second, this doctor or nurse practitioner is doing it this way. And this guy's doing it this way. What's the best way to do it?"

And neither of them are wrong, they're just different. And so you kind of have to educate yourself on all the ways and then decide which one you want to do. And we're constantly trying new injection techniques and different things and constantly having trainings.

But definitely get a good solid training right off the bat. Just like immerse yourself in the industry, especially in esthetics, or whatever type of business you want to. If it's just the business owning, they have business conferences that you can go to just to kind of immerse yourself in how to run a business. So whatever it is that you're trying to get into, definitely go full tilt and get into it, get educated.

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May

Sarah: Yeah, I think there's so much value to learning as much as you can. I'm always listening to podcasts and audiobooks and I'm always trying to absorb, absorb, absorb. Because I know if I can even absorb like small fractions of whatever is in those podcasts or books, not only am I going to be better served for it, but my business is going to be better for it as well. So I think that's a really important point too.

Corie: Oh, absolutely. We constantly have trainings that we not only train our staff on but train ourself on. And especially in the esthetic industry alone, I mean, you don't learn anything about it in school.

Sarah: That's that zero.

Corie: Literally zero. So yeah, it's not even like we had a little education about it. And I had never had cosmetic injectables before I started working in that other esthetics practice. So I was a newbie to it as a client, as a patient, and also as a provider. So yeah, the learning curve is definitely big.

And even though it's cosmetic injectables there's a lot of like emergencies that can happen. It's still just as scary sometimes as it would be working in a diabetes clinic or adjusting medications.

Sarah: Yeah, it's a liability.

Corie: Yeah, there's still a lot of risks that are involved that you need to know about so you can be a safe injector. So education has got to be a number one priority all the time.

Sarah: Can you kind of walk us through a little bit this new educational program that you and your partners have created to try to bridge this gap since there is nothing taught about esthetics in school?

Corie: Yeah. So, once we kind of got through our first year as a company we were like, "You know what? We were very fortunate to have a lot—" We had another nurse practitioner, that she was closing her practice in the beginning. And she actually gave us all of her patients because she was closing hers.

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May

Sarah: Oh, that's so helpful.

Corie: Yeah, that kind of definitely lifted us off the ground. But she was seasoned in esthetics, and definitely gave us a lot of guidance and is still a mentor to this day. And so we found that so helpful.

She was really the only voice of, not reason, but she was really our only guiding force in the beginning. And we just found that so valuable that we really want to be able to offer that to other people getting started, whether they want to open their own practice or if they just want a place to start in esthetics.

A lot of people really don't know where to start. It's kind of a tough industry to crack into if you don't know somebody or whatever. So our Esthetic Master Plan is our second company that we've now started. It is a two day training course. So the first day is all kind of business training and then some anatomy. Obviously, like I said, being safe injectors is most important, so knowing anatomy is where we start.

We'll give you all the tips and tricks of like how you start an LLC. Like bare bones basic, because we didn't know how to.

Sarah: Foundational knowledge base.

Corie: Yeah, so basically how you start your company, the steps you need to take. And then also day two is live basic injection techniques. So it's going to be so fun. Our first one is actually tomorrow.

Sarah: Oh wow.

Corie: Yeah, so we're super excited. But yeah, we kind of fumbled through our first year as entrepreneurs, so our goal is to help people fumble less, if you will. And definitely start with that education because we really struggled finding the right education, and the appropriate education. And we worked in a practice that had horrible education.

So we really want to make sure that when there are new injectors out there, that they're properly trained and have resources. And we really just want to

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May

elevate the whole industry. The community over competition, a lot of people think esthetics is kind of catty and we just really want to create that sense of community within the esthetic industry. So we're really excited.

So we're doing it once a month. So our next one, we have one in August and September. And I think there's only one or two seats left in each of those.

Sarah: Oh wow, you guys are booming.

Corie: Yeah, so it's filling up really fast and there's limited availability to begin with. So if that sounds like something that you're interested in, or you're ready to start your own company, this would definitely be for you.

So whether you're a nurse, nurse practitioner, really even doctors or PAs, it's really for anybody that's looking to get into the industry and start their own company. You can go to our website, it's www.4estheticslounge.com. It's the number four, E-S-T-H-E-T-I-C-S-LO-U-N-G-E. And then you can also follow us on Instagram @4estheticslounge as well, we do a lot of education on there, too. So definitely check it out if it's something that you want to do.

Sarah: So are your visionaries or your integrators going to be teaching this weekend? Or do all four of you teach?

Corie: That is such a funny question. So, our integrators, they compiled all of the slides and information for the business side of it. And then Katie and I, the visionaries, we did all of the live injectable stuff. It wasn't till after we did our own side that we realized that the integrators definitely don't want to do the presenting.

This first course all four of us will be teaching mainly so they can kind of reteach Katie and I all of the back-end part of the business. And then probably the next couple courses it will just be Katie and I doing the teaching, and then kind of setting up the production. But yeah, it's going to be a really cool event.

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May

And something else about the event that most other trainings don't do is it includes all your product.

Sarah: That's a big deal.

Corie: Yeah, it's a huge deal. And a problem that we actually ran into when we were trying to get ourselves trained was how do you acquire a product for training because it can be very, very expensive. So yeah, it's going to be an amazing course. The next two courses are still at our introductory rate. And then after September the price will go up. So definitely get in while we're still at that introductory rate.

Sarah: Yeah, and I love your vision too. Because you know I'm always talking to people behind the scenes about collaboration over competition. Because it can be so easy to do in this nurse practitioner space. But I was like, "Y'all, if we all work together, imagine the profession that we can create." If we could all just like get out of our own heads a little bit and be like, "I help you, you help me" imagine what the world would look like.

Corie: Oh my gosh, I know. It's funny, it kind of reminds me when that one person on that talk show had the doctor's stethoscope, and oh man, the nurses just banded together.

Sarah: Yeah, it was boom, boom.

Corie: Yeah, it was like a force to be reckoned with. And so I was like, "Yeah, if we just create more community, we're pretty much unstoppable."

Sarah: Yeah, I absolutely agree. Thank you so much, Corie, for coming on the show today, sharing knowledge with me and all of your listeners. And I wish you all the best with your new course too.

Corie: Thank you so much. We're so excited. I loved getting to talk with you.

Sarah: Yeah, and you guys, I know she said it a few minutes ago but I wanted to ask some extra questions. So you can follow them

Ep #26: Starting Your Own Business with Corie May

@4aestheticslounge, and that's on Instagram. And then you guys have a website too, right?

Corie: Yes, yep. Just 4aestheticslounge.com.

Sarah: All right, that's it. I'll talk to you guys next week.

As an extra bonus, friends, if you're looking for support, no matter what phase of your nurse practitioner journey that you're currently in, I have communities available for both students and new nurse practitioners, In these communities we work to uplift one another and grow this profession together every single day. Links to join will be included for you in the show notes.

Thanks for listening to *Becoming a Stress-Free Nurse Practitioner*. If you want more information about the different types of support we offer to students and new NPs, visit stressfreenp.com. See you next week.