

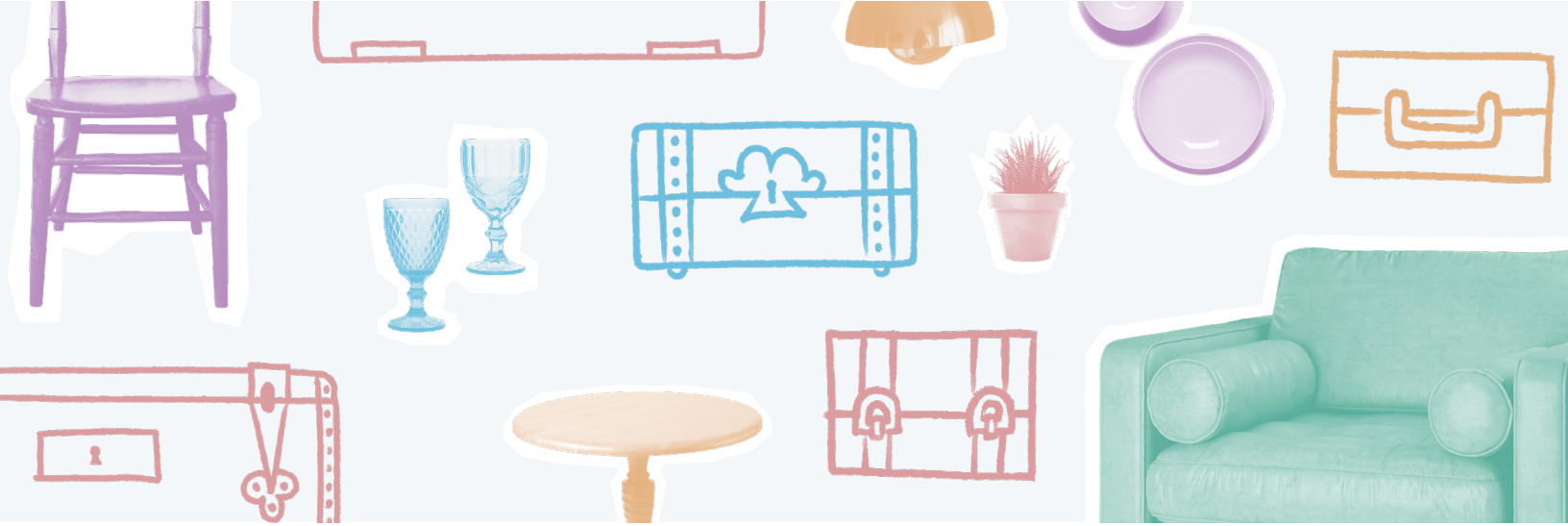
The
**TRUNK
SHOW**

With RW ELEPHANT

SEASON 2 EPISODE 4



**BUILDING RENTAL BUSINESS SUCCESS
ON ANOTHER'S FOUNDATION WITH
COLLECTED & CO.**



Purchasing an existing business and making it your own comes with its own set of challenges. Jacqueline Johannesson is here to walk us through the process. After buying Collected & Co. from a close friend, she and her husband have taken the business to new heights...and learned plenty along the way!



What's in this episode:

- A look at buying a business from a friend
- How Jacqueline and her husband made Collected & Co. their own
- How to build on someone else's collection
- Growing your core services, like, adding event planning to the mix
- How to handle client disappointment, both before and after it happens



QUOTES

“What can we do to really stay ahead of the market and just push Minneapolis to be something that you just don't see all the time?”

- Jacqueline Johannesson

“Would that be easy? Yes. **But we're never about the easy.**”

- Jacqueline Johannesson

“It sounds like you don't want to just fulfill the vision;
you want to cast the vision.”

- Allison Howell

“So for our lounge furniture, we try to, on the third time it's going out, it's got to make some sort of return, whether it's three dollars, **it has to bring something in.** We know that there are some pieces, like our dining chairs, that's going to take more rentals to bring that back in. We want our pieces to, you know, hopefully last a couple to three seasons before we have to retire something out.”

-Jacqueline Johannesson

“**We've worked really hard to build great relationships** with the other vendor partners in the city to be trusted, to say, ‘they're the people who are willing to take a little bit of a risk sometimes.’”

-Jacqueline Johannesson

“We learn something new every single day, every single event.

There's always something that we are learning, whether it's from a client, an experience, an event professional who knows more than us because we are not naive to say we don't know half of it. Like, we're always learning and growing, which is what you need to do in order to continue to grow and have a successful business.”

-Jacqueline Johannesson

“When you start out, you're thinking of all the beautiful things you're going to create, and that's sort of the primary stuff of your vision and your dreams. But, **a big chunk of what you do is actually move furniture around.**”

-Allison Howell

“There's always room for growth. There's always room for growth in your business. There's room for growth personally, always. Like we always need to strive to be better the next day. **We can always wake up and do better.**”

-Jacqueline Johannesson

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

Allison Howell

Hello! I'm Allison Howell. And you're listening to The Trunk Show. You've probably caught on by now, but in every episode I sit down with a leading event rental pro to glean some wisdom from their rental adventures. The show is brought to you by RW Elephant, Mighty Inventory Management Software, designed to help you conquer the chaos in your event rental business and reclaim your creativity. Because the world needs more of the beautiful events and environments you create. In this episode, Jacqueline Johannessen walks us through the journey of purchasing an existing rental business, making it her own, and taking it to new heights.

Jacqueline Johannesson

I am Jacqueline Johannesson. I am one of the owners of Collected & Co. based out of Minneapolis, Minnesota. I own the business with my husband, Russ, and we do all sorts of event production from planning, event design, and specialty rentals.

Allison Howell

So what attracted you to the industry initially?

Jacqueline Johannesson

I loved the just aspect of creating something experiential for people and those moments and the feelings that people get when having an event or going to something that just makes them just kind of forget about their everyday life and just feel special for a minute. And I really loved that.

Allison Howell

Well, how did you get started in events? Because you didn't start in rentals.

Jacqueline Johannesson

I did not. So it's funny, my wedding background--which I was never the girl that was like, Oh my gosh, weddings--started, I worked at a wedding salon in high school and helped sell wedding dresses, which is funny. But event background then really started after college in Chicago. I helped curate luxury social events, so partnering with the best salons, bars, hotels in Chicago to bring curated events to our clientele. And then moved up to Minneapolis, my husband and I started an event venue.

Allison Howell

Wow. Well, tell me more about the venue. What's the venue like? Do you still have it? What's that process? How did you get into that?



Jacqueline Johannesson Yeah. So the venue is--we bought it as a family property. And it's beautiful. It's a fifty five acre property in Wisconsin, and there's this big red barn. It took us--Russ and I renovated a lot of it by ourselves, except for like the structural work, roof, all of that worked with somebody who did barn restoration. So it was a barn venue. And, yeah, opened it up in 2014. We had our first event.

Allison Howell OK.

Jacqueline Johannesson It was something we knew probably was going to be short term because we lived in Minneapolis and the venue was an hour and 15 minutes away. We don't own the venue. Well, we own the property, but we don't run the venue anymore. When we decided to purchase Collected, there was about two seasons where we were just trying to manage it all. And it got just to be too much with little kids and running back and forth.

Jacqueline Johannesson In 2017, we were approached to purchase Collected and Co. So that is where we then purchased the company and got into the event rental side of the business because it was something that had always interested Russ, like drop things off, not have to be there for the event and not have to deal with the guests instead of owning an event venue where you have to deal with the guests all the time.

Allison Howell So is that how you met Marie is through the venue?

Jacqueline Johannesson So Marie Roddy was the previous owner. She started it in 2012. She called it Collected, I think, Vintage Rentals. Then it went to Collected Rentals, and then she went through a big rebrand in 2016 and changed the branding to Collect & Co. Marie and I met actually, we were both working at Anthropologie, and little did we know we were doing our first shoot out at the barn. And then, lo and behold, pulls Marie with a bunch of furniture to do the shoot. We were like, what are you doing here? And we just had never talked about, like, we're starting a venue.

Allison Howell Sure.

Jacqueline Johannesson She was doing the rentals and then we had always just stayed in touch. We became friends and good challenges to each other like, Hey, have you thought about this, about your company? Hey, have you thought about this in your company? Yeah.



Allison Howell

OK. So was it out of the blue when she approached you about buying it, or was this something that you knew was coming?

Jacqueline Johannesson

Um, I would say a little bit of both. I mean, more so we knew it was potentially coming. We had started talking about, I started telling her, You know, Russ is really interested in rentals. And then one day she called and wanted to sit down at dinner and asked us about what it would look like for us to purchase the company from her because she was—. She loved it, but she was looking to move and the style of where she was looking to move was not the same as Minneapolis, which makes sense because styles are different everywhere you go, so.

Allison Howell

Yeah. Wow. OK, so what did she say? She said, Hey, do you want to buy my business or what did that conversation look like?

Jacqueline Johannesson

She was. She was just like, Hey, I value our friendship. I think that you can take Collected to way bigger heights than I can. We are looking to move and she's like, I really would love to talk to you about what it would be like for you and Russ to purchase this. And I will be honest, at first, after we kind of went through the conversation, I was like, We can't. Like, we're too strapped out with, like, our eldest was not even two, the barn was super busy.

Jacqueline Johannesson

We were just, we were tired, and we knew we were going to have more kids. And then I would say about a month later, we came back and were talking a little bit further. And we just, we were like, Yep, this is something we need to do. Like, it is. We think that we can really take this on and make it into something great.

Allison Howell

Yeah.

Jacqueline Johannesson

She just went through a great rebrand and had really good connections in the city. She was starting to get more well known. So she really did lay out a great foundation for us to really kind of step in, kick it off, and be really successful here in our market.

Allison Howell

And so at that point, you said, OK, we want to buy it. What was the negotiation process like?



Jacqueline Johannesson Originally, she had come to us with a number, and then we had kind of worked through some things when she originally came to us and we had said, like, no, then we negotiated a little bit to be like, this would make sense for us. So we did go back and forth a little bit. But it was beneficial on both parts. Marie, we are still great friends.

Allison Howell And so at that point, were you and Russ both working full time in the venue? Or did you have side gigs too? What was the status? What else was going on besides the venue and buying a rental business?

Jacqueline Johannesson Yes. So Russ was full time in the venue, and I had a full time job as a digital project manager at a big healthcare company in the Twin Cities.

Allison Howell OK.

Jacqueline Johannesson Yes.

Allison Howell So you were doing that. You take on this new venture, too. How did you kind of imagine the next path? What was your next step?

Jacqueline Johannesson Yeah. So Russ and I are not sitters, so which is why we were like, Oh my gosh, like if we buy this, we have to go. Like, there is no sitting. There is a gap in the marketplace. We know that. We need to take that opportunity.

Allison Howell Yeah.

Jacqueline Johannesson So before we had even signed the paperwork, we knew we were going to be doing this, Russ had already started designing tables,.

Allison Howell OK.

Jacqueline Johannesson And we had started trying to sell some of those designs to people. So it was, our big step was we need to add farm tables and dining chairs. We started doing that. That was the big thing. And then we slowly just started, kind of, evolving what the inventory was going to be. As every specialty rental company that kind of started in the early 2010s, all started as vintage, pretty much, and what you could collect and things like that, and we really started to refine that a little bit.



Allison Howell Sure.

Jacqueline Johannesson And then we stepped in and really started to say, OK, what is our stamp on this market? What are we going to do? And we had always said we were going to challenge the Minneapolis market to be things and bring in inventory that you're not going to always see here. So you may see some of these things in California or Texas or Chicago or Atlanta, but we try to stay true to we want to be original to Minneapolis. Yeah. So we really focused on that.

Allison Howell Right. That seems pretty risky. Did that feel like a risk?

Jacqueline Johannesson I think we partnered with really good planners early on who trusted our vision and had some of the same kind of clientele to really say, Let's take a look at, you know, we want your event to feel different. We don't want your event to feel like the classic Minnesota that 10 of your friends are going to have. And people really bought that, and they're still they're still buying that.

Jacqueline Johannesson We today, our focus on anything that we are going to design is what is true and authentic to our clients. And we want our clients and their guests to walk into their event, and be like, That's so them. That's not anybody else. So how can we make that personalized stamp on their event?

Jacqueline Johannesson And so it's worked. And we've always said, you know, we're really open to bringing on new inventory. If there's something that isn't here in the marketplace, in the Twin Cities, let's go find it for our clients. If they're looking for something, let's go make something custom. What can we do to really stay ahead of the market and just push Minneapolis to be something that you just don't see all the time?

Allison Howell So it sounds like you are pretty aware of the demand. You're really just trying to fill that gap. Do you feel like you're also creating some of that demand? Or do you have a sense that people want this before you bring it there?

Jacqueline Johannesson So we, I would say in the past year and a half, have started creating things on our own. What's inspiring us? Where do we want to see this market go? Not just what clients are coming and asking us for. There's always going to be that. But we have started to say, Yep, let's get into—we know that private resident weddings are going to be a big thing next year, 2023. So what is the kind of inventory that we want to make a mark at these homes.



Allison Howell Right.

Jacqueline Johannesson We have to think about that logistically, how things are going to work. And this year, our, like our Colt Collection is a completely custom collection that started from one piece that went to another backdrop that went to an arbor, that went to lounge collections. That just started from an idea that we had and it's one of our most popular collections. So we're able to now say, Hey, here's the things that we like. Let's send it out there. Let's create these things before clients are asking for them.

Allison Howell Yeah, it seems like that's a pretty enjoyable process for you. It seems like you really thrive in that creativity, but it also doesn't just feel arbitrary. You're not just like creating for creation sake, you're doing that with certain people in mind. Right?

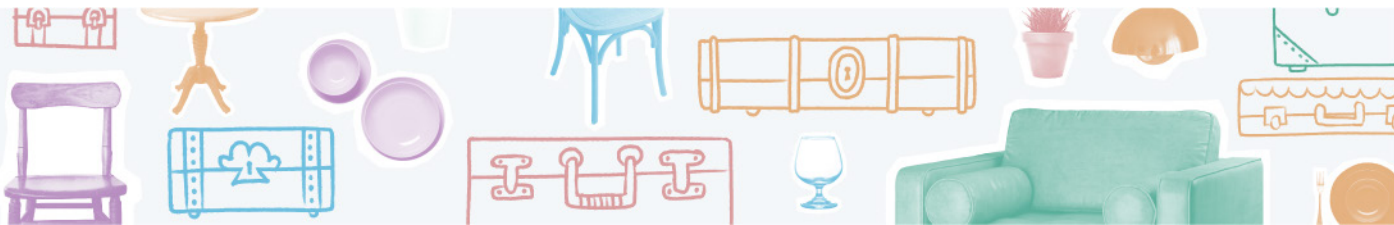
Jacqueline Johannesson Yes. You have to have the creative mind, but you have to have the business mind of, you know, if we're going to create this, we have to sell it and people have to like it. So there are some pieces that we'll create that don't get the biggest buzz. That's going to happen if it's something that we love or we bring in. But we really try to have a tap on kind of the style and evolution and where things are going. But it is really fun to have those custom projects that are true to who we are and what we love.

Allison Howell Well, tell me more about "true to who we are and what we love". What do you think are characteristics or values that people think of when they think of the brand Collected & Co.?

Jacqueline Johannesson I think people--and it's funny, because what my personal style may not be always the events that we designed.

Allison Howell OK.

Jacqueline Johannesson We say that we're not your copy and repeat event production company. We try to make things very specialized to every single client. Doesn't mean that you can't have the same charger and table and things like that, because that's going to happen. But we're not going to take the same designs and just give them to client after client after client. Would that be easy? Yes, but we're never about the easy.



Allison Howell You restored a 100 year old barn. It sounds like you're not really invested in easy.

Jacqueline Johannesson Yes. I think it's that bold, traditional modern feel. Because we'll do traditional, but in a way that brings in, so it doesn't feel like your classic wedding, or your classic event. We want to make sure that what we're doing is classic so that you can look back 10, 20 years later and still have that same event. But what were ways that made it stand apart in the time? Yeah.

Allison Howell Do you feel like that's what Collected & Co. was already known for when you purchased the brand? Or do you think it's evolved to that today?

Jacqueline Johannesson I think it's evolved to that. I think there was--Marie was very creative. Marie is way more creative than I will ever give myself credit for being. But I'm hard on myself. I tend to think I'm more logistical than the creative mind. But she was very known for that, like she used to, when we were working together at Anthropologie, she was very much into the displays in the stores. Those are very creative. She would help create and come up with some of those ideas that were coming down from corporate. So there is an aspect of that that was there. And then we've just helped evolve upon that.

Allison Howell Yeah, yeah. Well, I'm interested, it sounds like you have some similarities, but was there a training process when you took over the business? What kind of institutional knowledge was passed on?

Jacqueline Johannesson The biggest thing I remember, we sat down for like a really long dinner at our house once, and the biggest training thing was going through RW Elephant. That was the biggest thing.

Allison Howell Great. Yeah.

Jacqueline Johannesson Yep. How do we start like proposals? How do we add things to the website, adding new inventory? What that looks like? That was the biggest, I would say, training process. Sending like having some custom proposals that she would do. We went through some of like the inventory that she was looking to potentially bring into collections. But I would say the biggest thing was just RW Elephant and we had to know how that was going to work because that is our lifesaver. Yes.



- Allison Howell** Yeah. So you didn't you didn't practice packing trucks with her or you did over things like that.
- Jacqueline Johannesson** No, I'm going to be completely honest, and one of our biggest regrets was not taking a picture of--she had everything in a storage unit--not taking a picture of the storage unit when we saw it for the first time.
- Allison Howell** Was it packed to the gills?
- Jacqueline Johannesson** Yes.
- Allison Howell** You had to take everything out to get one item out?
- Jacqueline Johannesson** You had to take everything out to get one piece out. We had a big, like, launch party. The night we signed the paperwork, we signed it, like, on a trunk of a car right after the party. Like, they were leaving the next day to move, so it just...
- Allison Howell** Oh my goodness.
- Jacqueline Johannesson** And then, yeah nothing on how to load a truck. We were just like, We'll figure it out.
- Allison Howell** Yeah. I'm interested at that point, what things did you want to continue for certain and what things did you change fairly quickly? You talked about buying inventory, but what other things did you create continuity with, and what things did you put your stamp on immediately?
- Jacqueline Johannesson** Yeah. So I would say there was nothing that she was doing that we said, we're going to stop doing this. There were pieces that we were going to say, OK, we're going to discontinue this. This isn't where we see the brand going. So some of the biggest things we did right away were adding in some of those new inventory items. And then one of the biggest things which took a while for people to get to know that we did, was adding in that planning and event design side of the house.



Jacqueline Johannesson So we say Collected & Co. is an event production company with our planning and design side and then our rental side of the house. So we'll have full service planning clients, design clients, and then we will have rental clients. Sometimes they cross over. Sometimes they don't. I'm an event planner and I also work with every event planner here in the Twin Cities, so we do--. That was the biggest change. So that logistical of planning them was my bread and butter. So we knew we wanted to add that in right away.

Allison Howell Yeah. OK, tell me more about that because I've seen so many models. Some people, you know, are a florist and a rental company. Some people have a floral company and a rental company with two separate brands. I see people who have a huge scope of services and some people who say, like, I'm staying in this one lane, all we do is drop off and pick up, you know? So I'm really interested to know about your decision making process, about adding planning to the existing brand. What was going on for you there?

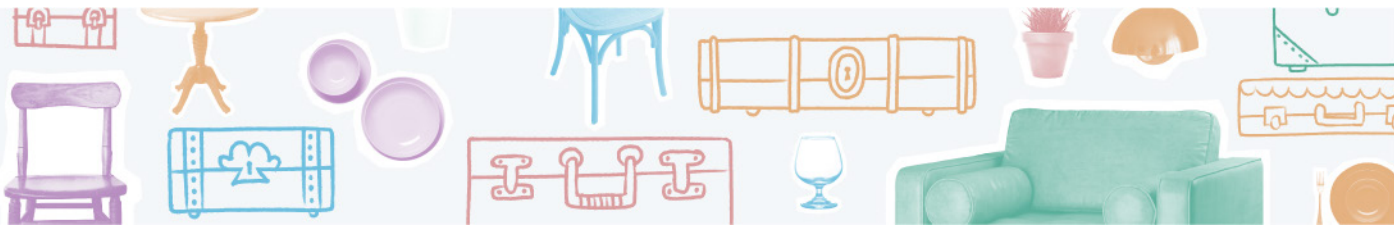
Jacqueline Johannesson So I loved working with clients and working more in depth with them to create that guest experience. And I knew just on the rental side, I wouldn't be able to get the stamp as much as I wanted to. We partner with some fabulous event planners in the city and they bring us in to help them with the guest experience as well from a rental side.

Allison Howell Sure.

Jacqueline Johannesson But there was aspects that I was like, OK, I want to be able to make our mark and create these events from start to finish and be able to plan the whole thing, see the whole thing through. And we knew to do that, we needed to add the event planning side to the business. And it was something that I had done in Chicago. We were offering it out at the farm for anybody who wanted it. And what we kind of say is I manage our event design planning side and then Russ is more on the rental operations side of the business.

Allison Howell Sure, sure. So it sounds like you don't want to just fulfill the vision; you want to cast the vision.

Jacqueline Johannesson Yes. Mm-Hmm.



Allison Howell

And you mentioned you work with a lot of other planners. Is that ever a problem being in competition, essentially? Do you feel like there are people who hesitate to send you rental clients because you also offer planning?

Jacqueline Johannesson

No, I, we haven't run into it. We'll have people who are planners will call and be like, Is your inventory only available to your clients? And I'm like, Absolutely not. It's funny because some of our biggest competition when it comes to event planners, are our best event planning clients.

Allison Howell

Or your best event rental clients?

Jacqueline Johannesson

Yes, they're our best event rental clients. We partner really well with other planners in the city and just say, Hey, yeah, tell me what you want. And it's, yeah, typically just really fluid. And yeah, I haven't run into any issues.

Allison Howell

Well, that's great. For somebody who's not familiar with your collection, tell us what's in it. What do you actually carry?

Jacqueline Johannesson

Yeah. So we say our style is modern, traditional. We are more of that specialty boutique rental. We don't have five of the same sofa, but we carry lounge furniture, sofas, side tables, coffee tables, all that. So our lounge furniture is probably our most popular here in the Twin Cities. We do specialty dining, so tables, chairs, we have backdrops, structures, rugs. We have a little bit of smallgoods, lanterns, things like that. Those are things that we're not really adding to our collection. We've dabbled in some tabletop. We're still trying to figure out if that's somewhere we want to go or not.

Allison Howell

It's a whole other animal than the big pieces.

Jacqueline Johannesson

Yes, it is a beast. Yeah, so bars anything specialty that you need for events. We don't do tents, we don't do linens.

Allison Howell

So how do you decide when to buy and when to make? Because you've got these big visions and it seems like you have a lot of capacity to make things yourselves in house. How do you make that decision?



Jacqueline Johannesson It comes down to cost and what can we rent a piece for? And also dining tables, nine times out of ten, we're going to have to make them because the cost to buy them and just having them get damaged and transporting tables that they tend to get dinged sometimes. And then also, what does--tables. The legs have to come off. How do we store them? All of that kind of stuff.

Jacqueline Johannesson Backdrops, we always custom make. We have some great fabricators that we work with that is--they're very skilled at what they do and we partner with them saying, Here's our vision. How can we go about it? And then all lounge furniture, you got to buy it. There is no way we're going to try ever doing upholstery and house, ever.

Allison Howell Do you have particular expectations for your pieces in your collection? Do you expect to sort of hit a certain return on your investment within a particular amount of time when you're making those purchasing decisions?

Jacqueline Johannesson Yeah. So for our lounge furniture, we try to, on the third time it's going out, it's got to make some sort of return, whether it's three dollars, it has to bring something in. We know that there are some pieces, like our dining chairs, that's going to take more rentals to bring that back in. We want our pieces to, you know, hopefully last a couple to three seasons before we have to retire something out.

Allison Howell Sure. Right.

Jacqueline Johannesson And we're--to have this stuff that lasts a little bit longer, we have expectations that our stuff looks great, so we don't allow clients to pick things up just because we want to make sure everything is wrapped. It's being packed properly. It's not getting dinged up and we have sofas that have marks on them from just being transported wrong. So we do have expectations on what our furniture looks like when it's out there in the market.

Allison Howell And we're back with Jacqueline talking about how she grows her business. Specifically, I want to focus on what can feel like the hardest part getting customers attention. I know Collected & Co. has grown a ton since you took over. Do you attribute that to a particular marketing effort or just the strength of the brand or your own magnetic personality? What do you think's driven that growth?



Jacqueline Johannesson Well, it is definitely not my personality that got us anywhere. I think there was a gap in the marketplace. I think there was really a need for a company to come in and say, I have, a client has this idea. How can I go about it? And there's people who do that creatively with backdrops and floral installations, but never when it came to the furniture side of the business.

Jacqueline Johannesson And we partner with a lot of other great rental companies where they will have clients come in. They'll dream up the big tents, and they'll do, you know, other things. And they're like, when you're looking at, you want custom bars, you want lounge flanking your dance floor, you need to go talk to Collected & Co.

Jacqueline Johannesson And we've really built—we've worked really hard to build great relationships with the other vendor partners in the city to be trusted, to say, "they're the people who are willing to take a little bit of a risk sometimes when it comes to, This isn't here in this market. Go talk to Collected. They might bring it in for you. They're the ones who will think and logistically kind of figure out how we can go about doing that." I think it's been a lot of that. It's been a lot of hard work.

Allison Howell Yeah.

Jacqueline Johannesson Nine times out of ten, you will see Russ or I at one of these events. Does that potentially lead to two owners getting very burnt out? It does. But it has gained a lot of trust within the industry that they are going to do it in a way that you don't need to worry about, is this company going to follow through?

Allison Howell Right.

Jacqueline Johannesson Yeah.

Allison Howell Well, tell me a little bit more about that burnout. I know, particularly after a year like 2021, where many people went from zero to 60 overnight and had to kind of scale up and deal with labor shortages. What are you doing to stave off the burnout and to sort of do what you need to do in order to be sustained?

Jacqueline Johannesson Yeah. The burnout is real, I mean, it's very challenging. When you're going, and especially having just many more events than we ever expected to have, just with postponements, but then also our business just growing on top of that, we, trying to produce events off of two hours of sleep on a weekend is not, you can't do it.



Allison Howell Sure.

Jacqueline Johannesson I will be 100 percent honest, I'm not great at setting boundaries. I'm not great at not taking a night and not working. It's very hard. And then so some of that sets expectations that, OK, well, Collected is going to get back to you within three hours all the time. That's not, that can't always happen.

Allison Howell Yeah, that's not sustainable.

Jacqueline Johannesson It's not. We've tried really hard. This summer in the heat of our season, we took two weeks off and we packed our girls in the car and we went down to the Outer Banks in North Carolina, and we took our time. And we said, You know, our team's got this. We have to be able to step away. We'll check in. We'll do that. We trust them to run events for us. If there's issues, they're going to troubleshoot them. They know what they're doing.

Jacqueline Johannesson So it's taking the time when it's needed. Being able to say, as much as you want to bring on another event because it would be a great order, but saying we can't, like, we can't. I wish I could do it, but we can't. And that was really hard this year, especially coming off of last year where you wish you could have took on more and you couldn't. And then this year we were having to say no because we didn't have enough bodies or inventory to go around. It was hard.

Allison Howell Yeah. Well, it seems like you've experienced some growing pains this year, particularly, but kind of year over year growth. What are some of those challenges? You mentioned labor shortages. You mentioned running out of inventory. Are there other things that have been barriers or challenges for you as you've grown?

Jacqueline Johannesson Warehouse. It got hard to try and find something that would work. We had a list of, we need these requirements, we need this, and we need this, we need this.

Allison Howell What were some of those requirements?



Jacqueline Johannesson We knew it had to be ground level. There were some warehouses that were on the second floor, but that ain't going to work for us. We had to have 24 hour access, had to have AC and heat. A lot of the warehouses up here had heat, but none had AC. But that is something that we knew we wanted because we didn't want our furniture, our upholstery to start to get this smell to it.

Allison Howell Yeah, that's not the reputation you wanted to have.

Jacqueline Johannesson No. No, that is not.

Allison Howell The smelly furniture.

Jacqueline Johannesson The "smells like it's been in somebody's basement for 15 years". Yeah, had to have AC. What were--? Those were like the main things. But I would say labor tends to be, on the rental side, tends to be, you know, people to do the deliveries, to do the late night pickups. That tends to always be our biggest challenge.

Allison Howell Yeah, yeah. So what did you do this year in particular to meet that challenge?

Jacqueline Johannesson A lot of our planners, they would bring on their fiances, they would bring on their boyfriends, they would say, Hey, like, let's go work an event together to try and fit some of the shortages that we need. We tried to work really hard with the different venues around the city to say, Hey, like--. And they got it. They got, like, everybody was strapped. So venues being really flexible. OK, we can't get there between that midnight and 1 A.M. tear down, but we can get there at like 1:05. Can we like, can we come? And people have been--people were great.

Jacqueline Johannesson So it's been a wild ride. It has been stressful trying to, you have logistics of where you need to be and when you need to be. And then when somebody calls in and they can't come because they're sick, or something happens, or that like, you're just, to try and figure it all on the spot, it's been a long year. It's been a long year.

Jacqueline Johannesson But to look back and be like we were coming to the tail end of our season right now, mid-November, and then, it just, we've accomplished a lot. It always gets done. It always, always, always gets done. So why do we stress ourselves out so much about it? Yeah, I wish we didn't, but it's just something that I have to be better at.



Allison Howell

Well, and it seems like you really care. You really care about the outcome of the events. You care about the reputation of the brand, but ultimately you care about these people that you're serving and that they have that magical experience that you got into this industry to create in the first place.

Jacqueline Johannesson

Yes, we want to be a company that is known to be easy to work with. They don't have to worry if the job's going to get done, how it's going to get done. And we want to bring that exceptional service to their event time and time again.

Allison Howell

So what do you have in place to meet those expectations?

Jacqueline Johannesson

So, yeah, so I mean, personally, it's hard. It's very good that Russ and I are both in the business because we are very different personalities. And so it's good to balance each other out, where sometimes I want to be like, no, like, we can't do this. And he's like, Well, think about this. But just always looking at the back side of, how does this look to our client? And instilling in our team as they go out into the marketplace and we're not always there, just having that client-first mentality of, let's not say, "No," right away. Let's see how we can fix it. Let's see how we can look at something and figure out how to solve their problem.

Allison Howell

It seems like that availability and the desire to hear is a really big piece because you could jump to solutions pretty quickly. But if you don't really fully understand the problem or you don't understand what your client needs, then it can fall flat. Even the best efforts can fall flat.

Jacqueline Johannesson

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Allison Howell

Have you ever experienced that?

Jacqueline Johannesson

I mean, absolutely. And I think everybody has that.

Allison Howell

Yeah.

Jacqueline Johannesson

Not everything goes perfectly. Not every event is how you imagined it would be, and not every event is how our clients imagined it would be.

Allison Howell

Is there an example of that that sticks out in your mind that you could tell us about?



Jacqueline Johannesson Yeah. So and it's more so on the planning side, well, a little bit. I've got kind of two examples. On the planning side, it always comes down to expectations. And planning clients really realizing what is in their planning package and what is the level of service you need.

Allison Howell Sure.

Jacqueline Johannesson So sometimes there's hard conversations of like, absolutely, I understand you may be frustrated. Some of these services that you're wanting aren't in your package. We're more than happy to add them in, but we can't add them in at no cost. On the rental side, sometimes, it's just, like one, it was something out of our control.

Jacqueline Johannesson There was a cake stand acrylic box that a client said her vision was going to be around, that, when we went to go deliver it, we noticed that there was a small crack in it. We were not going to put that out there because that rental is not up to our standard of what we want our company to be. We let the planner know. We said, Hey, we don't have another one. Let's flex, let's substitute it with something else.

Jacqueline Johannesson The client was just not happy. We called around everywhere. It happened to be one of the busiest wedding days of the year, and nobody else had an acrylic box in their inventory. So we tried to do as best as we could to find something that would complete that client's vision. And sometimes it just, it doesn't work.

Jacqueline Johannesson And we have substitutions in our contracts and we ask everybody to read the contract, know if if you order a white couch and somebody spills a red glass of wine on it the night before and we can't get it out, it can't come to your event. And so we need to bring something else in. So it's expectations. We try to deliver as much as we can. But yeah, it doesn't always go perfectly.

Allison Howell So it seems like really setting clear expectations and then delivering on them is kind of the key here. But there's also an element of trust. Knowing that when the client, when something goes wrong, that the client knows that you did what was in their best interest. And so what do you think you do either as a company or individually with particular clients that helps build that trust?

Jacqueline Johannesson Yeah. So, it's a little bit different when it's a client that is coming to us without a corporate or wedding planner involved because we can kind of go over the expectations with the planner. The planner goes over our expectations, as well



as clients. Where we really need to make sure that we over communicate and make sure that clients trust us is when it's just a straight rental client. We don't get a lot of interaction with them. They'll submit a wish list. We'll ask them some questions, we'll pull together an order, and then we may not talk to them again until the final payment's due.

Allison Howell

Sure. Well, let's transition a little bit. I'm interested to know what you've learned about yourself since you bought Collected & Co.

Jacqueline Johannesson Oh, so I'm very hard on myself for the fact that, like I said earlier, like Marie, was this creative, like, craft, could think outside the box. I'm more logistical. Where I have, you know, clients in an industry, people who will be like, Oh my gosh, you're so creative. I would have never thought of that. And I'm like, I'm not creative. Like, Go talk to this person. They're creative. I'm very hard on myself.

Allison Howell

Sure.

Jacqueline Johannesson That's one thing. And I have a very hard time of celebrating successes. And it's good that I have a partner who very much tries to make me slow down and celebrate the big wins we have, the great months we have, an event that was circled on the calendar for two years. I'm like, how are we going to do this? And it's over, and it went amazingly. We need to take more time to celebrate those kind of things.

Allison Howell

Yeah.

Jacqueline Johannesson So, I'm not good at that. And Russ and I worked together in the venue not as closely as we do with Collected. And it takes a different kind of relationship to be able to withstand what we try to do and also not try to have the business completely encompass our whole entire life.

Allison Howell

Right.

Jacqueline Johannesson And we have a hard time at that, sometimes. It's hard. We we catch ourselves and we're like, we want to go out to dinner and we need to talk about other things besides business. Like, we can't--because in our nature is we're just so like, go, go, go. Like, we're very competitive people and I think our competitiveness comes out in the business and trying to get it to grow. And



how can we do this and meet this milestone and beat this goal? And so it's hard sometimes to be like, we're not just business partners, like, at the end of the day, we're husband and wife, we're best friends. We can't forget that stuff.

Allison Howell

Right, right. Well, how have you grown personally? Are there ways that you've grown personally that are different than you expected?

Jacqueline Johannesson The way I view myself and my personality is not what my clients think of me. In my own mind, in my house, I am 100 percent no chill at all. Like I do not bring a calming effect to any room.

Allison Howell

Ok.

Jacqueline Johannesson But my, like, time and time again, my clients are just like, You just like, I have a phone call with you and you just calm me. Like, there's just like, I don't worry about anything and you're just this calm, like, presence. We learn something new every single day, every single event. There's always something that we are learning, whether it's from a client, an experience, an event professional who knows more than us because we are not naive to say we don't know half of it. Like, we're always learning and growing, which is what you need to do in order to continue to grow and have a successful business.

Allison Howell

Right. Yeah. Yeah. So is there anything you wish you had known about the rental industry before you purchased Collected and Co.?

Jacqueline Johannesson I think Russ and I both have learned that whole mentality we had of you have these pieces, you drop it off, and you pick it up, that's not how that goes. You have these pieces, you drop them off, and then you still worry. Like, at the venue, we worried all the time about weather and rain, and we thought that's going to disappear when it comes to event rentals. Nope.

Allison Howell

Right.

Jacqueline Johannesson Staying on top of trends, being above trends, the sourcing and how all of that works, there's still aspects of sourcing. Like, I would love to sit down with somebody who's been in the business a lot longer than we have and just ask so many questions about how you go about sourcing from different areas. So just working through some of that is just--there's a lot more that goes into it than just having a warehouse full of furniture.



Allison Howell

Sure. Sure. Well, and when you start out, you're thinking of all the beautiful things you're going to create, and that's sort of the primary stuff of your vision and your dreams. But, a big chunk of what you do is actually move furniture around. Well, you mentioned that it's tough for you sometimes to stop and celebrate, but what are some of the milestones that you've celebrated at it and go?

Jacqueline Johannesson So when we got our first warehouse, that was a celebration of, before it got cleaned and everything, we just had a little family dinner in it. When we bought our first truck, that was another big moment. Probably something we didn't celebrate. It was because it's a truck. I think we look back at some of these things and like, what are the things that like, really, you're like, Holy cow, that was a big deal.

Jacqueline Johannesson We had an amazing year. We had an amazing year and amazingly hard year at that, too. So in a couple of weeks, we're going out of town, just Russ and I, and we're going to take time to say, We're going to stop. We're going to take that time to celebrate everything that we made it through this year. This year has been beautiful. It has been demanding.

Allison Howell

Yeah.

Jacqueline Johannesson It has pushed everybody to their breaking point and we need to stop and recognize that. We're doing a big team dinner tomorrow night to recognize our team because without them, we're nobody. We are a warehouse full of furniture without our team, and they are the backbone to our company and they deserve to have every single recognition that Russ and I have. They may not be the face of the business, but they are the true heart and soul and we just want—we want to recognize them. And they made it through a really hard year with us and they flexed with us and they worked their tails off this year.

Allison Howell

It seems like you have achieved a lot of the things that you imagined for for Collected and Co., but you're not done yet. And that is really, that's really wonderful to be in this place where you can say, here are all these things that we're so proud of, but also not feel like, Oh, well, we've achieved it all.

Jacqueline Johannesson Mm-Hmm. There's always room for growth. There's always room for growth in your business. There's room for growth personally, always. Like we always need to strive to be better the next day. We can always wake up and do better. So we have big goals for the company. We have big goals for our team. We



have big goals individually and where we just where we want to go and who we want to be as people and how we interact with people. And how can we make a change on this world and how we go about the events that we do and just how we interact with people every day.

Allison Howell

Well, thank you to Jacqueline for coming on and sharing her story. If you'd like to connect with her, check out the show notes to find links to her website, Pinterest, and Instagram. Be sure to click that link to join the RW Elephant mailing list, and we'll close out as I fire some lightning round questions, Jacqueline's way.

Allison Howell

Three words that describe your collection.

Jacqueline Johannesson Modern, traditional, bold.

Allison Howell

What is one trait you look for when hiring?

Jacqueline Johannesson Loyalty.

Allison Howell

If you could only have one type of fabric in your collection, what would it be?

Jacqueline Johannesson Velvet.

Allison Howell

What is something other event pros do that annoys you?

Jacqueline Johannesson Not send out timelines and layouts. The week of the wedding.

Allison Howell

Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Yeah. How about change them the week of the wedding?

Jacqueline Johannesson Change? We're adaptable. We can adapt. Let's adapt. Totally good with that. I just want to know when and where, like where my stuff is going to--where it needs to be and when.

Allison Howell

Right. Yeah. Do you rent, lease, or purchase your delivery vehicles?

Jacqueline Johannesson Purchase.

Allison Howell

Two things outside of work you love to do.

Jacqueline Johannesson Oh, I love to go on coffee dates with my girls.



Allison Howell

Mm hmm.

Jacqueline Johannesson And I love just being outside and being with them.

Allison Howell

A business tool you couldn't live without?

Jacqueline Johannesson RW Elephant.

Allison Howell

I like that answer!

Jacqueline Johannesson Yes!

Allison Howell

Would you rather pack a delivery truck blindfolded or get a last minute order for a 200 person event that's happening tomorrow?

Jacqueline Johannesson Get a last minute order for 200 people for tomorrow.

Allison Howell

You could pull that off a 200 person event with 24 hours?

Jacqueline Johannesson Oh yes. Yes.

Allison Howell

Great. Love it. What's the next big trend in rentals?

Jacqueline Johannesson Personalization and custom bars.

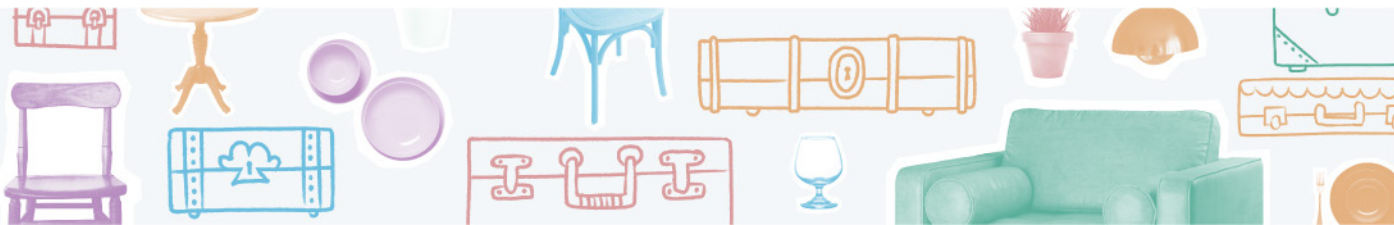
Allison Howell

Good, I like that. So my final question is, what do you enjoy most about your rental adventures?

Jacqueline Johannesson I enjoy working hand in hand with my husband. Most of the time. And together we enjoy just putting our heart and soul into something and watching it grow and seeing the look on our client's face when they see their final product from conception to end.

Allison Howell

Well, I think that about sums it up. Thanks again, Jacqueline, and thank you for listening to The Trunk Show brought to you by RW Elephant. I'm your host, Allison Howell. Happy renting!



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AND OUR GUEST:

Jacqueline Johannesson of Collected & Co.

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