

ColorYourDreams_Podcast_EP58

Elaine Lou Cartas: Why do I create events and retreats in the first place? Well, because as human beings, we heal when we are in community, you know, back when you're a teenager, you're probably dating someone and you had so much stress and anxiety over it because there were these big problems that we probably created in our head because we were young and it was just so nice to talk to a friend about it.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So I know that's. When we were younger, but even now, when everything's feel so isolated because of technology being in front of our screens, we feel like we're completely alone. And I just want to remind you, we heal in community. We are social human beings. Beings in a post pandemic world where we're not connecting as much or just focus on our screens leading to constant busyness.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Being in community is so important. In this podcast episode, we'll go over my evolution of how I've created my events and retreats to be more client and team centered. That's 1st, 1 2nd, the agenda structure, and then 3rd, the results of my retreats. So I would love for you to take notes to reflect on this podcast episode right after in terms of how you could create this type of community for yourself.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So 1st. How to create a client and team centered retreat and how I did it. So let me 1st share that this is my 2nd business being a business and career coach for a woman of color and allies this past 6 years. My 1st business. Was actually being a fund raising consultant for both the political and nonprofit sector for about four years.

Elaine Lou Cartas: I did so many events focused on building relationships and connections focused on the donors and community leaders that we served. In fact, being a California native, I actually moved. And left California living in Iowa, Indiana, Montana, New Mexico and Massachusetts, working in these different communities and districts where I basically built a community from the ground up and what I really appreciated when I was a fundraiser that.

Elaine Lou Cartas: The events that we built where we are trying to raise money for the campaign or the nonprofit I was working at. It was always a short program of gratitude that lasted about 30 minutes, but these events that would usually be 3 or 4 hours was really spent on connecting with others. And. It's actually what resulted me to raising millions of dollars for my clients, which included both campaigns and nonprofits.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So when I got to my coaching business back in 2017, like anyone, you see the gurus out there, the big leaders, you figured, okay, I need to do exactly what they are doing. Cause that's gold standard, which was ironically different from what I saw when I was a fundraiser, When I got into this industry, it was lots of speakers, bringing a lot of people, have everything absolutely recorded.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Even if your clients are there, they're crying, like on social media, photography and videography. And in my business for the first four years, I've been six years

in business now, I ran these monthly events, quarterly one day retreats and by annual two day retreats. So if I do the math, 12, 13, 18, 18 events here.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Mind you, I started my business, my twenties. So I had a lot of energy then, but I'm in, I'm in a new stage and new chapter in life. And that's, what's important to note is acknowledge that even what you have created up to this point in your career, that it is okay. If you want to shift and change because you are in this new chapter.

Elaine Lou Cartas: In your life and doing these events consistently, it felt great. People were motivated, but I had to ask myself the hard question. Are my clients, an audience receiving the individualized attention they deserve to create aligned action for themselves. So I asked for feedback from my clients and I stopped doing the most and really had conversations with them on exactly what they needed.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So I made changes. In my business, for example, and if you could see, I have to like back it up a bit, but I am wearing an Adele t shirt. I think in video, you can only see like her forehead, but the weekend before I had my retreat, I got to see Adele and God, she's so hilarious. I love her. And think about Adele.

Elaine Lou Cartas: She puts out an album every six years. And we know this because her albums are named after her years, like 19, 21, 25. And she stopped doing huge stadium tours because she had stage fright and that doesn't work for her. And right now she has a limited Vegas residency. And this is the type of work life balance.

Elaine Lou Cartas: We should all go for her, right? Working that extreme amount, like that little time and then living life to its fullest. We don't see her until like every five or six years. So I'm really set up to until I'm in my forties to hear her new album. That's probably going to come out then. So anyways, let's reel it back.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Let's go back to talking about how to create a client and team centered retreat. So these are changes that I did in my own business. I could make sure I'm helping my clients create aligned action 1st. I knew I needed to change my business model because I was being burnt out doing so many events, which is why I scaled down from doing those 18 events a year to 2 retreats per year, because it's not about doing the most.

Elaine Lou Cartas: It's about. Going deeper with my clients. So they get the results they deserve. And so by focusing on doing two retreats per year, I'm able to be super intentional with my clients where it could be more individualized. It also matches my energetic capacity. And at this present moment, I can only do two retreats a year.

Elaine Lou Cartas: And I know this may change in the future. Maybe I want to do more in the future. Maybe I just want to do once. A year, but right now I'm honoring this chapter of my life right now. As you're reflecting on wanting to create. I'm wanting to create a retreat for yourself. How often do you want to do retreat?

Elaine Lou Cartas: 2nd, what else I change after receiving feedback from my clients is. I had to be honest and ask myself, am I creating a safe space? For my clients, I used to have a photographer and videographer throughout my retreat, taking pictures of my clients when they're crying. And I know it was like my bad. I've also shared this in past podcast episodes.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So I have stopped. Having a photographer and videographer throughout my retreats and instead I have them at a specific time for a photo shoot. So I usually do about 2 or 3 hours and even before we do a photo shoot together as a group or even individually with my clients, I, my team and I make sure we ask our clients.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Hey, do you want to be in the pictures or not? And there's no obligation that you do not have to. The keynote here is making sure my clients know they have agency and choice if they want to be in pictures or not, because I'll be honest, I've been on the other side where I have been at retreats and so much pictures and videos.

Elaine Lou Cartas: I'm like, am I here for myself or am I here for the other person? So I could be part of B roll. Like I'm here because I want to learn and grow. That is my intention with what I want to do for my own clients. I will be transparent, though, I do plan to have a professional photographer at my next retreat just for a day because I need to update, update some photos and videos.

Elaine Lou Cartas: But the important thing is that I will still make sure my team and I do ask clients if they do not want to be any of the Being at any of the pictures or the videos that they do not have to a thing that I got actually from my partner's conference that he went to, which I really appreciate it was at their event.

Elaine Lou Cartas: If people did not want to take pictures or videos, like, there was still a photographer, they could wear a red and lanyard. So the videographer photographer. No, not to take pictures or video of that individual person. I really loved that idea. And that is something that I'm taking away from my own retreats and events.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So a question for you, you're thinking about creating your own events and retreats. How can you create a safe space for your clients? And also, do you ask your clients if you are creating a safe space or how you could improve on it? So that's my feedback for you. A 3rd thing I have done to change up my retreats is I've made my retreats exclusive to my current clients.

Elaine Lou Cartas: My retreats are a bonus. They don't have to pay anything extra and. The amount that my clients pay towards working with me, that's including their treats. And I do invite people who are not a client, but if they are not a client, they do have to pay. And it's not a low ticket offer. It's actually 1, 500 for general admission.

Elaine Lou Cartas: And I do have an early bird of a thousand dollars. So why is it this much? We intentionally chose this rate. Yes, we did the math. We figured out the numbers and, and we figured out. With the amount of time and energy that my team and I do for my

clients, this is the amount that makes sense in terms of, yes, paying for everyone and everything from the venues to my team members and myself, but also making sure that we're attracting clients who are willing to put the energy and work and making sure they're pausing to reflect.

Elaine Lou Cartas: I've done different price offers and tiers for events in the past, but. What I realize is when it becomes free, like what I used to do, my, the people that were attending weren't taking action right away, which didn't result to results. And I'm not saying just results in terms of monetary, but even results in like one of my clients, one of her goals is I'm going to stop working at 5 p.

Elaine Lou Cartas: m. so I could be present with my husband and child. And that was such an incredible goal that I got to hear from the retreat that just happened. Also, prior to the retreat, I have my clients go through a questionnaire. So my team and I can understand where they're at in their career and business, what their challenges are and what their goals are.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So when the retreat happens, I know exactly what to talk to them about. In fact, It kind of feels like double worse product. Any of you have watched that movie where there's a binder of people? Like I have a list of my clients with their goals and challenges are. So I'm always referring to it. I'm looking through my clipboard.

Elaine Lou Cartas: You might think it's crazy, but this is how I stand out as a coach is making sure that each one of my clients know that. They are receiving this, the individual life support that they deserve. So something that you could think about for your own retreat and events. Can you create your own questionnaire to ask your clients, team or attendees who are coming with their challenges, what their goals are, because do not.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Assume what your clients and community needs. You have to ask them. The 4th thing I have changed in my business is I moved from doing airbnbs to hosting retreats at a country club. I'm a member at some currently hosting retreats at the country club, and here's why I don't do retreats at airbnbs anymore 1st.

Elaine Lou Cartas: I have to respect that some people don't want to share room and need space and time from 1 another. When people do sign up for my retreats, I let them know you have to find your own accommodations and so you take care of your accommodations and your flight or how you're going to get here. And I do give a list of recommendations in terms of Airbnb as well as hotels that they could look at.

Elaine Lou Cartas: And if they want a roommate that we could help them find someone. Second. It gives people space and time from one another so they're together for a full day. And obviously we're all humans as much as we love to connect in and be in community. We still need space and time and 3rd and I'll be transparent.

Elaine Lou Cartas: It is cheaper. In terms of not having it at an Airbnb, I've just been doing this for months and I will be vulnerable. There were a lot of treats where I was losing money and doing events and retreats are a lot of money. And it's sad to say this, but generally what you want to do is hit even from your expenses.

Elaine Lou Cartas: And if anything, but you do is. You're making money after the event or retreat. That's what I have been taught, even in the nonprofit sector. It was usually like a 2 to 1 ratio. So what you raise 50 percent of the cost. Is from what you raise that was actually a successful event. So how I made sure my events are profitable.

Elaine Lou Cartas: I built in how much money my clients were. Doing to work with me into my retreats. In addition to that, if anyone that was not a client that joined my retreat, it was an amount that was going to going to cover the venue, my team as well as myself and then some. You don't necessarily have to follow this route, but I just want to share.

Elaine Lou Cartas: That it's important to do the numbers and math, because like I said, I did lose money at my retreats. And for me, since I am a member at a country club, I get discounted rates for the rooms and just have to cover the food and the cost of the rooms. Trust me. I have done my research too. I looked at the Hilton, the Marriott, all the hotels, and it would cost me like 10 or 20 K.

Elaine Lou Cartas: To get the venue with like a food minimum, which is a lot, which is why a lot of people don't do events and retreats. And Hey, if you don't have that option, I know some people have used their home, borrowed a friend's home. So that keeps costs lower, or you could rent out an office for a day or 2 or a coworking space.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So there's different ways to look for a venue. All right. Let's go to the 2nd piece of how to create a client and team centered retreat. Now that I've shared my evolution of how I change my events, I kind of want to talk about the agenda and structure. For those of my folks that are probably project managers or love the details I have.

Elaine Lou Cartas: A loose agenda, and what I mean by that is I don't stick to the agenda because you can't predict and control. Everyone's energy when you're in a space of connecting and vulnerability and crying and laughing. In my retreat, we do it for 2 days, right? The 1st day is focused on learning and growth and the 2nd days integration.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Implementation and planning, we start our retreats at 10 am to give folks enough time to sleep in. You're welcome. A lot of my clients actually appreciate that. We start at 10 and also. My retreats are in LA, so this gives enough time for driving and it's after rush hour and the 1st day ends at 8 PM. The 2nd day ends at 5 and we start the retreat with introductions and intentions.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Then we do workshop. I don't like saying we have speakers. I mean, we do, but it isn't like a, they're talking at you. So I have my marketing strategist, Monica

Schrock, who talks about marketing and mental health, because Monica does have ADHD and bipolar. So they share that vulnerability when it comes to having neurodivergency.

Elaine Lou Cartas: And then I have another workshop with Juliana Wise, who's a certified project manager, talking about systems and time management. And what both of my coaches do, Monica and Juliana, they are workshopping, having hot seats with my clients. So it's more of a conversation. And I have had. Seen that to be very powerful when I used to do events before, when I first started, it was a lot of like, people speaking with PowerPoint presentations.

Elaine Lou Cartas: And yes, you could get a lot of notes, but now that it is more smaller and intimate. My clients get to be really heard, and even throughout the 2 days, my clients are able to approach, not just my coaches, but also myself if they have further questions. What I have heard from my own clients is how tailored it is for them.

Elaine Lou Cartas: And on that 1st day. I ended with a former client, Lydia of the pink crow shop and her brother, Abraham doing a sample healing and Reiki healing, or even Lydia provides individualized Reiki sessions with each of my clients, providing reflections and what they could do to heal. And. Here's what I want you to hear is that each client, whether it is me, Monica, Juliana, or Lydia doing marketing systems and Reiki or strategy, each one of my clients receives individualized attentions, and we know what they are all struggling or going through challenges from and within those conversations I want to make sure that they are having space and time to connect to one another.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So when breaks happen, I often say, Hey, if there's someone you feel called to, to connect, where, whether you could receive support or you could support them, go connect with them. So providing that intention, and obviously if people need to go use the restroom or get some snacks, that's helpful too. Another thing, if you're going to be hosting an event or retreat, have snacks.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Especially. Yeah, just have snacks. You do not want anyone to go hangry. So with this individualized attention, to be honest, this is what has made me and my team stand out from other coaches. I mean, I just signed on a new client who was very transparent with me and shared that my rates working with me and my team were doubled.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Compared to other coaches who shared their rates with with her, but the reason why she chose me wasn't necessarily for the retreat. It's that she knew the amount of energy that I have showed up to the sales calls. I was with her. And that my team provided were different other coaches. It was self study courses, group calls, limited individualized attention.

Elaine Lou Cartas: My coaching programs, not only do clients have the 2 retreats in person a year, but depending. On what they sign up for, they do get a 1 to 1 with me, whether it's monthly or by monthly and with office hours with me and each of my team members in different topics, whether it's marketing, mental health, project and time management and intuitive guidance.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So when creating your agenda. Ask yourself what topics your clients need support in and get experts. Who can provide that individualized attention to them? I'm really lucky. Because. All of my coaches that I have hired, they were former clients. Some of them also still current clients, so they know my style and.

Elaine Lou Cartas: They already trust me and I trust them, which makes it easier for my clients to receive trust from them as well. So third and finally, what are results from creating a client and team centered retreat? So I'll share with you what has happened to me since I just had my retreat. One is, so these are a couple client results from the past retreat that just happened.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So I'm going to share about five, one during the retreat, one client. Received a new client from her for all she just received an email during our retreat. 2nd. Another client shared, I've never felt a sense of psychological safety like this retreat when it comes to talking about my business and even my own parents don't make me feel safe to share.

Elaine Lou Cartas: With them, my big dreams, and. This compliment made me tear up because honestly, it was the biggest compliment knowing that my clients felt safe, not necessarily with me, but in the container, in the community of my fellow clients as well, my other clients, as well as my team. Third, I shared this one earlier, but I think it's still a one that we want to talk about as another client shared, Hey, I've had to turn off my laptop at 5 PM so I could be present with my husband and my child.

Elaine Lou Cartas: And yes, I'm a business and career coach for women of color and allies, but what's important is that my clients are creating a sustainable life and I love that they are focused on their personal life. A fourth one is from my youngest client, a Gen Z er, who shared, oh, we called her the elder because she was just throwing out quotes, but she said this, like, it's not our abilities, it's our choices.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Why this reflection and quote is so powerful, it's not our ability, it's not about our abilities, it's our choices, is that we discussed as a group, That we always have a choice of who we can be vulnerable with. We always have a choice of which clients to work with. We always have a choice with tasks and projects to do.

Elaine Lou Cartas: We always have a choice if you should stay or go from a job. And we always have a choice when we can ask for help. And the fifth client results is in terms of the nuts and bolts, each client walked away with a sustainable action plan, a sustainable aligned action plan for Q4 and 2023. My question for you, and one action and one reflective question, when creating a client and team centered retreat, What do you want your clients to say about the retreat?

Elaine Lou Cartas: How do you want them to feel? And if you want to attend. Our next call your dreams or cheat it's scheduled for Thursday, April, 18th and Friday, April, 19th, 2024 at the Altadena country club in Los Angeles county right now. There's an early bird special. If

you register before the new year starts before January 1st, 2024, it will cost a thousand dollars.

Elaine Lou Cartas: 1, 000 instead of 1500, and you could do two monthly payments of 500. Just use the code in all caps, target lover and register at elainelou.com forward slash retreat.