

**0:00:04.1 Katie Berlin:** Hi, welcome to another special edition episode of Central Line. I'm here on site at AAHA Con 2023. We're in a different room than we have been so far, which is kind of cool 'cause we were just recording a Live Stream Podcast episode in here which was super fun. So you'll be seeing that episode coming out on the channel as well. But for right now, I'm here with a special guest, Jen Brocker of CareCredit is hanging out with us for the moment. And Jen, you and I have had many conversations over the last few years in multiple settings, but we share a love of storytelling and CareCredit has been just an absolute best for sponsor for Central Line. I could not have asked for a better group of people to work with in getting this podcast off the ground because to me, the essence of everything that we do as veterinarians, as veterinary professionals, as marketers, as people who interact with other people, it all comes down to people's stories, why they're there, why they do what they do, and how that dictates how we're gonna interact together and what we can do to make those interactions better.

**0:01:20.4 Katie Berlin:** And so I know that you understand that from such a deep level, and so it's really been like completely painless to work together.

**0:01:27.3 Jennifer Brocker:** Oh, thank you Katie.

**0:01:27.4 Katie Berlin:** On this podcast. There's never any...

**0:01:29.4 Jennifer Brocker:** I feel like we're storytelling soulmates.

**0:01:32.5 Katie Berlin:** Yeah. For sure. There's never any like, oh, I don't think that we should talk about that. Or like, that doesn't serve our interests. Like, we just seem to be naturally very aligned on what's important to us. And it's just been a dream to work with you. So I just wanna say thank you publicly here on the podcast to your face.

**0:01:48.5 Jennifer Brocker:** Oh, thank you, Katie.

**0:01:49.4 Katie Berlin:** That was my real selfish motivation of getting you in the headphones.

[laughter]

**0:01:51.6 Jennifer Brocker:** That's very sweet. I feel exactly the same way about you.

**0:01:55.5 Katie Berlin:** I love that. Thank you. So Jen, you know, I wanted you to have some time just in front of the mic yourself because you have been such a good supporter. To just say if there's things that you want people to know about you, about CareCredit or Pets Best about storytelling in general and what that means to you, I wanted to make sure that you have the chance to do that. So, but before we do that, would you mind just sort of giving people a little bit of an intro to Jen and how she got into this space, why you're so passionate about it?

**0:02:28.5 Jennifer Brocker:** Yes. Yes, So I started out, actually on the creative side in my career. I always wanted to be a copywriter when I started out. And as, anybody who has tried to become a writer professionally, getting your foot in the door is always the hardest first step. So after having quite a few jobs where my first job was actually at this big audio video retailer in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. I grew up in Oklahoma and I had stars in my eyes of all these amazing things that I was

going to do. So it was this little in-house group and it was very retail driven. So we would do things like... Okay, we are going to have a Dolly Parton lookalike contest on Saturday night at midnight, and then you can win like free stereos or headphones. And I'm like, there is no way that anybody's gonna show up at midnight dressed as Dolly Parton to get a free stereo.

**0:03:30.6 Jennifer Brocker:** Well, I was definitely wrong. So I think over the years in marketing, you realize that the job really is understanding humans, what drives their behavior, and never make assumptions that you actually know everyone's story. So, I guess maybe that's where my love of storytelling started is from the beginning of my career, I ended up in veterinary medicine. I moved to Kansas City and there's a lot of animal health companies there. So a lot of the agencies that are there serve veterinary Pet Care clients. And it just started from there. And once, I think once you become a part of this industry, meet the people in it you never really wanna leave. Because they're, it's so full of passion and purpose and caring not just for the animals, but for the people too. So I think I've always stayed in it. So I worked at marketing agencies for a long time and then like three and a half years ago I ended up coming to work at CareCredit. 'Cause I'd worked on their business from a marketing perspective.

**0:04:48.4 Katie Berlin:** That's a neat story. And marketing is definitely all about the stories it seems like, and whether we like it or not, veterinary professionals are marketers.

[laughter]

**0:05:00.8 Jennifer Brocker:** Yes.

**0:05:02.3 Katie Berlin:** We're in the room like trying to educate and talk to people about things and we are marketing whether we like it or not.

**0:05:08.6 Jennifer Brocker:** Yes. And it's funny, as I was thinking about what we might talk about, my dad was a professor at Oklahoma State University. And we lived on a Circle street, and our neighbor to the left was an Equine Veterinary professor. And our neighbor to the right was a Beaumont Veterinary professor. And down the street was a veterinary parasitologist. So when my parents would have like neighborhood cocktail parties, there would be a lot of veterinarians there. And I will tell you, they are great storytellers. The things they would talk about like...

**0:05:44.4 Katie Berlin:** Yes, sometimes you don't wanna hear their stories.

[laughter]

**0:05:45.4 Jennifer Brocker:** The people, the cases, the crazy things that they had done inside and outside of animals. I don't know, maybe I just never knew. I never thought about going into veterinary medicine or that I would somehow end up here now. But it's kind of funny looking back, I was surrounded by veterinarians from the time I was a little kid.

**0:06:05.4 Katie Berlin:** I love that. I wasn't and I wonder what that would've been like. I was surrounded by like lawyers. My dad's a lawyer and there weren't a lot of doctors, like medical doctors around. And so everybody was college professor bookish types. But on the Liberal Arts side so I actually have a Liberal Arts Degree and that's actually really coming in handy now is when my job involves so many words. But it was definitely not part of my upbringing. And so now, like

learning all of those stories, I mean, I first fell in love with that med, with James Harriet, just like so many people.

**0:06:43.4 Jennifer Brocker:** So now as an adult, when I would go back for like, my high school reunions and I would go over to my friend's house who a couple of their dads were veterinarians. Oh, I would talk shop with them. It's like, Oh yeah. I've worked on this new flea and tick control marketing mat or something for cattle or horses. So we talk about EPM, like I knew actually what it was, but...

[laughter]

**0:07:05.4 Katie Berlin:** Well, and you have to learn a lot about the stuff that you're marketing to market it effectively. As well as about the people you're marketing to. And I've seen that so many times when marketers come into veterinary medicine from other industries and they don't know the audience. And that's been a real lesson for me. And so, like, this is, shout out to all of you veterinary professionals out there who may want one day to have a career outside the clinic. Companies need veterinary professionals with experience to provide a lot of that input. And that was eye-opening to me. Like I didn't know that just like my day-to-day experience in the clinic could be that valuable.

**0:07:40.7 Jennifer Brocker:** Yes.

**0:07:41.6 Katie Berlin:** But it really is 'cause it's a hard thing to find a marketer who's also done all those things. And so like the combination of somebody with valuable marketing background and somebody with veterinary background is kind of unstoppable and I love that.

**0:07:55.2 Jennifer Brocker:** Yes.

**0:07:58.2 Katie Berlin:** Okay. So question for you.

**0:08:00.9 Jennifer Brocker:** Okay.

**0:08:00.9 Katie Berlin:** The theme of the conference this year, so AAHA Con 2023, the theme is Level Up. And I feel like this is a great theme because it can mean so many different things to different people. So on either a personal or professional level, what does leveling up in the next year look like to you?

**0:08:17.3 Jennifer Brocker:** I'm gonna actually go backwards to talk about next year. So I will say that, so I started a CareCredit in March of 2020.

**0:08:30.4 Katie Berlin:** Oh, wow. That must have been fun onboarding.

**0:08:33.4 Jennifer Brocker:** Yeah. Yeah. But it really... That experience when the world changed and veterinary practice changed and the day-to-day changed, it inspired us to level up our connection with what they were going through every day as marketers and respecting where they were in the world at the time. Because you just... We wanted to be really careful about what we were saying, what we were providing, because we knew that everybody was in a state of disruption. So we took a step back and said like, let's level up our understanding of their day-to-day. Let's level up actually what we're doing as a company. What we were doing at the time, like, it didn't work

curbside. So we had some technology in place at the time that we accelerated. So we can be there when you're at the car with the client and the pet owner who are also disrupted.

**0:09:41.5 Jennifer Brocker:** So I would say we just continue to do that 2020, '21, '22. I feel like we've all been in this evolution sometimes felt like a revolution.

**0:09:54.2 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:09:54.3 Jennifer Brocker:** And so I just see it as always leveling up your understanding of what people are going through as humans every single day in a practice and informing your marketing from that perspective. And not, they're busy, they're stressed. So if you wouldn't be able to do something that we're asking them to do in that environment, then we should rethink it. So I guess it's a respect for the wonderful people in the practice.

**0:10:28.4 Katie Berlin:** I love that you were thinking about that, so early on and what a heck of a time to onboard. I think I was actually onboarding a job, when I worked at Clinicians Brief. I was onboarding in March of 2022 and it was pretty crazy. Like 2020 was anyway, [laughter] So there's been a lot of leveling up since then for sure. And I will say you also had a really cute mascot too, didn't you? For the curb. I just remembered that.

**0:10:54.5 Jennifer Brocker:** Yeah. That's true. So [laughter], one of the things that evolved out of like the curbside thing is we have a little dog named Curby.

**0:11:05.4 Katie Berlin:** Yeah, that's right.

**0:11:06.4 Jennifer Brocker:** And Curby's there to help you make your workflows flow better at curbside. So from Curby, we went to... When everybody's just so busy every single day we now have a new little cat called Bizzy, and she's kind of helping you through make your workflow cash flow, mental flow a little bit better. Our two words are empathy and empowerment. So always thinking about what some someone's going through and how can we empower them power to make their day better. It might not be about CareCredit it might just be something to make them feel better.

**0:11:46.5 Katie Berlin:** So I love so, so many things that you just said. And like, one of the things is that we just, so this is all gonna come out at weird, in a weird order, [laughter], so this won't make any sense to people who are just like listening to this. So, but a little bit of context, we just a few minutes ago wrapped up a live stream with Josh Weissman and Debbie Boone and Debbie Boone wrote a book called Hospitality Healthcare which CareCredit supports. And it's an incredible book. It's a wonderful resource for sort of helping your team realize that hospitality doesn't mean sacrificing their own wellbeing. It actually will increase their wellbeing. And it gives some really actionable advice for how to do that, which is a mindset shift for a lot of people and Debbie's so good at that.

**0:12:31.5 Katie Berlin:** She just has a way of making you feel like, why didn't I think of that?

**0:12:35.6 Jennifer Brocker:** Yes.

**0:12:35.7 Katie Berlin:** Like, of course it's that way. Anyway, so everybody should check out that

book. But she said something in it that kind of resonated with what you just said, where she talked about, you should be able to empower all the team members that you oversee or that you lead. You should give them the autonomy to create a delightful moment for someone. And I just love that, like...

**0:13:01.2 Jennifer Brocker:** Me too.

**0:13:01.4 Katie Berlin:** There's like a certain cost ceiling where like below that you just have the autonomy to just give them something or do a favor for them. Or like, if it takes a minute, just do it. And if it's a tiny thing to you, it may be an enormous thing to that person, and that's gonna make you feel really good too.

**0:13:20.4 Jennifer Brocker:** Yes. And I think in a time where it feels like we don't have time to do anything extra.

**0:13:28.9 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:13:30.5 Jennifer Brocker:** Always it take only takes 10 seconds to say thank you.

**0:13:34.7 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:13:34.8 Jennifer Brocker:** Or it only takes a minute to tell somebody, you know, I really appreciate what you're doing. I myself, and based on some of the things that Debbie and some of the people said is like, if nothing else, when you walk into your veterinary practice, say thank you. So I try to go out of my way to do that every time I'm there and it really does make a difference.

**0:13:56.2 Katie Berlin:** Yeah. Well, we just, as part of this event, which I'll talk more about in second, but as part of this event, we had some stories after the podcast that we recorded and we had an amazing family here with their service dog from Canine Companions and she was just the most adorable thing ever.

**0:14:15.4 Jennifer Brocker:** Oh, it was amazing.

**0:14:17.4 Katie Berlin:** And they're telling us all these amazing things that this dog, her name was Oasis, and she was very beautiful. She's the most beautiful girl. And they were telling us all these things that she can do, and she was demonstrating these tricks and she was so gentle, you know, and we were all just like, this is the best.

**0:14:33.1 Jennifer Brocker:** That's great.

**0:14:33.9 Katie Berlin:** And then at the end he said, and we just wanna thank all of you to this room full of veterinary professionals. Like, we just wanna thank all of you because you are what makes this. And he pointed to their family like, you are what makes this possible. And God, he didn't have to say that. Like we were here to see them. And man, did that really get me?

**0:14:55.1 Jennifer Brocker:** Yes.

**0:14:55.5 Katie Berlin:** That was pretty great and it took two seconds at the end of a really moving

presentation and it also just touched every single person in this room in some way. And those things are, are the glimmers.

**0:15:09.5 Jennifer Brocker:** It is so many glimmers.

**0:15:11.6 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:15:12.4 Jennifer Brocker:** I love, by the way, I did love that triggers and glimmers.

**0:15:15.4 Katie Berlin:** Yes. So glimmers are a moment that just kind of is the opposite of a trigger where a trigger might make you just be like...

[laughter]

**0:15:24.5 Jennifer Brocker:** I'm an easily triggered person, so I'm like, I need focus on glimmers.

**0:15:29.4 Katie Berlin:** Yes. Glimmers are the opposite. Where, it's just a moment that just like fills you with warmth, even if it doesn't last, even if you're like onto the next thing, but later you'll look back and be like, that was a really great moment and that was definitely a glimmer, do you have any glimmers that you... That other glimmers that you'd wanna share?

**0:15:46.4 Jennifer Brocker:** Oh, what are glimmers?

**0:15:48.4 Katie Berlin:** I'll let you think about that.

**0:15:49.5 Jennifer Brocker:** Well, sitting here with you is a glimmer of my day.

[laughter]

**0:15:52.6 Katie Berlin:** Same. It's always such a treat to see you. Like I'm always seeing you in a little square.

**0:15:56.4 Jennifer Brocker:** Well, and just, it took a lot to get to the Express Yourself moment today.

**0:16:03.7 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:16:04.3 Jennifer Brocker:** It evolved over time and for me to see it come to light, maybe it would, it was more than a glimmer. But, just to hear people's stories, to hear Debbie and Josh, the fact that we can be empower people like that and share them with the world, that that's always makes me feel good. Like we do help the profession literally with financing options that helps people pay for care. But to me, supporting the profession, the health of the people in it, it's so important.

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and even pay if approved, all on that smart device with just a tap. They have a friendly contactless way to pay over time for the services and treatments their pet needs, whether it be a general referring or specialty hospital, as long as they accept the CareCredit credit card.

**0:17:21.3 Katie Berlin:** That is another thing that I loved about what you said a few minutes ago where you were talking about like, even if it has nothing to do with CareCredit, like maybe we can... Maybe this person can feel empowered to make someone's life better. And, that is another thing. Like a lot of people or don't love the sponsor association relationships, they feel like it means that we're biased in some way or that sponsors are like buying their way into our hearts. And I having had a perspective from working in custom content at Clinicians Brief and now here at AAHA. AAHA is a nonprofit, like we can't do what we do without partnerships. But it definitely, there are different types of partnerships and there are partnerships where our job is to really help a company sell a product while they give us funding to do what we need to do. That's fine. The partnership with CareCredit feels different. It feels like you know that by helping the ecosystem, the veterinary ecosystem. Success will come, people understand who you are and what's important to you as a company because of what you choose to support. And that's...

**0:18:33.5 Jennifer Brocker:** A healthy profession helps everyone.

**0:18:38.4 Katie Berlin:** Yes, a rising tide lifts all ships, right?

**0:18:41.5 Jennifer Brocker:** Yes. Absolutely, yeah.

**0:18:42.6 Katie Berlin:** So that's one of the things that I love the most is feeling like we can all be mission driven together.

**0:18:47.8 Jennifer Brocker:** Yes.

**0:18:48.7 Katie Berlin:** And glimmers are just one of the ways that, that relationship comes to light. So, okay. So you mentioned Express Yourself. The event that we just recorded with Josh and Debbie, and then we had the Canine Companions at Dr. Yuen Wolf, told their story. This event was the kickoff of a year of storytelling essentially which was an idea that sort of germinated with the Veterinary Visionaries event this year where we had a lot of people tell us their stories. And, there's... We've done a lot of talking about that at AAHA. And on the podcast. So, there's definitely more information available on that. We'll put links in the show notes. But I love the idea of an event that rolls out through the year and gives people a chance to start feeling comfortable telling their story. It's not just like one event, boom. Like, if you don't tell your story now, that's it. Bye-bye. It's like we got this whole year to feel comfortable with the idea and it started with so much personal storytelling and, Express Yourself. It's, a really deeply personal thing. It's a personal theme. What, why is that so important to you?

**0:20:00.4 Jennifer Brocker:** Oh, [laughter] I might get tears in my eyes. I I think that, Express Yourself is the active version of storytelling. And I think a lot of people sit, they feel alone and that they, that they're not going, they're going through something in all by themselves and by expressing themselves and hearing other people express themselves, it creates connection with each other.

**0:20:31.8 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:20:32.1 Jennifer Brocker:** And instead of sitting and just in silence and, and suffering, as soon as one person has the courage to express what they're going through, express a story. And it can be anything. Express a funny story, express how sad you are. It opens the door to valuable connection. And I love what you said earlier when you were talking to Debbie and Josh, like, we all come to, to an event and you go, you get do all this learning and you get all excited about it. But I find when I go home, it's the little stories like that Peter Weinstein will tell, or a little story that Debbie will tell to me. You remember those you might not read. Remember, like, here's four bullet points to better communication. So I think that is the value of storytelling is we're feeling people who think. And so if you... I feel like stories tap into your feeling as a human, and that's really how you change. It's how you change the world. So that's what I love about the Express Yourself.

**0:21:40.5 Katie Berlin:** Okay. We're done.

[laughter]

**0:21:44.5 Katie Berlin:** I mean, you're right. And people retain information better. There's research backing that up, that people retain information better if it's in a story and so this isn't soft science. This is hard. There's hard science to back up why storytelling is so important. I mean, it goes back to the beginning of humans and I couldn't love it more, so. Yeah.

**0:22:07.5 Jennifer Brocker:** Me too. And my dad was actually a Statistics professor. Oh. Which seems like it's way up here. So he would help us with our math homework of course. So, when I got to Trigonometry classes like that, I was like, I'm not a dimensional thinker. So he would, he would tell stories to explain what it meant, what the equation meant on paper. So I think I learned the power of storytelling attached to like, statistical modeling from when I was a kid.

[laughter]

**0:22:42.7 Katie Berlin:** Do you know my dad used to do something similar. Like he would tell stories. He, and he also made up little cartoons. Like he would draw little cartoons on my notepad. So like, I remember learning about solubility and like saturation point with little beakers that had particle floating in them. He called them Happy Beaker and Sad Beaker and like happy.

[laughter]

**0:23:03.3 Jennifer Brocker:** Oh God. That's awesome.

**0:23:03.8 Katie Berlin:** Anyway, I wish I knew where those were because...

**0:23:05.4 Jennifer Brocker:** My dad would also, so he mainly taught PhD students. He would correct the spelling and grammar on any of their papers and they were like... And they, he would grade them down and they're like, this is a Statistics class. Like why are you grading me down for like, I'm misspelling or not use of a comma. He is like, if you're gonna get a PhD, you better well able to write, yeah.

[laughter]

**0:23:27.8 Katie Berlin:** I like your dad.



[laughter]

**0:23:30.5 Katie Berlin:** That's why I'm a good editor. I know that stuff doesn't always matter to everybody, but it matters to me. I'm still Liberal Arts anyway.

**0:23:37.3 Jennifer Brocker:** Yeah. When my dad passed away, my brother made us all bumper stickers that say Commas Matter and DLW that's my dad's initial. So...

[laughter]

**0:23:50.4 Katie Berlin:** I would have that on a t-shirt.

[laughter]

**0:23:53.5 Katie Berlin:** Well Jen, is there anything else you'd like to say while you're here? Because I know you support care, you support Central Line all the time, but you don't get a chance to sit in front of the mic a lot. So.

**0:24:03.5 Jennifer Brocker:** I just wanna say that, how much we value our partnership with AAHA in everything that you're doing to support the profession and how you all have leveled up, how you're interacting with the profession 'cause I think it's really making a difference.

**0:24:20.5 Katie Berlin:** I'd love to hear that. Thank you so much.

**0:24:22.5 Jennifer Brocker:** So thank you Katie.

**0:24:24.5 Katie Berlin:** And thank you for coming by today, I don't know if this is your comfort zone or not, but it seems like it is and I really appreciate you taking a few minutes. I know these conferences are so busy but, and thank you for so much always for your support. It means the world. So great.

**0:24:40.5 Jennifer Brocker:** Thank you.

[laughter]

**0:24:41.9 Katie Berlin:** And thank you everyone for listening and watching. We'll catch you next time on Central Line.