[00:00:00] **Krista:** Hey, hey. Welcome to the Summit Host Hangout podcast, where you'll learn how to host a high converting virtual summit that leads to your biggest signature offer launch yet. I'm your host, Krista from Summit in a Box, and if you've ever wondered what the, quote unquote, best summit tech is, I have the episode for you today, and I brought in an amazing guest to help.

[00:00:18] I have with me Sharee Collier of thesummithost.com, who is all about helping you plan and host virtual summits. Her goal is to help you simplify the summit hosting process so you can grow your audience, build your authority, create engaging experiences, and boost your sales in the process, and who doesn't want that?

[00:00:34] I have had the honor of collaborating with her in her summits and mine, and it's just always a joy, and I'm so excited to finally have her here with us today. So without further ado, let's dive in and talk with Sharee. Thank you so much for coming on today.

[00:00:48] **Sharee Collier:** Ooh, I'm so excited. Thanks for having me.

[00:00:50] **Krista:** Yeah, and I, I just feel like you gave me such a gift in your willingness to have to talk about this specific topic, because it's a question I get so much.

[00:00:59] What about this tech platform? What about this one? And actually, the ones that you have the most experience with are the ones I get asked about the most, so I think this is gonna be so helpful to so many people. But before we dive into the tech, I always just like to hear, like, the backstories of other summit nerds like me. I'm curious, like, what was it that got you hooked on summits?

[00:01:21] **Sharee Collier:** That is so funny. Yeah. I fell in love with summits back in, like, 2019. Let me take you back. I was driving on a road trip with my family. We were going from, like, LA to Seattle, and I took, like, a spontaneous work meeting. Like, just a quick Zoom meeting before we enter the Avenue of the Giants. You know, it's beautiful. It's just-- Oh, it's just magical, right?

[00:01:47] I thought it was just, like, a quick catch-up. It was a fire Sharee meeting, and there I was. I was fired in the car on the road trip. All the kids are in the car, my husband's sitting there, and we had just decided to take, like, the, the long route through the Avenue of the Giants instead of going straight up I-5.

[00:02:04] And I was like, "Jeez, I have so much extra time to sit here and mull this over and, like, be in my feelings and just..." Oh, it was rough. So I'm sitting there and I'm like, "Oh my gosh, what am I gonna do? Like, I just lost my job. Like, I have to replace this income. Like, what am I about to do?" So instead of being, like, down in the dumps for the entire ride, I took a little time, then I got to work thinking, like, how I was going to monetize what I did have.

[00:02:34] And what I had was, like, a little mini blog that I had started, and it was, you know, talking about a specific topic. And I was like, "I gotta monetize this, 'cause this can't be a hobby anymore. Like, we have to turn this into a business." So I was like, "Oh, I'm gonna, um, I'm gonna answer the number one question that everyone keeps asking me in this audience."

[00:02:55] Like, everyone kept asking... I'll tell you, the niche was, uh, full-time RVing, like, how to make money and travel full-time. So I said, "Jesus, that's it. How to make money in RV. I'm gonna answer that question a hundred million times till it's exhausted, and I'll make an event out of it." And that's what I did.

[00:03:14] **Krista:** Oh my gosh!

[00:03:15] **Sharee Collier:** Yeah. So I put that event together, and we ended up having 5,000 people, over 5,000 people register. We made over $10,000 by the first day. We had huge sponsors. It was crazy. We had huge sponsors like RV Trader. We had this TV show on the Discovery Channel that came in and, like, did a sponsorship. Dubsado even came on, and no one knew me. It was crazy.

[00:03:38] And, and then it was just like, we had hundreds of people tuning in for these sessions that were recorded, and I was like, "Jeez, this is the power of virtual events, bringing people together, building community, like, answering a question, helping them over a hurdle." And from then on, I was hooked.

[00:03:56] **Krista:** Yeah, I can see why! I love that story! I actually didn't know that story.

[00:04:03] **Sharee Collier:** Oh, that I don't actually love to talk about it 'cause it was humiliating, but it did start me down this path, so I have to be thankful.

[00:04:11] **Krista:** Yeah, we do good things out of desperation sometimes, and that was good. That was awesome. Oh my gosh. Okay, that's cool to hear, and I definitely see why you love summits now, both yourself and helping others with it. And something that has always stood out to me about you and what, the way

you teach summits is all the different platforms it seems to me you have experience with and I've seen you talking about.

[00:04:37] And I-- like I said, I was so excited when you agreed to be interviewed about it because, like, the tech choices are something that trip so many people up and cause just so much anguish and anxiety. I'm like, "Y'all, just pick a platform." But you, as far as I know, have hosted summits using Kajabi, ThriveCart, and HeySummit primarily.

[00:04:56] Let me know if you have any others, but I'm curious to hear what made you decide to experiment with multiple instead of sticking just to one.

[00:05:05] **Sharee Collier:** You know what? I am not a one-size-fits-all type of person in, in any stretch of the meaning of that little phrase or whatever. Like, I love variety. Like, I don't think one thing fits anyone or one thing will fit you for the entirety of your life. So I, I can never just pick one thing. So, you know, I, I just believe that people should use what they have or use what feels right for that moment, that moment in time. So, you know, I plan a lot of events for different people as well as for myself, and people come to me at different starting points. Some are already using Kajabi, so it makes sense for them to continue down that path. We're not gonna set up all a new website over here if you already have this all-in-one platform. Some, you know, are already on Thrivecart or they just want something that they're not gonna have to continuously pay a reoccurring subscription price for. So that was an easy sell for them. Like, "Okay, I can use Thrivecart." And then some want all the bells and whistles and they want everything. They want the whole kit and caboodle. They want, um, you know, affiliate tracking. They want speaker dashboards. They want chat boxes. And we do our thing on HeySummit. So, you know, I tend to meet people where they are. And for my own events, I just kinda come from the same mindset and I use what feels best for the long-term goal of that project. So each one is individual.

[00:06:37] **Krista:** I love that take. That makes so much sense. And that's interesting what you said about HeySummit. So I last looked at HeySummit when they were, like, first a thing. So this was, I don't even know how many years ago. So many. And I looked, and one of my friends tried using it and jumped ship really early on, and I was like, "This isn't it."

[00:06:54] But from what you just said, it sounds like they have upleveled a lot perhaps. So how would you say running a summit in HeySummit feels different than using a setup like Kajabi or ThriveCart or something like that?

[00:07:09] **Sharee Collier:** Well, okay. One thing I love about HeySummit that I just don't know that you're gonna find elsewhere is the fact that you-- this has happened to me so many times, like so many of the features you're gonna see on HeySummit have come from Sharee because they will build it if you want it. So when I first started my very first event was one of *their* first events, so they were building it as we were going, and it was like a real, like back and forth kind of situation. And then I got into like a really tight jam where in my head I just knew there was a 24-hour, like if I did the free ticket, it was gonna be there for 24 hours. And I was like, "Did I make that up? Like that's how I wanted my ticket, so I promoted it like that? Or did I see that somewhere?" And they were like, "Our platform does not do that, but we will build it. Give us two minutes." You know? So they built it and it was ready by day one.

[00:08:05] And they do that to this day. When I did my 2023 signature event, Teach Me How to Summit, they were my main sponsor and I was going to use a different platform for like, the upsell so I could just really jazz it up. They were like, "Well, we prefer you do that on HeySummit, so we're gonna build that functionality for you here." And they built it before the first day. They really will work with you and if you have a, like a user case that is something that other people can use and they can explain it into their platform, it's gonna be there for you.

[00:08:39] So that's why I love HeySummit above anything else, but it doesn't always fit the bill. So going back to your question, which now I have forgotten what it was. What was it about?

[00:08:51] **Krista:** Oh yeah. It was a... I don't even remember. How does running a summit inside HeySummit feel different than using something like Kajabi or ThriveCart?

[00:08:59] **Sharee Collier:** Oh, yes. Okay. You get all the bells and whistles, right? Like, HeySummit feels like an event from the very, like, start of it! Your speakers are gonna feel like they're coming into an event. They get their own dashboard. Your sponsors are gonna come in. They're gonna feel like they have their own place, and they do.

[00:09:20] And most importantly, your attendees are gonna feel like this is an event. It's just not a collection of videos that we are, you know, drip-feeding to you and calling it an event. It's an event. Like, we are here with you in these chat boxes. We now have, like, an attendee kinda, like, meeting area where we can chat. You can go into sponsor booths. You know, it's an experience.

[00:09:42] But to kinda double down on what your friend said, going in there for the first time, it is overwhelming. That is a tech platform that you have to touch every piece and every setting, or something will go wrong because you did not go in and tweak the setting.

[00:10:01] They set it up for their standard template. You have to create it. You have to tweak it and, and create your event. So yeah, it, it can be overwhelming. But I just tell, like, myself every time I go in there, start from the main dashboard and just work your way around to each one of the settings and just read it.

[00:10:19] They have little icons, like, to refresh your memory if, you know, you planned a whole bunch of events, still don't know what the heck this does. You know, they have the tools there for you that, uh, will help you customize it. So it just feels different. We're not just dripping out videos, which still is very powerful and we do all the time. We're just more focused on the event-like feel of it.

[00:10:43] **Krista:** That is really interesting. Oh, man. So I've always seen HeySummit as something that's, like, limiting and you're, like, stuck in their box, but it sounds like that's probably not the case anymore with how many changes they've made over the years, thanks to requests from people like you and probably many others.

[00:10:58] If you have an affiliate link, you're gonna have to send it to me 'cause I am curious, and I know I will not be the only one. So we're gonna use Sharee's affiliate link in the show notes of this episode for HeySummit.

[00:11:08] **Sharee Collier:** Okay, I will totally do that. And yeah, they have a whole, like, system for submitting your requests. I just submitted some more because I was like, "You know, I'd really like analytics on what people are clicking on inside of the sponsor booths." Like, I wanna know every piece of it, 'cause I wanna be able to give that information to my sponsors. But yeah, it has grown and it has come a long way. But I think where people go wrong, and I do see this all the time, and it just makes me cringe each and every time. I even saw, like, some, kind of like a big deal, do a recent event on HeySummit, and I went and I registered and I was like, "Oh my God, I wanna see what they did." And when I got in there, I was like, "Oh no, they didn't do much."

[00:11:47] **Krista:** Oh no!

[00:11:48] **Sharee Collier:** And I was like, you have to customize it. You can't just use their standard template 'cause it is going to look like the template, and it's not gonna convert, and people aren't gonna get the event experience. So here's an example. So when you are doing, like, speaker recruitment and onboarding, HeySummit can take that off of your plate, right?

[00:12:10] Like, they have a system where you can enter in your speaker name, their email, and then they can send your speaker, like, an invitation to come and fill out the information theirself. Krista, you and I both know that getting speakers to do that is, would be like a nightmare. Like, they're not going to do that.

[00:12:30] It would be so much easier just to have them fill out, like, a little form and us go build it. So that's where I see a lot of people going wrong with HeySummit. They try too much. They try and, like, you know, offload, you know, this task and that task and put it in the hand of the speaker and the sponsor, and then when they get to their event, they're left with, like, half-completed pages and it doesn't feel good.

[00:12:52] It doesn't feel good to attendees, and it probably doesn't feel good to the speaker for them to get to their page and be like, "Oh man, I let this drop off my list and now my speaker bio says, 'Speaker updating this soon.'"

[00:13:06] **Krista:** I love it. Yeah, so there's like still, even though like HeySummit is a built-in all-in-one platform for events, you can't go in there and assume that you can get away with not knowing what you're doing just because it's an event platform. You still gotta know your stuff.

[00:13:19] **Sharee Collier:** 100%.

[00:13:21] **Krista:** Yeah. Yeah, I think that's good news for us as summit strategists, but it's also interesting to hear 'cause I wouldn't have considered that.

[00:13:27] But I know like, every time I go to a HeySummit event, I land on their registration page, I'm like, number one, this is garbage. Number two, it looks like every other registration page I've ever, ever seen on HeySummit. So it definitely lines up with what you're saying here.

[00:13:41] **Sharee Collier:** Yes, that is the problem. I just had a client event that wrapped up, and I was so excited to duplicate that event, 'cause that's another feature in there. You can clone the event so you don't have to start from scratch, which is very helpful. And I was like, "Guys, we gotta clone this baby because

this is the exact landing page we're using next time." The landing page for their event converted at 92%. I was like, "This is amazing." Like, I'm never...

[00:14:07] **Krista:** touch anything

[00:14:08] **Sharee Collier:** Exactly. Do not touch it. This is the model!

[00:14:15] **Krista:** Yes. Oh my gosh.

[00:14:17] **Sharee Collier:** So it's all about what you do with it. Like, you can't expect just to log in, toss in your videos, toss in your speakers, and call it a day. There is still strategy, there is still planning, there is still branding that has to go into the event or it's gonna fall flat, and there's g- there's just not gonna be anyone to blame but the host because you didn't do your due diligence. You didn't do the work.

[00:14:42] **Krista:** Okay. That is so interesting. Like, I've learned so much already. Thank you. Everyone's just, like, in on our little chat session, I feel like here, of you teaching me about HeySummit, so I really appreciate this. Um, I also love what you said about being able to duplicate the events, because I think that's one of the most powerful things people can do with a summit.

[00:15:02] Do it once, figure out the kinks, fix it next time, and then rinse and repeat. Duplicate everything you did, make it a little better next time, and it sounds like that is easy in there. Would you say HeySummit is the best platform for that kind of thing? I feel like it's pretty easy even in Kajabi, but it's not like a one-click duplicate situation.

[00:15:23] **Sharee Collier:** Okay, so it is a one-click duplicate, right? Like, you can clone the event inside of HeySummit, and you're gonna have all your sessions from last year and, you know, they're linked to, you know, whatever Vimeo video you link them to, all that good stuff.

[00:15:37] You're still gonna have to go in there and tweak the copy. You're gonna have to make some, you know, updates. It's a one-click clone, but it's not a one-click new event. You know? Like, you still have work to do. But I love it because now inside of our all-access pass, we can easily offer all the videos from last year, you know?

[00:15:55] **Krista:** Mm-hmm.

[00:15:56] **Sharee Collier:** So I love that.

[00:15:58] **Krista:** Yeah. Okay. Okay, this is handy. So now I'm like, okay, is Sharee's opinion that HeySummit is the best platform for summits? Would you say that there is one, or is that like the wrong question that people are always asking?

[00:16:13] **Sharee Collier:** I think that's the wrong question that people are asking. The right question would probably be, which is the best event for *me*, you know, and this event. Because I always tell people, start where you are. So if I have HeySummit, which honestly guys, they had done, recently like a lifetime deal and I was shouting it from the rooftop to anyone on our email list.

[00:16:38] I was like, "Guys, they don't do this often and they just did it and you have to buy it now. This is gonna be one of those things that you want in your back pocket. Get it, get it, get it." You know? So if you bought HeySummit, then use HeySummit. But if you have ThriveCart, then we can use ThriveCart. And if you're on Kajabi paying all of that money, which I'm a Kajabi user, we need to be using Kajabi. Like, we need to be using Kajabi, okay?

[00:17:02] That's just what it boils down to. There is no like, best tool. There are some really great tools, but if you know strategy and structure behind how to do a virtual summit, any tool can actually deliver it. You can do the thing with a Facebook group if you want. Most people are not there for like the bells and whistles.

[00:17:23] They're there for the promise, that goal that you're helping them reach. So let's focus on that more than, you know, picking some crazy theme and, you know, trying to build this brand around this like Disney or Pixar theme and you're like, "Wait, what in the world is going on here?" Like, let's make sure we have a like really like just dialed in list of sessions that are gonna teach this person how to accomplish the whole reason that they registered.

[00:17:58] **Krista:** Yeah.

[00:17:59] **Sharee Collier:** Like what are we helping them do? 'Cause if we don't have those sessions to get them from point A to point B, we don't really have much, do we?

[00:18:09] **Krista:** We do not. Doesn't matter how fancy your tech is if you don't have that.

[00:18:14] **Sharee Collier:** It doesn't. And I can get lost in the tech, I can get lost in branding, like fine-tuning, but that's after everything else is done. Those are like nice-to-haves, you...

[00:18:22] **Krista:** Yeah.

[00:18:23] **Sharee Collier:** Like making things pretty. Like it does need to be pretty to a certain extent, but it actually needs to work and deliver.

[00:18:31] **Krista:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. People place so much weight on that, and that's not the thing that's gonna get you the results.

[00:18:39] **Sharee Collier:** Oh, the page that I was just telling you about that converted at 92%. I do not even think that that was like a pretty page. It just spoke to the user, and they knew that they needed to register. I would not say that that was one of my prettiest pages that I've ever built. I don't even necessarily like the color scheme.

[00:19:02] **Krista:** That's like good news and also painful at the same time, I feel like.

[00:19:06] **Sharee Collier:** It's not, but it's not for me. I am 100% not the person they were trying to reach. So it's very interesting.

[00:19:14] **Krista:** I feel like we've pointed out a couple of things already, like even just in that conversation, but do you-- are there any other mistakes you see people making when they're choosing their summit tech other than what we've already touched on?

[00:19:25] **Sharee Collier:** I think overbuilding, overcomplicating. Like, if you're gonna pick, um, if you're gonna pick ThriveCart or Kajabi, well, I would hope you are already on Kajabi. That's one that is not like a, "Hey, let me just pick up, you know, some templates and, and pop up a Kajabi virtual summit site." No. Kajabi virtual summits are for Kajabi users. I would never recommend anyone just pop up a summit on Kajabi. It's so much to learn. That's a big learning curve.

[00:19:58] ThriveCart, less of a learning curve. You can pop up a summit on ThriveCart and be okay, but there is still a learning curve, and I think we have to take that into consideration.

[00:20:09] Like, let's make a list of the things we need to accomplish. What is the goal, okay? What do we need for the virtual summit? Is it audio? Is it video? You know, where are we hosting this content? What tools do we currently have? Let's take, like, an inventory and then move from there and see, like, where we need to fill in the gaps. Because I don't think planning a virtual summit, learning new tech, trying to, some of us, build the funnel for the back end of the virtual summit, trying to do all those things at one time is like, I mean, you're aging yourself.

[00:20:48] You're aging yourself fast, 'cause it's a lot of work. So I always tell people, "Use what you have, start where you are, and then, like, get that first one going, and then build from there." Like you said, you can rinse and repeat these. Either you're using the clone button or you're duplicating some pages, or maybe you're duplicating the course modules and you swap things out and you can, you know...

[00:21:10] ThriveCart lets you embed anything, so you don't need HeySummit for chat boxes. You can go pick up a chat box and embed it into ThriveCart if that's what you really want.

[00:21:19] Think overbuilding, overcomplicating things. I've seen some of the craziest things, like some people, like, buy HeySummit and then their registration page is HeySummit, but then tickets are sold through ThriveCart, but then all the content is still in HeySummit, and I'm like, "What? I'm sorry, why did we do this? What is this?" There's too many Zaps going back and forth. Like, the emails are delayed. Like, we gotta make sure that it actually works or else you lose, you lose the excitement of the event experience.

[00:21:50] Event marketing is so powerful. It is so powerful! Like, you're touching these people in a way that you just can't with a, with a, with a text email. So, you know, you don't wanna lose that momentum. You wanna lean into it.

[00:22:04] **Krista:** I love it. I love it. Oh my gosh, so good. I feel like we were so efficient with this conversation. Do you feel like there's anything else we missed that we should touch on or any, like, final words you would wanna give someone who is, like, sitting here stressed out about their tack being like, "But Sharee, what one should I choose?"

[00:22:21] Let's go with that as the question. What would you tell that person? She would shake her head at you or me, one of those.

[00:22:29] **Sharee Collier:** Go back from the beginning of the podcast and re-listen to...

[00:22:33] **Krista:** There we go.

[00:22:34] **Sharee Collier:** Already went through it. You-- There is no perfect tech. There are great tech options, and each one is gonna depend on what you're doing and where you're at, what you have. Like, every event is gonna be different. I honestly think ThriveCart is just a simple tool that is affordable. It's easy to learn, easy to set up. So when people ask me like, "Okay, what should I use on a virtual summit?" Like, if you don't have any idea, if you don't have any of the things we're talking about, ThriveCart is an easy option to set up. You can get templates, you can get help planning your event, and it works, right? It will work, and you can build from there. Yeah, no, I'm not gonna go down the rabbit trail again. I'm gonna say start with what you have and fill in the gaps. If not, turn to ThriveCart.

[00:23:32] **Krista:** Love that. And then when you really wanna up your game, if you're feeling like you need to do that, HeySummit would be the step up from there. But I like that: start with what you already have, period, end of story kind of situation.

[00:23:45] **Sharee Collier:** Yeah. See, the thing about HeySummit is once you have your event built on there, you are going to have to move it somewhere if you don't plan on continuing to pay for HeySummit. That's why I was encouraging everyone in my audience to buy the lifetime deal, 'cause at least you could keep it open. Yeah. So yeah, this was a fun conversation, Krista.

[00:24:06] **Krista:** Yeah. Well, that was good! Thanks for coming on and chatting about all that with me. Before I let you go, can you let people know where they can go to learn more about you and what you offer, and I think you have a freebie you wanted to share. Like, tell us all the things!

[00:24:19] **Sharee Collier:** Okay. Well, I would love to share my Virtual Summit Planner, which is what I call 70 pages of virtual summit goodness. It is not just like a fill-in-the-blank kind of worksheet, but it actually, like, has some, like, you know, substance to it that kind of walks you through different aspects of your virtual summit. I think it's a great place to start. You're gonna get a lot fleshed out. You're gonna get those ideas out of your head onto paper or onto the screen. Either way is good. So yeah, they can download that for free.

[00:24:54] And where you can find me is at thesummithost.com. I don't wanna say I'm not a social person, but I'm not on social media. I just, I've tried it in the past and it just feels like more work. So I love to connect with people via email or at my events, and in different collab projects that I do throughout the year.

[00:25:14] **Krista:** Yeah, I love it. Well, we will link to those things in the show notes, so everybody go grab those. Sharee, thank you so much for being here. I really appreciate it, and thank you so much everyone for tuning in. For show notes and those resources that we mentioned, head to the link in the episode description. We will have all the goodness for you there. And now go out and take action to plan, strategize, and launch your high-converting virtual summit.