**Wendy - Zoom recording**

[00:00:00] Hey party people. Welcome to Stand Up and Stand Out. I'm your host, Nikki Green Stand Up and Stand Out. It's more than a podcast. It's a call to action. And no, I don't mean in that cutesy CTA acronym, buzzword type of way. Are you tired of misogynistic bosses, ruining your Workday? Did you dream of using your creative energy for good, instead of promoting corporate greed and evil?

**Nikki:** Then this educational podcast is for you. Following, nearly two decades of working in fortune 500 companies. I want to share my leadership learnings with all of you. Leaders are needed in all walks of life, not just business. We are in a critical time to pivot ourselves. And the community around us to build a better future together. In this podcast, we're going to cover some behind the scenes. From my new book, I laugh in the face of danger and other life lessons that should have taught me better.

Stand Up and Stand Out is education, comedy, and therapy. All in one. See you there! Welcome everyone, to [00:01:00] Stand Up and Stand Out today we interview Wendy Cooper, a woman of incredible talents. Wendy Coop is the CEO of Coop Creative Consulting, LLC. She has a formal Naval office, and computer teacher, turned writer and entrepreneur.

She contributes to publications, commenting on marketing, writing, health and consumer technology. As a freelance writer, her writing has been featured in places like Entrepreneur.com, Addicted To Success, Indigo Blue Magazine, Diabetes In The Know, and Thrive Global. She is also a former business and financial management teacher.

Wendy is also a graduate of the United States Naval academy, the University of Baltimore and the Community College of Baltimore County Phi Theta Kappa. In addition to being a veteran and military spouse. All right, Wendy, let's kick it off. How are you today?

**Wendy:** I am doing really well, my fingers, not so much from playing the guitar, but that's my new pursuit is playing the guitar.

**Nikki:** Oh, [00:02:00] fantastic. Yeah, it's getting warm here in Chicago. It just meant a lot of yard work. I think my hands are equally tired from pulling weeds.

**Wendy:** Absolutely. Yeah. Guitar was something I always wanted to do, but it was something I couldn't teach myself. So I had to go and sit in lessons and have someone say, no, your fingers go here, and this is the better way to do this. And so that even four or five lessons I've progressed tremendously, so I'm feeling good.

**Nikki:** I think we forget how much we should be getting coached on things we can't just float through life and figure it out on a YouTube video, it's helpful, but there's something missing.

**Wendy:** Exactly. Exactly. I was thinking about that exact thing when I said the story because so many times, and I read like all the Amazon comments on under books and there's always that one person who says as " I could have found all of this for free online," so you could have, but how much longer would it have taken you and [00:03:00] how many mistakes would you have made along the way?

Just let other people make the mistakes and, just learn, let's not reinvent the wheel.

**Nikki:** And learn from them, and at least like you're not topping over all the problems, right? And you know, those of us that of, you know, seen some action, we kinda know that, hey, there's some ways to do things it's a little bit better, a little bit easier, and don't take the hard road every time.

**Wendy:** Exactly.

**Nikki:** So let's talk a little bit about, where you came from , my family has a bunch of, uh, comic book nerds, I love it, I know you like comic books too. So I have a bit of a kind of storyboard here, but, um, what's your origin story? Every great superhero or villain has one, what's yours?

**Wendy:** So my origin story basically has me as the nerdy kid, whose parents are trying to give her a normal upbringing. So if you, if you've watched young Sheldon and I'm not saying I'm Sheldon Cooper genius level, but you know, Sheldon's mom [00:04:00] is always trying to make sure that he has like a normal-kid experience go to birthday parties, play with actual kids and things like that. So my parents were really good about, making sure I hung out with people my age. I didn't skip any grades, but at the same time they nurtured my giftedness and my "intellectuality," is that a word I'm making it a word.

So they nurtured that and all the things that I was into science, music, drama, um, and all that good stuff. So in the end I had a well-rounded upbringing, which allowed me to excel at boarding school, into an overall sporting school. Did all the things and then went off to the United States Naval Academy.

After leaving the Navy, I realized I was free to do whatever I actually wanted to do. And that's what I did, so if I had a job that I didn't like, I left, I was like, I can leave, this is so liberating. But that means also I had a lot of jobs doing a lot of [00:05:00] things. I sold everything from cars to mobile phones, to wedding dresses.

I was a substitute teacher, I was an actual teacher, I was a photographer, I made gift baskets, I did any and everything that kept my schedule flexible and clear, and just allowed me to feel like I could be productive, but not too tied down.

**Nikki:**  I love that because I think, our parents' generation, they had one, maybe two jobs, you know, they really didn't move around, but you had this promise of security, benefits, retirement, pension, whatever.

The last time I went for an interview, Wow. Why you stayed at a job for five years? Why so long?

So times are changing and I think this next generation is going to have a very different experience, especially with sort of the rise of the gig economy, where you can just sort of pick up lots of odd jobs and make a living out of it and have the flexibility to do whatever else you want in your life. I [00:06:00] think that's fantastic.

**Wendy:**  And I think one of the things to understand is that it doesn't mean a lot of jobs on your resume means you're disloyal. I think it means you're loyal to the right kinds of things that you haven't found yet.

**Nikki:** Part of the reason I left my job and started my company and wrote about it in my book is I was just unhappy.

I kept doing the thing that I thought I was supposed to do. And you just end up in this miserable state and doesn't make sense. I was laying in the bathroom floor crying, having a panic attack at four o'clock in the morning and you're going: this can't be the way to live, I'm definitely doing something wrong here.

**Wendy:**  Absolutely, I've had those moments multiple times, they've been in the bathroom, they've been in the bedroom, they've been in the living room. So I do understand. And as an entrepreneur, I think we have them a little bit more often. But they're valuable experiences they stink when you're going through them, but they are valuable.

**Nikki:** That was a great story to start with, but let's talk about [00:07:00] what else makes you unique? What makes you stand out from the crowd?

**Wendy:** Well, one of the things is that I do Stand-up comedy.

For the last five years I've been doing Stand-up comedy, um, I am also the lead pastor of a church plant that, will be primarily online, but coming to St. Augustine, Florida, whenever I get to St. Augustine, Florida. I know that there aren't a whole lot of pastors with the standup comedy background.

So I'm looking forward to, marrying the two skills and seeing how that goes on a week to week basis. I think it's just a combination of being able to look back at the last 17 years that I have been a civilian and say, what have I learned through those experiences and how did therapy help me?

Being able to filter those experiences through therapy and knowing how, they have helped me, [00:08:00] allows me to help other people now. So what I'm finding, are people who are a few steps behind me or a few years behind me and I'm saying, oh my gosh, I was there, let me tell you what happened and hopefully this'll help you too.

**Nikki:** That's a church I definitely want to go to, I think it's a good combination, right? Of like bringing a little bit of humor to the spirituality, but it's to help us grow. I think some people maybe shy away from religion because they felt that sort of oppression and there's just a lot of rules and it's very heavy instead of like, it should make you happy to be there.

**Wendy:**  I remember someone said to me, why are you doing this thing. You're a Christian. And I was like, when I became a Christian, no one handed me a rule book, said what I could and couldn't do. So I don't know what you're talking about. Whose rule was that? Did I miss that meeting?

Because there are a lot of assumptions about what one should or should not do as a Christian or as a comedian or as a writer or [00:09:00] as an insert, whatever here, but often times those are outdated expectations of society, or random expectations we have put on ourselves for no good reason.

**Nikki:**  That's the important thing and why my message is always about maintaining your uniqueness.

What you believe is the right path for you is the right path for you. All this influence, and like you said, someone's always going to tell you, like, this thing is supposed to do, it was like, have you ever been a standup comedian? No, then how do you know this is the thing like that it's supposed to be, right?, like just a lot of opinions out there without a lot of factor.

**Wendy:** Folks love to tell you how to do your job.

**Nikki:**  Well you've shared a little bit, but what careers have you explored in your life? I think it's really important to share with the next generation that you can start in one thing and end up in something very different but each of those things is sort of a foundation to where you end up.

**Wendy:** Wow. I looked at everything from being a history teacher to working in [00:10:00] IT, um, anything that I could do from home, like when entrepreneur, so back in the early 2000's entrepreneur, the magazine and the website, entrepreneur.com, um, they used to sell this binders that each binder and it was a huge binder was for a different type of home-based business. And so the first half of the binder was specific to the business itself. So maybe you wanted to be an event planner or maybe you wanted to be a professional speaker. And then the second half of the binder was just more general, how to start a business information. So really, if you own multiple binders, you really only needed the first half. Yeah. So I had multiple binders. I was in the bookstore all the time in the business section, looking at every conceivable business idea because I wanted to know what was out there and I just wanted to work from home. That was, that was my only goal. It didn't matter what I was [00:11:00] doing. I just wanted to do it from home because I knew getting out of the Navy that a 40 hour a week office cubicle life just wasn't for me. And I was doing everything I could to avoid that. And I did, I did avoid it completely.

To this day I've never had an office job, but at the same time I had to forge my own path because office jobs come with their own, career paths and expectations. And I didn't have any of that because I was, you know, I had my job of the week or job of the month and my poor mother never knew what I was doing.

She just, I was getting paid to do something, that's all she knew. So I was doing a research from the very beginning, but what was missing was any sort of confidence in a particular idea. like, I never felt that I knew enough or that I had enough experience despite being a Naval officer, despite a fancy degree from the United [00:12:00] States Naval Academy, I felt a huge amount of imposter syndrome.

And if anyone knows Enneagrams, I'm an Enneagram five. And so I just like to accumulate knowledge. The downside of that is feeling like I never know enough. So that, that kept me from pursuing a lot of things.

**Nikki:**  We're training this generation of there's this myth that you go to school, you get this job you retire, right?

Like, and that's the end of it. And, and nothing works that way anymore. Even the illusion that you have one of these corporate jobs and, you know, because they give you benefits and 401k or whatever that, that security, but they do layoffs, they get a merger or acquisition, right? And things change all the time and they don't care about you.

You're a cog in the machine, just like anything else.

**Wendy:** I've seen that, with a couple of the jobs that I had, one of the jobs when I, was selling mobile phones, the company got the contract got bought out by another company. When I was teaching group fitness. Yes, I did that too. Um, that whole corporation was [00:13:00] essentially bought out by another company and they actually lowered my wages and I was like, I'm outta here because you didn't pay me that much in the first place, so definitely not staying. And then a third time when I was doing security at an airport and it seemed like every other month they were trying to figure out who had the contract for what our uniforms never changed, but the person paying us always seemed to change.

And I said, you know what? This is a little too much instability. I'm out.

**Nikki:**  I talk a lot about it too, constant reorganization. So even, yeah, same thing you're working for, what you think is sort of the same job, but your boss changes, and so then what you're really supposed to do all of a sudden changes, and now you're held to a different standard.

It's very confusing and it's a terrible way to run things. If you go back to any of those business books, I'm sure they did not tell them to do it this way.

**Wendy:** Exactly. And I learned that in the military, that that is not how you do things. And I'll tell you what led to the church plant was that I was going to get [00:14:00] ordained in a particular organization, I won't say the organization, but they elected a new organization president, and then this person wanted to go through and change a bunch of things. And I heard that that was normal. Within this organization, someone new will come in and then everything would change. And I said, no, that is not good. That is not how this is supposed to work.

And in all my time, in retail and in the military, I knew that that was not necessarily a sign of good leadership. So I said it is definitely time to have, my own church plant and start this thing. Started on a good foot with leadership principles that I know and trust.

**Nikki:** Again sort of going back to how things may be coming together in the future for young people.

I think there are going to be more entrepreneurs. I think it doesn't have to build into this giant thing. It can be something that you're really passionate about and builds on, you know, skills that you have maybe you learned in school, maybe you got from a job, [00:15:00] who knows, but you kind of build them together.

And then you're your own boss, right? And so you control your destiny, you control your success, you control your failure and you decide how you're going to impact people around you as well.

**Wendy:** Exactly, but always have mentors because sometimes we can not see the forest for the trees and we need somebody who's not directly involved to say, you know what, you're being silly. I'm going to smack you across the face, just like the man and Robin meme were Batman smacking Robin, and he's like, no, sometimes we need that because, we don't see the bad path that we're going down, or we just don't know enough about what we don't know to make a good decisions.

Even in this church thing, I'm not doing it by myself, obviously, I have a board of directors, but in addition to that, I'll have an accountability board so that as a pastor, I'm going down a good path and should I, God forbid to anything, suspicious [00:16:00] or bad that I've got a whole board of other pastors who's who can look at me and say, Fix yourself

**Nikki:** Especially when you're going to try something new is that you do have mentors. I really had a mix, I had some really great ones that really helped my career helped me just personally and professionally, about keeping that balance. And then I had other ones who stole my ideas, claim things for themselves, put me down in front of other people and I'm just going, okay, this is really difficult. So you have to choose your mentors carefully too, cause that you need to make sure that their motives to help you are genuine and are going to get you where you need to be.

**Wendy:**  Not just that, but that they have some experience in the space you're working in. So one of the frustrating things for me is when, cause I see my husband going through this. waiting on his retirement date from the Navy, and they're giving him a lot of traditional business advice that doesn't seem to really be applicable in 2021.

And there are certain [00:17:00] organizations that are still giving mentors and not even really giving coaching to business models that worked 20 years ago, but don't fit. Like you said, the gig economy, or the work from home environment, or even just the multiple streams of income where you don't give up your day job.

So we need more mentors out there who are able to walk alongside younger people and say, you know what? I know that you want to do this, let's make this happen.

**Nikki:** I got a career coach, that's sort of what helped set me on this new path. I went to a bunch of, and I interviewed them and they're like, oh, I'll fix your resume, I'll help you interviewing, I'm like I've been doing this 20 years, like you're not really going to help me with that. And he was like, no, no, no, you need a new path, you're not happy, and he could see it, and he really set me in a much better direction to fulfill my dreams and I stay with him, you know, hopefully I'll have him on a future podcast.

So on that, what is your passion and how are you currently pursuing it?

**Wendy:**  I love to teach what I know, and I love to do that, through writing [00:18:00] and speaking. So obviously I love talking on podcasts.

But I love creating written content. So that's why I have those articles in entrepreneur.com and addicted to success, because it is so easy for me to sit and write, and I know that's not an easy thing for a lot of people, but, I had to realize like someone had to actually tell me, Wendy, you are good at this, not everybody can do this. Then I had to accept that and say, okay, I am good at this, let me ride this wave and go all in with this type of content so that I can teach people. What I know about health, about marketing, about all these things that I've been learning since the early 2000's.

I am doubling down on going all in, let's see how many gambling terms we can put in here, with, producing content and writing so that I can get in front of larger audiences in magazines like, Oh Magazine or on sites like Business Insider or Forbes Magazine. So I'm [00:19:00] Looking for those publications that can disseminate, what I want people to know what I think people need to know, but particularly about the world of freelance writing.

There's a lot of people who want to make money as a writer, but they think the only way to do that is as a fiction writer. And that is the, no, that is the least way to do that. The easiest way I'm telling you right now is to do non-fiction. But there's still a lot of misinformation. and a lot of people out there who just don't know how to get started and I'm looking for those people. I'm looking for the beginners, the career changers who say, you know what I love to write, too, how do I get paid to do it? So if that's you come find me.

**Nikki:** We'll send them your way, Wendy. When I wrote my book, I started with writing is hard and then I went, no, no, no, no writing was easy, like I could write thousands of words every day, especially, it was my memoir, right, I'm telling my own story, but then it's about crafting something that someone can read, and that they're going to be interested to understand, and that there's a lesson, you know, with each chapter as to what did come out of [00:20:00] this.

**Wendy:** Yeah. Cause you know, when I was doing market research into freelance writing, I went to the writing subreddit. And it was all about people trying to better their fiction writing.

And I was like, guys, this is not the only type of writing there is. So I had to go through and look for related subreddits, and finally I found the freelance writing subreddit and I was like, okay, these are my people. These are the questions that I can answer, these are the questions that make a little bit more sense to me because I, I can't tell you how to craft a plot twist.

But I can tell you how to craft a pitch for a publication.

**Nikki:** And we talked about Medium earlier. Uh, it's been fun getting on Medium. I love reading the articles, you know, I've written a couple, uh, really want to do a lot more of that and just been inspired by what other people are writing on there and different than say reading the wall street journal, or, you know, other publications like that, which are kind of mainstream articles.

It's cool. You learn stuff. But I think in Medium one, there's a lot more immediacy to it. You know, when they're pitching stuff.

**Wendy:** Yeah. And one of the things I love about [00:21:00] Medium is that you, as the writer can create your own publications. And, um, if anyone hasn't been on Medium lately, um, when you go on the homepage, they're only showing you publications trends. They're not even showing you the individual writers that you follow anymore. So if you haven't crafted a publication for Medium, it takes about five minutes, make your own publication because it's much easier for people to follow you that way than your individual stories.

The ease with which this is being done and the amount of people who aren't taking advantage of it just blows my mind and it's because they just don't know.

They just don't know to do it. And they're struggling with putting content on their blog and nobody's seen their blog and they haven't had success on Medium. Well, try creating your own publication.

**Nikki:** Yeah, I think that's it like so many people want to blog and then you make your own website, but then it's like, now you've got to worry about your own SEO and marketing of that particular page.

Whereas I was immediately like after two or three [00:22:00] blog posts on my own site, I was like, no, no, no, this is so much easier, you're already getting traffic and then you can get followers, right? And then I'm not doing email blast, which I can't stand doing, you know, it's like, just go to Medium. You're already there reading articles, hopefully mine will pop up as one of your favorites and you go from there.

**Wendy:** I stepped away from Medium for a while as well, but I'm coming back to it with my own publications, and one of them is called, "Being a freelance writer."

**Nikki:**  We can link to it on my site and send more people that way. Well, as we finish up here, last big question is what makes you stand up? So aside from the Stand-up comedy, but how do you use your super powers for good?

What causes have affected your life that make you want to improve them for future generation?

**Wendy:** I would say it's a cross between technology and storytelling. So I'm pretty good at the tech, like I can roll out of bed and do the tech, um, which is why I used to design websites for so long. But one of the things I had [00:23:00] to learn was how to tell a story.

And I used to be so bad at telling a story, I would bore myself, it was horrible. But once I started to become a stand-up comedian, I started to learn basic storytelling, and then I actually took a class to get better at it. And so in this digital information age that we live in being able to cross my technology skills with the ability to tell a story has really helped me be able to drive the learning points home that I need people to understand.

So it's not just do this, do this, do this. It's Hey, here's the story about the time that I didn't do that and why that didn't work? Yeah. Here are the lessons and you're more likely to remember the story and then therefore remember the lessons than you are just to remember. Oh, she said in step five, do this thing.

Okay, no, you need a story. Stories are key, [00:24:00] level up your tech and I think you'll be good to go.

**Nikki:** I think that's what makes you a great pastor too, that's always been the thing that when I was going to church, it was, you hear the story, you hear the parable and you learn the lesson and it makes you connect.

Even if you don't understand the characters or maybe what was going on, but the story sticks with you.

**Wendy:**  Exactly. The last Stand-up show that I did, I did nothing, but tell stories. There was, there was no traditional joke in there, it was just a series of funny stories about my life and being short.

**Nikki:**  It has been fantastic having you, Wendy. Thank you so much for being on the show today and for sharing your story, if you guys would like to learn more about Wendy or book her forspeaking gig or get some writing advice. You can find her at wendycoop.com, she also has a YouTube channel, Wendy Coop tech for beginners.

We just found out about her Medium section too. Um, so we'll put everything on my website as well. At https://www.greenchameleoncollective.com/podcast there'll be [00:25:00] show notes, lots of wonderful info about Wendy, so thank you so much for being here, Wendy.

**Wendy:** Thank you so much for having me. I had a blast.

**Nikki:** Always fun, and I'm sure we'll come up with new topics to talk about in another month or so back.

**Wendy:** Absolutely. I'm down for that.

**Nikki:**  Sounds good.

Well, thanks for joining us today. And I hope you enjoyed this episode. Don't forget to follow us wherever the cool kids hang out the do podcasts, Spotify, Google, Apple, and you can also subscribe to Nicki Green's YouTube channel to see the video versions of each show. Plus additional bonus content.

You know, it's all about the gram, so you can follow us on social media, on Instagram, as well as Twitter and Facebook at Green Chameleon Collective. And if you're on TikTok you don't stop. You can find us at nikkigreen678. Thanks again guys and can't wait to see you next time bye