

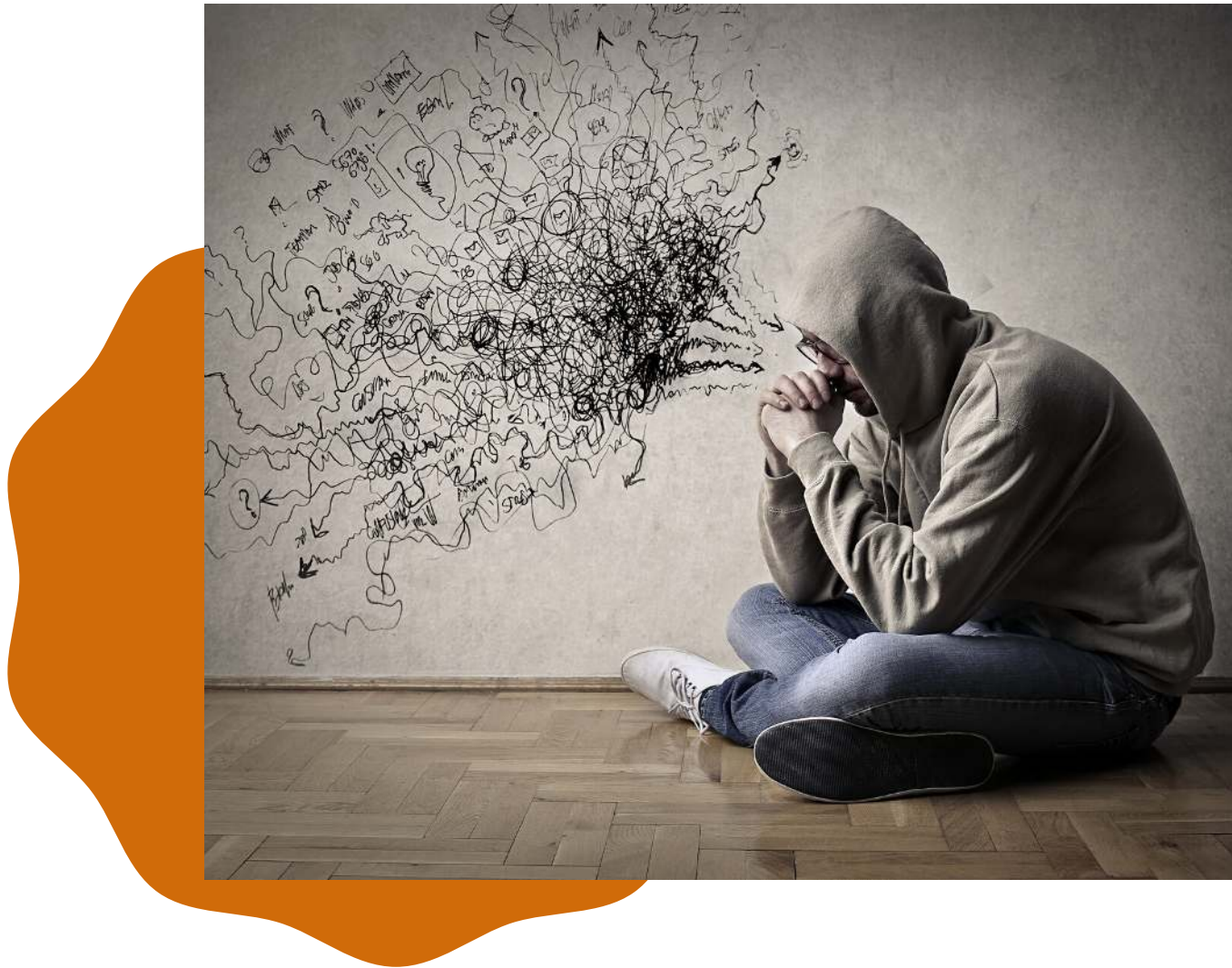
CRUSH NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

TO BOOST YOUR
BOTTOM LINE

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J U D Y W H A L E N



Crush Negative Thoughts to Boost Your Bottom Line

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INTRODUCTION

WE ALL HAVE THOUGHTS AND BELIEFS THAT ARE EITHER EMPOWERING OR LIMITING.

You may or may not yet be aware that your thoughts and beliefs about life and business may be holding you back and affecting your bottom line. Your negative thoughts and beliefs impact your success. The purpose of this ebook is to crush six very common limiting beliefs I often encounter when working with my clients who want to grow their businesses.

Your mindset is the fundamental key to creating the strategic change you desire in your business and in your life. As Mike Dooley teaches, “Your thoughts become things.” What you believe appears. The trick is to truly, whole-heartedly embrace those beliefs that propel you to success and let go of those negative thoughts and limiting beliefs that hamper your success.

So, here’s my guess: You know or at least have a hunch that some of your thoughts and beliefs about life and business are holding you back. For instance, your thoughts about success and money could be clouded by thinking you don’t know enough or that you are not good enough. Or, the way you approach relationships with people may be cautious due to beliefs steeped in mistrust.

Some beliefs are hidden far below the surface of conscious thought. If this is the case, it can be hard to identify those beliefs. Yet those beliefs have a pervasive impact on our life and our success.

Here’s the good news: You already know something isn’t quite working for you. **Being AWARE is the first step** to creating the change you desire. You **CAN** adopt new thoughts and cultivate new beliefs.

That’s why this ebook has been created. First, we are going to explore those thoughts and beliefs that can create a mindset of lack and keep you playing small. Then, we are going to immerse ourselves in new ideas and thoughts – planting the seed for new beliefs to grow that will serve you well!



NOT ENOUGH TIME

One of the most common complaints I hear from my clients is, “I don’t have enough time.”

Many people feel they don’t have enough time to take on new or different activities. Or, not enough time to invest in modifying their mindset to level up their business. As a result, they end up stuck at the same level for months or sometimes even years.

The only way to overcome this seemingly huge obstacle is to **change the way you view time.**



We all have the same amount of time. We all have 24 hours every day. It is how we choose to fill the 24 hours each day that makes the difference in what we accomplish.

TAKE SMALL STEPS TO GET STARTED

There are hundreds of books, apps and planners to help you make better use of your time and be more productive. However, these tools are helpful only if you decide to make better use of your time.

The first step before investing in any planner, book or app is again awareness. Awareness you have time that you could be using more effectively.

Then the next step is to **DECIDE to make better use of your time.** Decide to work with the time blocks you already have available.

While it may be tempting to dream of retreating to a mountain cabin for a month to plan your next project. Or, closing your business a day each week to work on paperwork, hiring or employee evaluations. The reality is it may not be feasible without impacting your revenue stream.

Telling yourself you can’t possibly work unless you have long uninterrupted periods of time to devote to getting started is a fallacy. These perfect situations rarely come along.



There are bound to be small steps you can take to get you “on your way” to more effectively use the time you already have. For instance, perhaps you want to launch a new podcast. Some of the steps on your TO DO list would include items such as:

- Identify topics to include.
- Develop a list of episodes.
- Determine if you want to interview experts to include in the episodes.
- Research the best platform for delivering your podcast.
- Write sales copy.
- Draft an outline of each episode.
- Record the intro music, title and branding.

You don't need long periods of uninterrupted time to do any one of these items. You can break these down into small actionable steps to fit whatever time you set aside for this activity. Work on these small steps whenever you have time.

Small chunks of time can appear throughout your busy day. For instance, while you are standing in line at the grocery store you can be thinking about topics to include or experts to interview.

HERE ARE SOME STEPS TO HELP YOU:

- Write down your goal.
- Write down the steps you will take to reach your goal.
- Determine if there are smaller tasks of each step you've written down.
- Identify those smaller tasks that can be completed in 15 -30 minutes.
- Make a list of these smaller tasks.
- Estimate the time you will need for each of these smaller tasks.
- Put this list in your phone, tablet, laptop or write it on paper.
- Keep this list with you so you can look at it every day and determine what task you can do during the time you have that day.



Now you're armed with a **list of bite-sized tasks**. You don't have to waste time when you are waiting to pick up your kids from school or standing in line waiting for a cashier.

Pull out your list and start working on a bite-size task - even if it is just thinking about how you will accomplish that task. Use your phone to dictate your thoughts and ideas related to that task.

Using the above process creates **forward motion that creates momentum**. No longer is that project something "you're going to do." It's something you **ARE DOING** in the time you already have.

Don't panic, get discouraged or overwhelmed if you discover more tasks than you put on your master list. That's normal and just an expected part of project management. Just add them to your master list. Deal with them in the same manner you are using to get the other tasks done.

TACKLE THE MOST IMPORTANT TASK FIRST

Now you're armed with a list of bite-sized tasks. You don't have to waste time when you are waiting to pick up your kids from school or standing in line waiting for a cashier.

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Brian Tracy, a coach and speaker who helps businesses of all sizes succeed, teaches his clients the Most Important Task (MIT) method.

The MIT method is the key to getting more done so you can move your business to the next level. The MIT method forces you to do your most important work first.

YOUR MOST IMPORTANT TASK CAN BE DEFINED AS THE TASK THAT BRINGS YOU CLOSER TO YOUR GOAL.

Want to launch a video course in a few months? Then make a list of the tasks involved and pick one to get started. Want to form a strategic alliance with a solopreneur or small business? Research possible businesses. Make a list of possible people to contact. Then select one and arrange a phone call or time to meet to explore interest and possibilities.

Each day ask yourself, "Which task on my list moves me closer to my goal if I complete it today?" Select that task.

Remember, start small – 15 minutes or thirty minutes. If you can devote more time each day, do it. At some point, you may be able to devote at least one hour or more of concentrated focus on your selected task.

Once you've selected your Most Important Task for the day, begin working on it immediately. Don't procrastinate. Respect the time you have for working on that task. When you procrastinate, it robs you of your ability to focus and can derail your entire day.

Say to yourself, "The most important task I have on my plate today is (insert the name of your task.) I'm giving myself one hour (or whatever amount of time you select) to work on it."

By doing this, you help yourself focus on the task. Periodically, check in with yourself. If you're in a good flow, keep going and you'll be surprised by how much you accomplish. If you need a break, take one. Then get back to focusing on your task.

Keep in mind **positive action begets positive action**. The more you work on a project, the more you're going to want to work on it. That's because you've broken through the mental barriers that cause delay. Now the project doesn't seem as intimidating as it did before you started.

Sometimes you may find there are two or three important tasks on your TO DO list for the day. It may be a family priority, like taking a child to the doctor. Or it may be a client commitment.





If this happens, go right back to making a list of what needs to be done today. Then rank the tasks. The task you start with in this circumstance may not be the hardest. It may be the one with the most significant consequence - an important deadline or a sick child who needs medical care.

Even on days with multiple top priorities, find time to work on a task on your list. Keep breaking tasks down into smaller tasks you can do in small segments of time - 10 minutes, 15 minutes, etc.

USE THE MIT METHOD CONSISTENTLY

To get the best results from the MIT method, use it consistently. As MIT becomes a habit, you'll notice your energy levels improve and you have a more positive outlook when it comes to tackling your TO DO list

MANAGE YOUR ENERGY LEVELS

One of the most effective things you can do to maximize the time you have is to pay attention to your energy levels. Your body has a natural energy rhythm. Perhaps you've nurtured your body's natural rhythm with periods of good sleep, nutritious food and creative thinking.

Over the course of our life, we've been programmed do certain things at a certain time in a certain way. For instance, you go to bed at a certain time because that's what you're supposed to do. You set office hours for your business because that's when you are expected to work. You eat at specific times because that's what you are supposed to do.

The problem with having each day of your life carefully structured is it teaches you to ignore what your mind and body need and are telling you. If you want to become more productive and find extra time to work on your business, you must learn to listen to yourself.

TRACK YOUR ACTIVITY

During the next few days, track your activity, your response and your energy level during that activity. Use an app on your tablet or smartphone to do this. Record what activities (both personal and professional) you do from the time you get up until you go to bed. Capture how you feel as you're doing these tasks.

After a few days, you'll notice patterns begin to emerge. Study those patterns. You'll begin to see when your peak creative time is. Use this creative time to your advantage. Reserve this time to work on those activities that need your creative juices to help you grow your business.

If you notice you're at your best in the morning, this is when you want to schedule your most creative tasks. Schedule other tasks like administration or bookkeeping later in the day.

Perhaps your best creative time is late afternoon or late at night when your household is quiet. Find ways to keep that time available for you to work on those activities that need your creativity.

Refer to the patterns that surfaced while tracking your daily activities to discover other patterns in your personal life that may help you find more time each day.

Reflect on these patterns. Figure out how you can maximize the benefit of these patterns to impact the time you have each day and increase your productivity.





For example, you may find your best ideas come to you while you're in a coffee shop. If that is the case, start brainstorming at a coffee shop instead of in your office where you're constantly distracted by all the things you should be getting done.

Or perhaps your best creative time is before the rest of your household wakes up...or after they are all in bed. Then get up before them or stay up after them and use the quiet time for your creative work.

Another way to effectively manage your energy is to set a reminder on your phone every hour. When the reminder rings, pause what you're doing and listen to your body. Are you hungry or tired? Are you hunching over your screen as you work, causing shoulder or neck pain? Or are you engrossed in what you are doing and on a roll?

Take a moment to consider how you're feeling mentally. Are you feeling focused and energized by what you're doing? Are you feeling overwhelmed and stressed out as you struggle to fix a complicated technical problem?

Use this mini break as a chance to grab a healthy snack, adjust your posture, stretch, reach out for help, or practice a brief meditation session. When you take care of your physical body, it is easier to tackle your TO DO list with energy and enthusiasm.

Unfortunately, many people have spent months or years ignoring their body's natural rhythm depleting their ability to maximize their energy levels.

CREATE A TIME BUDGET

We all have only twenty-four hours in each day. If you are like many business owners, you regularly feel stressed when you think of time. You struggle to balance all aspects of your business and personal life. You may feel the pinch of time when you attempt to focus on your home and family responsibilities.

Since time is your most precious resource, budget it the same way you budget your money. Create categories to put your time into, just like you do when budgeting your money. Think of time in the same manner you think of your Chart of Accounts.

Start by making a list of the business categories you need to spend time on during the week, month, or year. Your categories will include tasks like:

- Marketing to new customers
- Completing contracted work for existing customers or clients
- Social media management
- Networking with other entrepreneurs
- Product creation
- Continuing your education
- Managing the financial functions of your business
- Managing employees, virtual assistants or sub-contractors
- Responding to phone, email, social media inquiries
- Strategic planning

Depending on what the condition of your business and personal life is now, you may have a lot of time to devote to your business or have only a few hours to work on it each week.

How much you have doesn't matter. What's important is using the time as smartly as possible.

Determine the goal for your business. Your goal might be to transform your side hustle into a full-time business. Or your goal might be to reach six figures. Or your goal might be getting paid to speak at conferences. Or increasing the number of customers.

Once you've determined your goal, you can look at the categories above or create other categories and choose the ones that are most important. If you want to move your side hustle front and center, focus on marketing to new customers as well as providing outstanding service to existing customers.

If your goal is to develop your speaking skills, focus on continuing education and networking with other professional speakers. By choosing your goal, you prioritize all your business tasks and focus on what really matters.



YOU HAVE ALL THE TIME YOU NEED

Some people find they don't have enough time to grow their business because they're not efficient handling their business tasks. They spend hours replying to email messages, hanging out on social media, and answering customer questions.

When it gets to the end of day, they realize they haven't made any progress towards their goals. They feel defeated and wonder if they'll ever successfully grow their business.

But you have all the time you need. If you are disorganized, you often don't know it. You do things a certain way because that may be the only way you know how to do it.

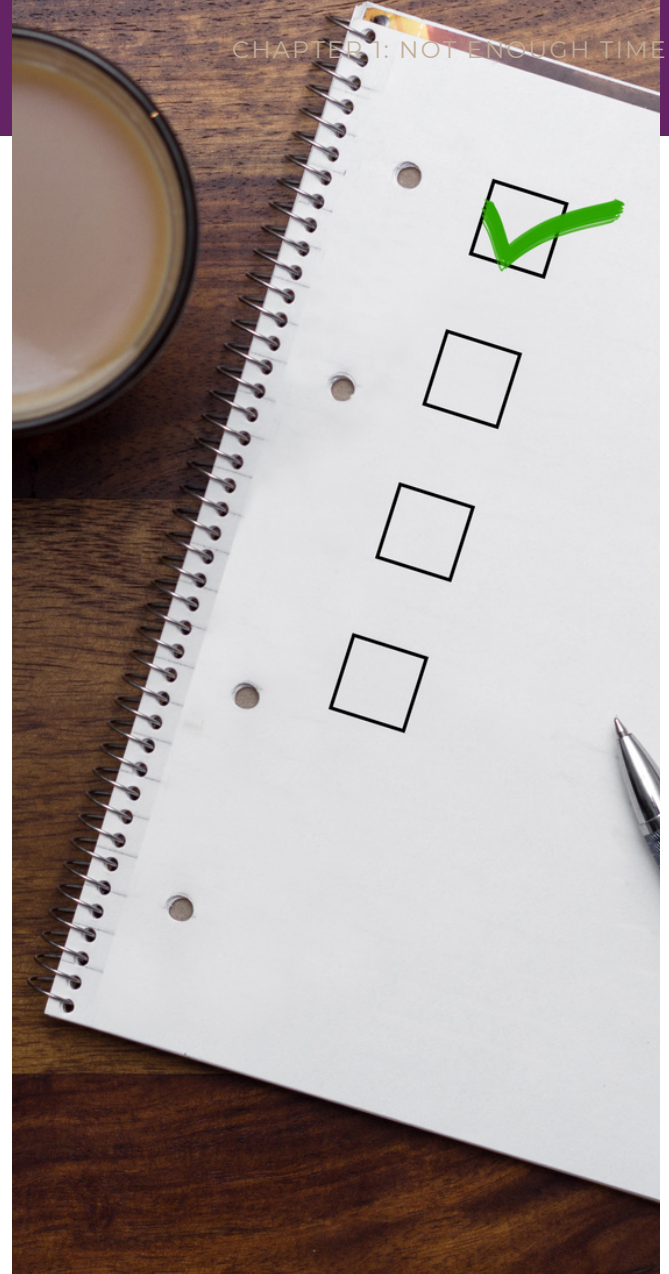
But you can learn to become organized, efficient and reap the benefits of growing your business to the next level.

Make another list. This time list the common problems you deal with repeatedly. Things like:

- Answering common questions from customers
- Posting content to your blog or website
- Creating and scheduling social media content
- Website upgrades and maintenance
- Scheduling virtual or real-life meetings
- Bookkeeping
- Developing marketing campaigns
- Attracting new customers

These are tasks many business owners do without realizing they can be eliminated or handled in a more efficient manner. For example, if you get the same questions from your customers, develop a FAQ section on your website to answer these questions. When a customer has a question that is a Frequently Asked Question, send them the link to the FAQ page.

Create policies procedures that cover important information your customers might need. Then post that information on your website. Post hours and contact information so clients know how and when to contact you. If you sell tangible goods, post your shipping policy on your website. Your policies might seem simple to you. Posting them will reduce questions and ease your customer's mind.



Create checklists that help you remember and refine the process for posting content on your blog or website, scheduling social media content, paying your bills, etc. Note all the tasks you do to create, publish, and socialize a blog post. With a checklist, you won't worry you skipped a step. A checklist makes it easier to hand off a task to a virtual assistant. It is part of building the systems to ensure stability in your business.

Checklists make it easy to outsource tasks when you have revenue available to contract a virtual assistant or hire an employee. Write a blog post and hand it over to a virtual assistant to post and promote. With the checklist, your virtual assistant can successfully handle the task and you can focus on the tasks that make you the most money.

NOT ENOUGH MONEY

Of all the limiting beliefs, the most dangerous one is that there's not enough money available for you to move your business to the next level. When you believe this, you limit the growth of your business and hinder your personal and professional success.

To overcome this limiting belief, change your money mindset so you'll be able to grow and expand your business and enjoy it as it flourishes.

YOUR MONEY MINDSET MATTERS MORE THAN YOU REALIZE

We all create a story (or stories) about our business. You're writing this story with the thoughts you think - about your business your expertise, and your ability to make it successful. And, you write the story with the words you speak - about your business, yourself, your colleagues, employees customers, vendors, the competition and more.

If you think you can't grow your business to the next level, you won't. If you say you can't afford to outsource, it will be true.

If you say you can't afford to invest in the business, you won't be able to. If you think you can't find qualified employees, you won't find qualified employees. Remember, **thoughts become things**. Think the positive, encouraging thoughts and your business will blossom. Thinking positive thoughts about the vision for your business rather than fear and negative thoughts will move you and your business towards your vision. But you still need to do the work

YOUR MINDSET ATTRACTS CUSTOMERS

Use your thoughts to attract the customers that will help you grow your business. If you are frantic about paying your bills because you are desperate for cash, your less than ideal customers can sense your situation. They'll use your desperation and convince you to do more work for them at a lower price or sell your products at a discount. Doing more work at a lower price uses more of your time. It eats up time that you could be working for customers or clients that are willing to pay your fair rate. Selling too many products at a discount has the potential to eat into your profit and put you out of business.

Your mindset works the same way with your ideal customers. When ideal customers sense your positive mindset, they're attracted to your services and products. They'll treat you fairly and they'll believe in your business because they can feel your confident mindset.

To build a positive mindset about the type of customer you want to attract, **write down the characteristics of the ideal customer you want to SERVE**. Be as detailed as possible. What is the age range? Where do they live? What need or problem do they have that you can fill/solve? How much is the average sale? Dig into the demographics of your ideal customer. Write down the characteristics.



Writing – especially with pen to paper - is a proven technique that embeds the characteristics into your subconscious mind.

Once you brainstorm the list, save your list to your computer, laptop, smartphone, or favorite app. Then you will have access to it from any device you may decide to use.

Use apps such as Evernote, Dropbox, Google Drive, OneDrive, iCloud, Sync, or Pushbullet that syncs your files across all your devices. Then you will have access to your files regardless of which device you choose. Think about your ideal customer's characteristics every day. Your subconscious mind will go to work helping you find and serve your ideal customer.



YOUR MONEY MINDSET

If you have a poor money mindset, you fear you won't have enough money. Consequently, this causes you to take on projects and clients that aren't a good fit for your business. You do it because of fear – fear you won't have enough money. You think getting more clients, even if those clients are not the best fit for your business is the answer to solving your money problems.

But serving a customer, client or project that isn't right for your business not only costs you extra money, it risks jeopardizing your business' reputation, your personal reputation, your energy and your overall perspective. You may spend more time trying to make the client happy.

You may struggle to bring your client's vision to life. You most likely will stress and feel anxiety when you must communicate with them. You may come to resent the client, the project and the time it takes to serve them. Not a good scenario for developing a happy client.



Now we all know when first launching your business, you take whatever work comes along. That is necessary to simply get some money flowing in your door and to help you develop the systems and processes you need to be effective and efficient.

However, you need to use this initial work to help you refine your mental picture of your ideal client and the ideal type of service or product you want to offer.

To change your mindset about money or the type of client you are serving, listen to the stories you're telling people ... and yourself... about your business. Listen carefully. Re-frame negative statements to positive, confident statements. This may feel uncomfortable at first. But remember, **thoughts become things.**

Instead of saying, "I'm not going to make six figures this year," say something more positive, "Since I am working effectively in my business, I attract customers who value my services (products) helping me meet my income goals."

Changing your money mindset isn't something you do once and you are done. Work on your money mindset every day until it becomes natural to think positively about money and business. Read or listen to resources to reframe your money mindset. There are many resources on the internet.





START NOW - UPGRADE LATER

Running a business can put a strain on your wallet, your energy and your relationships. Whether you are in a traditional, brick and mortar business or an online business, there are startup and ongoing expenses that can weigh on your mind and cause your money mindset to go astray.

It's smart for small business owners and solopreneurs to focus on money producing tasks such as offering products customers want, creating new products, marketing or showcasing their services.

If you are just starting your business, begin marketing now. Delay expensive purchase such as expensive office furnishings or costly software upgrades and tools to a later time when you have the time to invest in a careful review and the money to pay for them. Not everything has to be perfect.

Invest in the equipment that has the potential to generate revenue for your business. For instance, if you are a copywriter, invest in a good computer, printer and software before spending money on a fancy desk or furniture.

If you are launching a website, consider having your website on a shared host until you can afford to upgrade to better hosting. Look for other ways to rein in expenses. Consider using your smartphone to take photos until you can afford a professional photographer. If you sell products on your website, opt for the PayPal button until you can afford to pay for shopping cart software.

Remember, expensive doesn't always equate to more revenue. You may find expensive software too complex taking more of your time to master and reducing your time for marketing or customer service. Or your costly website theme doesn't convert visitors into subscribers as well as the free theme you were using.

Starting now and upgrading later doesn't just help your wallet. It motivates you to get underway and launch your product or service. Go ahead start. If you are releasing an online product, release Version One. Watch your sales numbers and get feedback from users. You can revise it and launch Version Two with all the bells and whistles after you've made sales and have customer feedback.

Upgrading later teaches you how to run your business wisely and cost-effectively. For example, if you have an online business, you learn how to set up a simple blog and add a WordPress theme.

Whether your business is offline or an online business, be sure to get a receipt when you pay for a service or product. Your business purchases may be tax-deductible. Check with your tax preparer or search the IRS website for information on business deductions.

HOW TO DIY YOUR BUSINESS

When your business is on a tight budget, you tackle projects on your own. Whether you have an online or offline business, you might decide to tackle designing your own logo, creating your WordPress website, developing marketing materials, handling your bookkeeping and filing state and federal reports.

Handling these tasks might feel a bit overwhelming at first. But it's easier than ever to learn how to do new things. Look for tutorial videos online. Listen to podcast episodes and radio shows. Take an online course or attend a webinar about the topic you want to learn.

VIDEOS

If you are a visual learner, watch a video demonstration. There are plenty of websites offering videos of other business leaders giving an over-the-shoulder look at how they handle everyday tasks.

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If you want to find videos across the web, you can try performing a search video search engine. Enter your search and sort through the results.

PODCASTS AND RADIO

If you're an audio learner, try listening to podcasts and radio episodes. A good place to start your search is the iTunes store. Search for the keyword you want and the word podcast, like this: graphic design podcasts.

Browse the iTunes podcast directory. This allows you to search the directory by subject and see all the available podcasts at once.

When it comes to radio, look for shows on Stitcher or TuneIn. Use the app or website, iHeartRadio to find podcast episodes and radio shows covering the topic you need help with.





ONLINE COURSES

If the task you're doing is big, an online course may work better for you. You'll find a variety of websites offering free and premium courses.

The most popular course sites are Udemy and iTunesU. Both have thousands of courses for you to choose from. Look at Coursera which features classes taught by college professors on topics such as digital marketing, search engine optimization, content strategy and more. Or check out LinkedIn Learning.

Want to learn how to create your own website or code in computer languages? Visit Code Academy to develop your tech skills.

BARTERING WITH OTHER BUSINESS OWNERS

Some elements of your business may be difficult for you. Maybe you're not good at bookkeeping or you struggle with understanding the technical aspects of your website.

There's a way you can get the help you need without it costing you a fortune. Barter with another business owner gifted in the area of your weakness. Bartering can be a fun, enjoyable experience. If you've never bartered before, keep these tips in mind.

CHOOSE SOMEONE WITH A GOOD TRACK RECORD

It's smart to choose a business owner that's trustworthy. The person you pick should be known for following through on projects.

If you're part of a chamber of commerce, a social media group or forum where you hang out with other business owners, look around for someone you might like to barter with. Depending on the group rules, you may be allowed to post about your search.



KEEP IT SMALL

Keep the first projects you take on with your bartering partner small tasks. This lets you see the other entrepreneur's work and show them yours. If a small project doesn't work out, you can easily part ways.

After you've worked together, you should know if you and the other business owner are a good fit. If you are, start on a bigger project.

Bartering is a good way to grow your business when your budget is stretched thin. It gives you a chance to work with other solopreneurs, entrepreneurs or online marketers.

BE UPFRONT ABOUT IT

Be honest about your desire to barter. Don't lead the other provider on and make them think you would be a paying customer.

Say, "I've seen you on the forum/group and I could use someone with your skills. Are you open to bartering?" This lets you quickly rule out candidates who aren't interested in bartering.



START A GROWTH FUND FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Have you ever seen a course, video course or e-book you could benefit from, but you can't quite afford it? This makes you feel horrible you're stuck where you are. It nags at your confidence and self-esteem.

One way to resolve this is to **create a special growth fund**. With it, you'll have money to invest when you find a product or service you could use. The money in your growth fund comes from your earnings. Set aside a portion of your earnings for investing in yourself and your business.

Determine what percent of each sale/payment you will commit to growing yourself and your business.

Don't worry if the percent is small. Any percent of a sale that you set aside begins to embed in your subconscious the habit of setting money aside for your growth and growing your business.

Some solopreneurs and small business owners have gone into debt for large purchases that didn't grow their business. As a result, they struggled financially for years. A growth fund can help prevent this from happening.

You can spend your growth fund any way you like if the expenditure is focused on growing your business. To get the most for your money, invest in areas where you need help. If you're good at graphic design but poor at copywriting, it would be smarter to buy a copywriting course rather than one on graphic design.

Spend your growth fund on new technology and software you need. Don't use this as an excuse to run out and buy the latest tablet or smart device. Instead, take an honest look at what your business needs and could really benefit from.

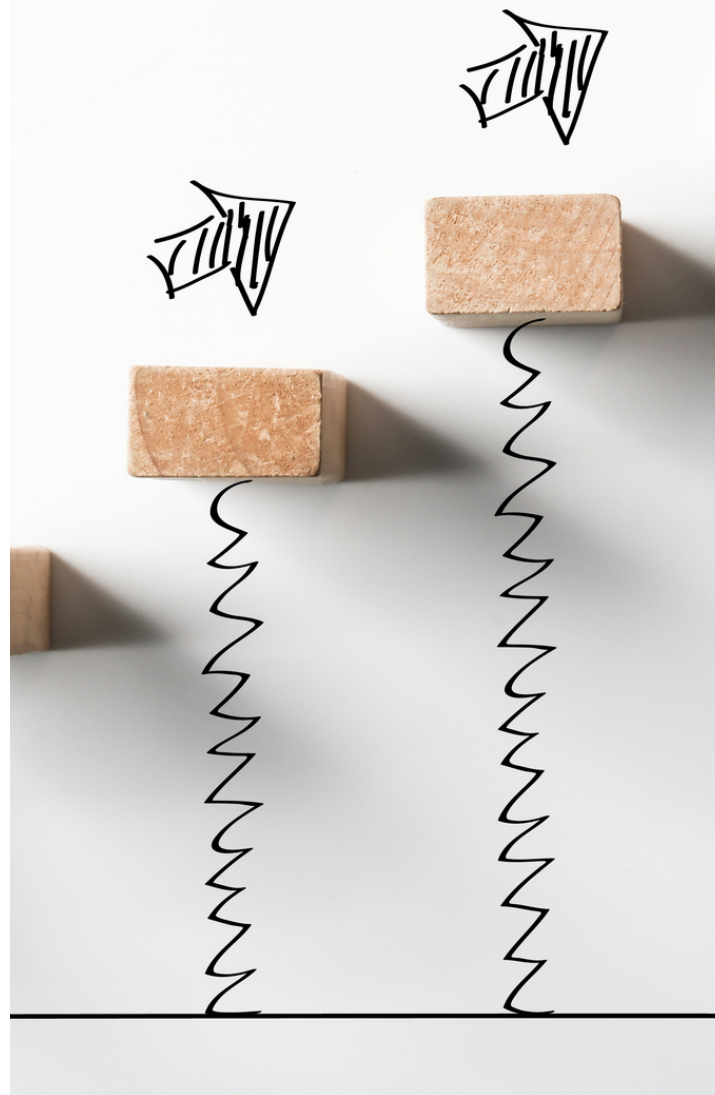
Maybe you plan to launch a webinar class. If that's the case, buy a subscription in webinar software and spend time learning how to use it. Get familiar with the software before your actual launch date.

Spend your growth fund on new technology and software you need. Don't use this as an excuse to run out and buy the latest tablet or smart device. Instead, take an honest look at what your business needs and could really benefit from.

But you underestimated how difficult the setup was going to be. You're frustrated by the instructions and worried you spent money on a product you can't use at the moment until you get more training.

You ask other online business owners for advice. An online friend recommends an entrepreneur who specializes in marketing automation software. You still have money in your growth fund, so you hire this person to help you learn your new software and be available as a paid coach for when you get stuck and need help with the software.

NOTES:



Pull money from your growth fund to network with other niche leaders. Use it to buy a ticket to an industry conference where you know you'll have the chance to meet other professionals in your field.

If networking in person isn't possible, look for a virtual conference or join an online group. Attend a virtual school if you find a teacher whose expertise and style fits your need.

There's no right or wrong way to spend your growth fund. If it helps you earn more or expands your reach to new clients, then it is money well spent.

NOT ENOUGH PEOPLE



Many new small business owners fear there aren't enough people in their unique niche. That's a limiting belief that stems from a scarcity mindset. A scarcity mindset is the belief that there will never be enough. This mindset holds you hostage.

Remember, your subconscious mind moves you in the direction of the thoughts you think. The subconscious mind is incredibly powerful, yet it does not have the ability to filter what works on your behalf. It acts on the thoughts you think. If you think there are not enough people to purchase your products or services, there won't be enough people purchasing your products or services.

Understanding the vast power of your subconscious mind is beyond the scope of this ebook. If you are interested in learning more about the power of your subconscious, there are a number of resources online including Mindvalley.com, JackCanfield.com, BrianTracy.com. For now, just be aware that **your thoughts are powerful**. Your subconscious goes to work on your thoughts. Monitor your thoughts so scarcity thinking doesn't impede your business.

Fears such as scarcity thinking keep you stuck on an island of your own making. There are plenty of people in your niche for you to generate revenue if you're willing to challenge your negative thoughts.

STOP PLAYING SMALL IN YOUR SMALL NICHE

Some small business owners play small because they are afraid of playing big. They may do things half-heartedly. They may churn out volumes of mediocre blog posts. They may tweet or post to social media...but infrequently. They don't consistently follow-up with their customers or subscribers. They may focus on attracting new customers but not retaining existing customers.

These types of entrepreneurs rarely see big success. They may tell you the economy is bad, and their business is not growing. Or they may tell you they are focusing on building and refining the internal systems before jumping to the next level. Reasonable, yes. But they never take the leap to move to the next level.

Those reasons are merely excuses that camouflage the real issue. Those business owners are stuck playing small. They play small because they may not know how to play big. They play small because they might be averse to the risk to play bigger. They may think they are totally committed to their business because they put in long hours. When it is inefficient systems and unproductive time that keeps them working long hours.



Take a hard look at your business. Where are you on the path to leveling up? Are you open to attracting more clients or customers? Are your systems in place to handle more customers? What is your tolerance for risk? Are you tracking AND managing your revenue and expenses?

In offline businesses, customers want to see you showing up, being open during the hours you post, offering friendly customer service and be willing to work hard yet efficiently.



In online businesses, customers want to see captivating blog posts, consistent social media posts, experience outstanding customer service. What determines outstanding customer service? Ask your customers. They are the best source for defining the type of customer service you should be offering.

Do things in such a manner that enable your customer community – online or offline - to trust you. Show your community you care about their needs and address those needs consistently and in a high-quality manner.

Stay current in your niche and advise your community on trends, issues, and solutions to problems. Join trade associations, online communities or the chamber of commerce to stay current on changes in your industry.

Give your community valuable advice they can act on. Tailor your communication to provide valuable information. If a community member shares how your services/products have helped them, ask if you can share their story. This is great marketing material. Let others know how you helped this one person. This will help you to be a leader in your niche.

As you invest in your community, the community will begin to invest in you. They'll want to buy your products and services. They'll want your advice. This is how you'll know you've stopped playing small—when your community trusts you enough to ask for your recommendations.



FEWER BARRIERS = MORE OPPORTUNITIES

You can be in a small niche and still play big. Being in a small niche means there are fewer barriers to entry. You can launch a product or service without having to work as hard or spend large amounts of money.

When you're in a large niche and you want to launch a new business or a new product/service, you must invest in broad marketing to be successful. In the online world, you need to gather an army of affiliates and network for weeks in advance. In the offline world, a large niche means more dollars spent on advertising as well as more networking.

It's harder to get noticed in a big niche. It's like throwing a pebble into the ocean. It doesn't make much noise nor is it newsworthy. You're just another solopreneur or small business owner in a sea of millions.

But focusing on a smaller niche is like dropping a pebble into a still pond. You're bound to get attention and your marketing can create ripples in the most popular target audiences

Serving a small niche can help you target your customers. Drill down to find the characteristics of your primary target customer. Figure out your customers' unique characteristics.

Start with general characteristics such as demographics - gender, age range, income, geographic location, education, ethnicity, etc. Then drill down into what the marketing professionals call the psychographics - beliefs, mindset, personality, key motivating factors, attitudes, aspirations, opinion, etc.

Visit [CenterForStrategicChange.com](https://www.CenterForStrategicChange.com) for more resources.



FEWER BARRIERS = MORE OPPORTUNITIES

Then think about their behaviors – how they act. For example, do they purchase coffee every morning? Do they let their dog sleep with them? Are they do-it-yourselfers for home repairs? There are many other types of behavior to consider.

Next identify their needs. What do they want/need? Some examples are safety, longer-lasting phone battery, stronger paper towels, etc. Then articulate their problems.

But what if you narrowed your niche so you could target just those clients you would really love to serve? You decide you would really love to be a fashion consultant for postpartum moms.

Search on Google for the term “postpartum fashion consultant” and the results drop to just over 35 thousand results. Now, you’re a big pebble in a small pond.

Some new entrepreneurs are terrified to choose a niche because they fear they’re locking themselves into one product or service forever. Again, another negative thought that can sabotage their business. Don’t let this keep you from starting a business in a tiny niche.

Start out by serving a small target audience. As your business grows, turn to serving similar audiences.

Let’s revisit the example of the postpartum mom fashion consultant. If your postpartum mom clients are happy with your fashion consulting services, they may refer you to their pregnant friends, allowing you to position yourself as a pregnancy and postpartum fashion consultant.

Because you served your niche well, your clients urged you to move into an additional niche. This happens naturally when you have the trust and support of your community.

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR NICHE

It's not uncommon for solopreneurs and small business owners to fail to recognize and thoroughly understand their niche. Even large corporations lose sight of their core competency and venture into product lines that are not aligned with their fundamental core business. Perhaps you designed your logo and company promotional material before you figured out who you want to serve. Maybe you were so passionate about your expertise, you didn't do any research on a customer base. Maybe you bought a clever domain name and started creating great content for your target customer.

Without narrowing down who you'd like to sell your products or services to, you can't stand out.

In this busy media and marketing world, you need people to visit your website, interact with your social media posts, visit your blog.

To make this happen you need to choose your niche, even if you've already started building a brand. It may require a bit of work to re-brand yourself, but it can be done.

Choose a niche by identifying what you want to do.

When you're a solopreneur or small business owner, it can be hard to figure out what niche is right for you.

But you can shorten this process and gain valuable insight if you talk to a trusted mentor or a business coach. They can help you see how to position your brand and give you feedback on how to avoid common niche mistakes.



AVOID THESE BIG MISTAKES WITH YOUR TINY BRAND

Tiny brands can make business mistakes, just like any other business. Some mistakes are small and can be fixed without a massive impact on the business. Others can cripple your business so badly your brand isn't able to recover. Here are three mistakes you'll want to avoid when starting out:

MISTAKE #1

Using Corporate Jargon

You think using corporate jargon will impress your community and make them think you're one of the big players. But all it does is frustrate customers and make you look out of touch.

Your community wants direct, thoughtful advice they can implement. Use simple plain language – as though you're talking to someone new in your niche.

MISTAKE #2

Pretending to Be Bigger

You may worry that as a solopreneur or small business owner customers will perceive your business as a tiny business. You worry customers won't buy from you if they know how tiny your brand is. You think the bigger players in your niche will laugh at your small business. So, you pretend your business is bigger than it is.

You may get away with pretending to be big for a time, but it'll only last so long. Eventually, your customers will feel deceived.

Own your tiny brand! Be proud if you're a one-person shop or a family-owned business. Embrace it and let your customers know your tiny brand offers a personal touch.

MISTAKE #3

Badmouthing Others

Never badmouth others in your niche. It damages your business in several ways. First, you lose your credibility and you appear unprofessional. Customers worry about what you'll say or do if they ever have a problem with your business.

Badmouthing other people in your niche can hurt you when it comes to referrals, strategic alliances or affiliate marketing. No one wants to partner with you to promote your product if you've spent a lot of time insulting other businesses. They fear you'll damage their brand.

Customers can sense when you're not being genuine. They don't want to do business with any brand that's not credible and authentic. The best thing you can do is be authentic, no matter how small your business.



DOES TINY NICHE MEAN TINY PROFITS?

Small business entrepreneurs often worry if serving a tiny niche means tiny profits.

There's never a guarantee that any idea, product or service—regardless of niche size—will be popular and make you a lot of money. But there are factors you can control which will make you more likely to succeed in a tiny niche.

Some businesses and brands become popular because they're known as the most affordable option. Think of the discount store Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart competes for customers based on price. It makes its profit by offering discounts to millions of customers. However, when you're in a tiny niche, it's hard to compete on price. There are fewer customers. As a result, your discounts may not stretch far enough to earn you a big profit.

Compete based on a different buying decision. For instance, like better quality.

This is something the grocery chain, Whole Foods decided to do. Whole Foods focuses on being "America's Healthiest Grocery Store."

Whole Foods isn't competing with Wal-Mart based on price. Whole Foods is competing based on the quality of its products. Customers shopping at Whole Foods are interested in different type of products and quality than customers who shop at Wal-Mart

Look at what your customers value to discover how to compete with other brands. If your customers value group coaching, look for ways to offer it in a manner that is different from other group coaching programs. If your customers want a video course on your topic, create one. If your customers want a unique product, look for ways you can offer it.

To earn more profits in a tiny niche, focus on helping your customers meet their needs or goals.

For example, you decide to offer wellness coaching. There are many reasons someone may sign up for your coaching.

Some clients may want to lose weight. Some may want to change their eating habits. Some may want to heal their bodies from illness or cleanse their livers from all the toxic chemicals in their environment.

Decide which goal you'll help clients meet and focus on it. By concentrating on this goal, you've clearly identified what's most important to your client. Now you need to help them get the results they crave.

Being in a tiny niche doesn't mean you have a tiny revenue stream. There are many ways to serve your niche and make a profit.

TOO MANY COMPETITORS



BEING IN A TINY NICHE DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE A TINY REVENUE STREAM. THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO SERVE YOUR NICHE AND MAKE A PROFIT.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID OF NICHE SATURATION

But people love having options. Some people will buy similar products from different brands. For instance, think of your closet. How many clothing brands are inside of it? You may have some favorite brands that you buy from over and over. But you most likely have a variety of brands or have tried a variety of brands before you found your favorite brand.

Niche saturation is a common concern for solopreneurs and small business owners, especially when they're just starting out or when they're changing the direction of their business. But most of their worry about niche saturation is unfounded. Here's why you shouldn't worry about competing in a crowded marketplace.

COMPETITION MEANS SALES

Competition is a good sign to experienced entrepreneurs. It means there are consumers who are willing to spend money to buy products or services they need and want. It means there is a consumer want that needs to be filled.

Offering a product or service that meets your customer's needs is the first step in making sales. There are additional factors such as marketing, pricing and customer service that impact your ability to make sales. But filling a consumer's want is at the top of the list especially in the early stages of your business.

COMPETITION MEANS COMMUNITIES OF POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS

When you pick a niche where there are already businesses meeting the wants of consumers, you're likely to encounter communities. It might be an online essential oils expert who has a thriving Facebook group or the small business wellness clinic owner, financial advisor or real estate agent who has an online forum where customers gather for information and interaction.

These online communities are valuable and worth your time to join. You'll learn valuable facts about the niche you're considering or the one you are already in.

If you join the Facebook group from the essential oils expert, look at what her fans are asking. Do they need oil blends specifically for asthma sufferers? Do they want to know which essential oils they can use to clean their kitchens? Are they asking if diffusing essential oils is safe for their dogs or cats?

These discussions can give you an inside look at what customers really want and how you can better serve them.

Never join a competitor's group with the intent to "steal" their members. Join to learn and research your marketplace.

BE WARY OF COMPETITION-FREE NICHE



If you've found an untapped niche while doing your market research and you're excited and thrilled, be cautious. If you begin thinking of how many products you can sell, be careful. Often, no competition is a red flag warning. It may indicate a niche is so small or so remote, it's difficult to make a sale, let alone a profit. Do more research. Seek insight from seasoned, successful entrepreneurs.

When you see competition, it means a niche is thriving. There are hungry customers with a need who are willing to pay for their need to be satisfied. That's the type of niche you want to be in.



DETERMINING YOUR UNIQUE SELLING POINT IN A CROWDED MARKET

When you enter or are part of a crowded market, you must be unique. Let's consider this: You decide to start a business. You know there are competitors, but you are confident you can be successful. But you don't yet know how to market your business. You just want paying customers. You study your competitors. You advertise in a similar manner as your competitors. You offer a similar product as your competitors. You customize things just enough to respect your competitors' copyright and trademark.

But the paying customers are not flocking to your business. Why? The problem is you don't stand out in your customers' minds. You're look like your competitors. Why should a customer spend money with you when they already trust your competitors?

What your business is missing is its unique selling proposition (USP).

WHAT COULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY

Determining your unique selling proposition, also known as unique selling point, is not easy. Look at your product or service and ask yourself what you could do differently than your competitors. If everyone else in your industry offers expensive shipping, maybe you could offer free shipping like Amazon. This perk has positioned Amazon as one of the top online stores.

If you offer services instead of tangible products, having a USP is vitally important. Maybe you can offer your service faster than anyone else. Maybe your service is unique because of a special personal touch, such as a free consultation phone call or free customer support for a year or a new and unique process.

ARE YOU THE USP?

Sometimes, you are the most important element of a brand. Think of brands such as Martha Stewart, Lindsey Riel, or Ann Marie "Ree" Drummond or Ryan Seacrest. All four of these people are their brands. Their personalities as well as their expertise is what sell their products.

If you are your brand, then it can be helpful to narrow down what elements of your personality you want to showcase.

Maybe you want to be known as the bubbly niche leader who welcomes everyone, even newbies. Maybe you'd prefer to be the niche leader who is more focused on showcasing your expertise and while allowing your reserved personality to show through as needed. The important thing is to be genuine. Be who you are.

WHO IS YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE?

When you're considering what your USP might be, think of the audience you want to serve. Maybe you're the computer expert who makes technology simple for seniors. Maybe you are the one who teaches moms how to keep their kids safe on social media.

If you choose to serve seniors, your USP could be tech support for the technically challenged. If you choose to serve moms, then your USP could be the watchdog, protecting kids online.

Your unique selling point needs to appeal to your audience. Words you choose to describe your USP need to resonate with your target audience. This is where your market research helps. Go back to the demographic and psychographic research you've done. Find words that move your target audience. Your USP should draw consumers in your target audience to you and convince them you're the very best solution to their problem.

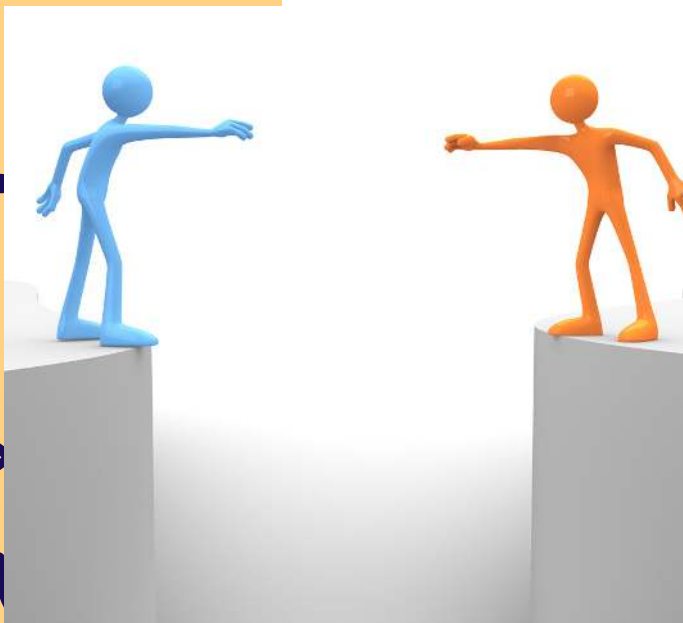


COMPETITION DOESN'T HAVE TO BE SCARY

When you live with the negative thought that there is too much competition, it's hard for you to get to know others in your niche. It makes you look at everyone else as competition rather than as strategic alliances.

This can lead to business isolation. It can limit the impact you can make since you're busy guarding "your" customers from everyone else. Business is a lot more fun and can even generate more revenue when competitors can possibly become strategic alliances.





REACH OUT

Start making friends with your competitors by reaching out behind the scenes. This is not the place to pitch your products or services.

Instead, focus on getting to know the person(s) behind the brand. Look for something personal they've shared on social media and ask about it. If a niche leader mentioned trying out yoga for the first time, ask how it went. If she shared a photo of her new gluten-free cake, ask for the recipe.



PROMOTE THEIR CONTENT

Did another solopreneur or small business owner publish a blog post that resonates with you? Share it on your social media channels. Re-tweet their content on Twitter. Like their videos on Facebook and share the funny image they posted. Don't be a stalker and repost everything. Pick two to three of their content pieces to repost each week.



ASK FOR FEEDBACK

If you see a small business owner succeeding at something you struggle with, ask them about it. Remember feedback goes both ways. If someone asks you a question about your business, be willing to help. If the question is outside your area of expertise, refer them to source that can be helpful.



RECOMMEND THEIR PRODUCTS

If someone else in your industry made a great product, let your community know. Recommend their product and use your affiliate link while doing so. You can design a special bonus your community will get if they purchase with your affiliate link.

Promoting their products helps other niche leaders and it establishes you as an affiliate. Plus, your efforts are rewarded with “thank you” money. That’s a win-win.

Many online business owners can become friends for life when you’re willing to reach out to them personally. Instead of thinking of your business as an island, think of it as a party where everyone is invited.

CREATING YOUR OWN TRIBE

When you operate in a saturated niche, you need a tribe of people behind you. These dedicated fans can share your latest offering with their friends and family. Their in-depth discussions can give you hundreds of ideas. Their feedback early in the product creation phase will help you know exactly what your audience wants.

Think that sounds too good to be true? It’s not. You can have all of this if you build a community around your brand. Here’s how to get started right now.

DECIDE WHO YOU WANT TO ATTRACT

Determine who your ideal audience is. Since this group is going to help you build your brand, the members should be people that will be purchasing and using your products or services. This doesn’t mean your group has to be exclusive and limited to customers-only. It just means you’ll work hard to find people who will be a good fit for your community.





CHOOSE A SOCIAL SPACE

Some niche leaders prefer to set up a Facebook group they can use to build their own tribe. Others prefer forum software or some other social space. It doesn't matter if you use a social media platform or build your own forum. The important thing is whatever you choose to use must be easy for your community to access and use.

SET BOUNDARIES

Before you start inviting anyone to your brand-new community, think about what guidelines you'll need. You want guidelines because they tell participants and prospects which behaviors are acceptable, and which are not.

This is especially important in some niches. If you're a wellness coach, you may have a rule stating members cannot promote dangerous diets or behaviors that can lead to disordered eating. Remind everyone who joins your community that the advice within the group cannot replace medical advice from a doctor or other healthcare professional.



SHOW UP CONSISTENTLY

In the beginning stages, your group may be small, and members may not feel comfortable posting discussions. Keep the group active and encourage other members to participate by posting regularly. For example, if you're in the crafting niche, feature "Work in Progress" Wednesday where you share a picture of what you or someone in your community is working on. Invite your community members to do the same.

ANSWER QUESTIONS

When members of your group ask a question, be sure to answer promptly. You want your community to be a place where members can get help. In the beginning, you'll answer most of the questions yourself. But as time goes on, members will begin interacting with each other and answering questions.

Building your own tribe is a great way to stand out in your niche. But keep in mind it can take several months. Be patient and keep building.

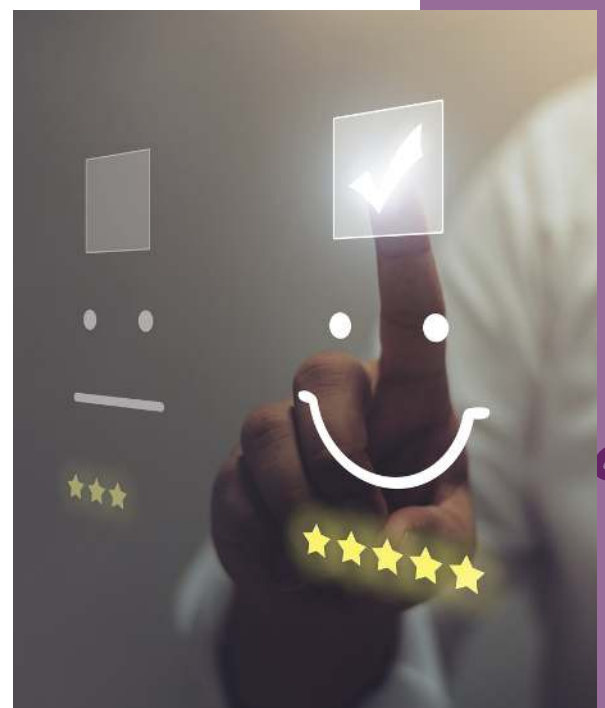
HOW TO INSPIRE BRAND LOYALTY IN YOUR FANS

When customers have multiple products or services to choose from in a large niche, how do you make sure they choose your business? In two simple words: brand loyalty. Smart solopreneurs and business owners know customers will choose you over your competitors again and again if you inspire brand loyalty. Here's how to achieve it.

TREAT YOUR CUSTOMERS WELL

Some people mistakenly believe customer service starts when a client makes a purchase. Customer service begins the moment someone discovers your brand for the first time.

Relationships are important to today's consumers. They want to do business with brands that **take the time to cultivate a relationship**. Take the first step toward this personal relationship by inviting website visitors to join your mailing list. Then ask potential customers to follow you on social media. On social media, point them to your blog.



INTERACT WITH CUSTOMERS

Imagine how you would feel if someone told you they were interested in a romantic relationship with you then didn't call you for four weeks. You'd seriously question their desire to be with you.

It's the same thing consumers do when you invite them to follow you on social media or sign up for your mailing list without interacting with them. If you're serious about building a relationship with potential customers, connect with them.

Acknowledge new fans. Answer questions about your brand. Comment when they share content with you. This sort of interaction makes fans feel like they are part of your brand, too.

ASK FOR FEEDBACK

Feedback is a great way to learn more about your audience and what's important to them. Use polls and surveys to ask questions. Ask fans what they think of your new product or new service. Ask why they choose your brand. Or ask what products they want to see from you in the future.

When you've closed a poll or survey, take some time to gather the results. Look for trends in the data that can help you do business better. You might learn most of your customers buy products after you've posted about them on your Facebook fan page. Use this information to refine your marketing.



FIX PROBLEMS

Some new business owners cringe when they hear from an angry customer that something went wrong with their order. But an angry customer is a good sign. It means your customer cares enough to want the problem fixed.

Start by acknowledging the situation. Say, "I'm so sorry the order form failed to go through. I understand how frustrating this can be. I'd like to help you get this problem resolved right now."

Handling problems with grace is a great way to turn an angry customer into a happy one. If you resolved their issue, they have a pleasant story about your brand to share with their friends and family members.



REWARD THE LOYAL ONES

When it comes to rewarding customers, focus on acknowledging the ones who are loyal. They should get the best perks and discounts from your brand. The perk can be something simple like 10% off their next order, a free bonus report, an extra coaching session, or anything else you want.

Amazon uses this technique. They reward their Prime members with special perks like episodes of their favorite TV shows, free shipping, and unlimited music streaming. Amazon knows their Prime members are their most loyal customers and they want to keep them happy.

Brand loyalty makes a big difference in a saturated niche. It can lead to repeat sales and glowing reviews, envied by your competitors.



CHAPTER 5

NO ONE WANTS TO LEARN FROM ME

Whether you've been running an offline or online business for fifteen years or fifteen days, you may struggle with this negative belief. If you believe this, you are not sure you know enough or have enough qualifications to be the thought leader in your niche or even to serve customers successfully.

This negative thought can hold you back from launching new products or services, forging new relationships, or connecting with your audience. The truth is there's a niche filled with customers who want to do business with you. Your vision, personality, viewpoint, products, services and customer service may be exactly what the industry needs. But you won't know that until you **step outside your comfort zone**.



HOW YOUR LACK OF CONFIDENCE IS KILLING YOUR BUSINESS

Because you don't feel qualified to lead or teach in your niche, you stay on the bench – on the sidelines or in the background. Business from the sidelines is not as lucrative, exciting or fun. You tell yourself it doesn't matter because you're not the most qualified. You might say, "As soon as I master social media, finish this latest course, get a degree or hire a coach, I'll make my business more visible."

These excuses keep you stuck, preventing you from moving your business forward. Your lack of confidence affects your business in three major ways - all of which can be fatal to your brand if you don't take action and resolve your negative thoughts.



EXCUSES

1

2

EXCUSE #1: YOU HAVE NO PRODUCTS OR SERVICES

If you want to be in business and boost your bottom line, you must sell something. Otherwise, you don't have a business

It can be scary to invest in an offline business or to create and offer a product or service online. Most likely, it means you must confront your doubts. Many solopreneurs and small business owners have struggled with doubts about launching their business or products. Confronting your doubts is the solution. Just like a child discovering there are no monsters in the closet, you'll find your monsters disappear when you confront them.

EXCUSE #2: YOU DON'T LAUNCH YOUR PRODUCT OR BUSINESS

You created a fantastic online or offline product or service. You did your research to make sure your offering would be popular with your target audience. You got through the first phase and your product or service is ready to go.

write the sales copy, market the product or service or commit to your business going "live." So, you decide to go back to your original product and tweak it. You invest more time to do more research. You move a module, edit a chapter, or record the audio content again. You decide you'll be ready to launch after just one more tweak.

You blame your perfectionist tendencies for this delay. But perfectionism is masking the real issue. You lack the confidence to launch so you keep tinkering with your product.

The only way to deal with this fear is to acknowledge your product is good enough as it is and launch. Remember, you can release an updated version of your product later.

EXCUSE #3: YOU HAVE NO CUSTOMERS OR CLIENTS

If your business is going to succeed, you need customers and clients. When you lack confidence, you may be tempted to take any customer who comes your way. This type of desperation can lead you to take on clients that are a bad fit for your business.

Stop the cycle by getting clear on who you want to serve. Once you know who your ideal customer is, it's easier to market your services. Your confidence will grow. You will inspire prospects to do business with you and your brand will become a thriving business.

If you want to share your knowledge as a product or service – online or offline – don't get trapped into thinking you can't teach or lead in your niche. You don't have to wait years or take hundreds of courses. Just start right now. Trust your confidence will grow. Create your product or service. Sell it. Revise it. Sell it again. Revise it again. Keep on selling and revising.



CLARIFY YOUR BRAND

It is important to be crystal clear about the characteristics that make your brand your business. People often use the word “brand” and “business” interchangeably.

Without getting too theoretical, let’s define “Brand.” David Ogilvy, who is considered the Father of Advertising” defines brand as “the intangible sum of a product’s attributes.” The Dictionary of Brand defines brand as “a person’s perception of a product, service, experience, or organization.”

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EMBRACE YOUR PERSONALITY AS PART OF YOUR BRAND

Your personality is a huge part of your brand. You’ve probably met, worked with or done business with someone and felt like you clicked even though you couldn’t necessarily explain why. Chances are your personalities were a good match. You had enough common ground to forge a connection but enough differences to keep things interesting.

Some niche leaders fear showcasing their personalities because they’re afraid of rejection.

Some people may reject your personality, but others will embrace it. The ones who embrace your personality are the people you want to serve. They should make up much of your community. When you feel you “clicked” with someone online or offline, invite them to join your community by connecting with you on social media.

Accept you can’t serve every single person in your niche. That would be impossible and overwhelming. Serve those who are the best match for your personality and your product or service.



EMBRACE YOUR PERSONALITY AS PART OF YOUR BRAND

You have a message to share. Clarifying this message so your customers and prospective customers can easily understand it helps you and them embrace your brand. Hopefully, you've articulated it in your unique selling proposition. This crucial piece of branding inspires customers to choose your business over your competitor's.

An example of a branding message is Nike's "Just Do It" tagline. That message is a nod to their community of doers, everyday people who get up and go after what they want. Don't panic if you don't have a message that is so succinct. It takes time to develop a short, catchy message. Just articulate your message as simply as you can.

The image of your business needs to match your message and your personality. When these are in sync, your business will attract the people who relate to you and love your brand.

Keep in mind the image of your business is about so much more than how you look in your headshot. Your business' image is about the words you use on your blog or in your newsletter, your website theme, your posts on your social media channels, the way you deliver customer service, and the quality of products and services you offer.

When creating your brand, remember your fans and followers want a passionate business owner, leader, teacher who is willing to be their voice in the marketplace.



MOVE YOUR BUSINESS BEYOND YOUR COMFORT ZONE

If you seriously want to be a successful offline or online small business owner who leads in your niche, then you must be willing to step beyond your comfort zone. Many new small business owners avoid this because it's scary to go beyond what's familiar.

As a small business owner, you must be willing to be continually learning. It also means being willing to take risks. Figure out what is your tolerance for risk. It means giving yourself permission to try new things. Sometimes, you'll succeed at these new things. Sometimes, you'll fail at these new things. But failure is the path to success. Here are a few examples of entrepreneurs who were persistent and eventually overcame failure with amazing success.

Walt Disney's first cartoon business went bankrupt. He tried acting but failed. He lost the legal rights to his first animation, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit. But he persisted and created Mickey Mouse. But bankers rejected Disney's concept of bringing Mickey to life on film over 300 times before one finally said yes. He persisted through the WWII years, strikes by the animators, health issues, venturing into new



technologies such as TV and opening Disneyland.

Thomas Edison is another entrepreneur who experienced massive failure before incredible success. He had 1,093 patents including ones for the light bulb, the phonograph and the motion picture camera.

Many other famous people have failed before achieving success. Failure is a step to success.

Both failure and success are acceptable because you've learned something new in the process from each one. As you learn from your experiences, you grow to be a tough leader in your niche. You can share information with your community so they can benefit from your experience. If you're ready to challenge yourself, try some of these activities:

ACTIVITY #1: ANSWER QUESTIONS

Go to an online forum or answer site and look at the questions being asked. Sign up for an account and answer the questions being asked in your niche.

Do this helpful exercise every time you feel you don't know enough to teach someone else. You'll discover you do have a lot to offer the communities in your niche.

ACTIVITY #2: SIGN UP FOR A CHALLENGE

Look for a challenge centered on an area of your business you need to improve. If you want to grow your subscriber list, sign up for a six-week "grow your mailing list" challenge. If you want to publish a book, join a Kindle publishing challenge.

When you participate in a challenge, you get social support from people who understand your doubts and fears. You may even find other solopreneurs or small business owners you want to partner with later.

ACTIVITY #3: TRY VIDEO MARKETING

Video marketing is a good way to step outside your comfort zone. Start with a vlog about a frequently asked question in your niche. For example, if you're a blog coach, you could record a video talking about the way bloggers make money online. The great thing about a vlog is if you don't like what you've recorded, you can delete it and start again.

If you are an offline small business owner, you could video yourself answering a typical question you get from your customers or new ways to use your product, or trends in your marketplace. Then post it on your website.

After you've stepped outside of your comfort zone, try to capture the experience while it's still fresh in your mind. Share your challenge with your community to show them you understand and relate to their journey.

Social proof is a quick and easy way to impress your visitors and customers. Social proof can also help you remember you're qualified to teach and lead in your niche. It also helps your customers and prospective customers to value your products and services. There are several different kinds of social proof you may want to display on your website and blog:

DEVELOPING YOUR SOCIAL PROOF

SOCIAL PROOF #1: BADGES

Badges help customers see your brand as trustworthy. If you're accredited with the Better Business Bureau, proudly display your badge. If you are a member of a national association that represents your industry, show their logo. If you're a coach and you're a member of Worldwide Association of Business Coaches, show it on your website.

SOCIAL PROOF #2: TESTIMONIALS

Testimonials are a type of social proof that is familiar to almost everyone. When someone emails you or tweets about a positive experience with your brand, ask them if you can use their feedback as a testimonial. If you're given permission, post a photo of the customer and their name next to their testimonial. Use the testimonial on your website and in your marketing material.

SOCIAL PROOF #3: SOCIAL BADGES

If you've built a following on social media, share that with your website visitors. Sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn allow you to display your brand's page along with the number of people who are following your brand.

This is social proof at its finest. Visitors will be more likely to follow your brand on social media when they see hundreds, or thousands of other people are already interacting with your business.

SOCIAL PROOF #4: SUBSCRIBER COUNT

Popular blogs do this all the time. They invite you to sign up for their mailing list and tell you how many subscribers they already have. The number of subscribers matters because it makes your brand look popular.

But don't display your subscriber count too early. If your blog is small and you only have two subscribers, don't broadcast this. It'll make your blog look unpopular and cause visitors not to sign up.

SOCIAL PROOF #5: MEDIA LOGOS

Did you write a guest post that appeared on a popular industry blog? Were you interviewed in a prestigious magazine? Was your startup story featured in a national newspaper?

Media logos excite potential customers and encourage them to make a purchase from your business. Put the media logos anywhere you want on your website but it's smart to put them on the front page or in the sidebar.

Don't be bashful. If you have social proof, show it off on your website or blog or in your marketing materials. Next, mention this proof in a tweet or Facebook post and invite your followers to see it for themselves on your website.

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PUT YOUR BEST CONTENT FORWARD

If Some solopreneurs and small business owners freeze when they go to create content. Maybe you do, too.

The most important part of creating content isn't impressing your English teacher or positioning yourself as the definitive expert in your niche. The most important part is **connecting with your followers**. Here's how to do it.

DROP THE BORING TONE

When it comes to creating content, relax. Don't try to sound like a boring college professor. Your natural style and tone should come through in what you're writing. It's the special sauce your brand is known for. Remember, let your personality shine through.

Be yourself in your content. Bring all your personality. Let the world know what your brand is about. The fans that love your special sauce will stick around for seconds and thirds and even bring referrals with them

DITCH THE INDUSTRY SPEAK

Avoid using terms only those in your niche understand. This is fine for 'shop talk' when you're discussing a project with another solopreneur or small business owner who's familiar with your industry.

To customers, shop talk is unfamiliar and confusing. When your customers don't know what you're talking about, they get embarrassed and leave. They unsubscribe from your mailing list, unfollow you on Twitter, or just stop visiting your website or brick and mortar business

ue everyday language. If you use a term your customers may not be familiar with, include a quick explanation for example.

OPT FOR YOUR PREFERRED FORMAT

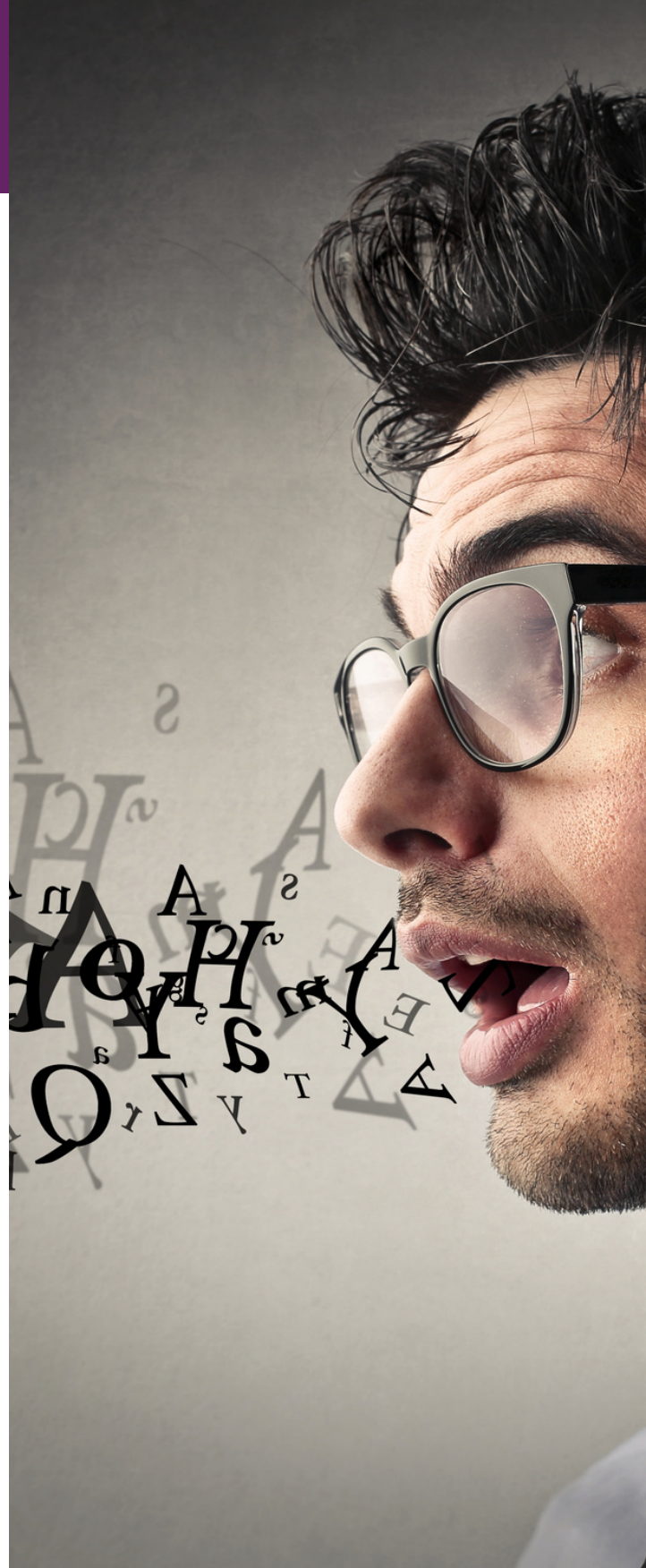
There are many ways to communicate with your customers and prospective customers now. You could create a video, record a podcast episode, write a blog post, send a newsletter, create a unique voice message on your phone, or more. Most customers want a mix of options.

But most small business owners find one or two methods are their strongest format. Maybe you prefer video because you enjoy customers being able to see your face. Maybe you've been podcasting for years so you're most comfortable when it comes to audio.

When you know which format you prefer, use it to create a first draft. You'll find it easier and more fun to create content this way. Plus, you'll feel more relaxed as you work.

Convert content into different formats after you've created the draft. Record a podcast episode then hire a ghostwriter to turn your audio content into an article you can post on your blog.

Don't get distracted by your topic or your format. Instead, focus on creating content your community will enjoy.



CHAPTER 6

NOT ENOUGH EXPERIENCE OR EDUCATION

You have a niche you would love to serve, and it's filled with customers eager for your service or product. There's one tiny thought niggling at the back of your mind and keeping you from going after what you want.

You're worried you don't have enough experience or education.

That's a common concern when you run your own business. But most small business owners and online marketers are qualified—you just don't know it yet. Here's how to keep this limiting belief from sabotaging your business success.

YOU ARE QUALIFIED RIGHT NOW

Many brilliant entrepreneurs have talked themselves out of building a business in a niche or launching an idea they loved. Have you done this? Have you put your idea on the backburner because you believed you didn't have the right education or experience to make it successful?

When you do this, you're holding back. You're playing small. You're sabotaging your business. The good news is you can change. You can decide to show up in a big way.

WORK WITH WHAT YOU DO HAVE

Focus on what you can bring to your prospective customers. You have passion and heart. You're willing to work harder and longer than anyone else. You're the one more invested and more committed than other business owner in your niche. Your lack of experience and education aren't roadblocks.

They're useful tools in your tool chest. Business trade associations in your industry are a great "first stop" for learning. There are also organizations specifically designed to help new entrepreneurs. Groups such as the Small Business Administration (SBA), local chambers of commerce, technical colleges, online resources are wonderful resources for new entrepreneurs. Your local library is also a great resource. Join online forums for entrepreneurs. Search online for resources for entrepreneurs. There are many free online resources.

LOOK AT YOUR OTHER EXPERIENCES

You learned to crawl then walk. Now, you can do things such as ride a bicycle or drive a vehicle. But all these things are not skills you were born with. You learned them by trying new things and learning what not to do.



It's the same way when you step into a new area of business or launch a new product. You can gain all the skills you need. But you won't get these skills until you show up and do the work.

Trust you will develop the skills you need as you go along. You'll learn how to host websites by doing it. You'll learn how to set up an online shopping cart by doing it. You'll learn how to market to offline customers by doing it.



EMBRACE YOUR JOURNEY

Many small business owners and online business owners worry about their lack of skills or education because they spend too much time comparing their journey to everyone else's.

YOUR JOURNEY IS UNIQUE TO YOU.

You are where you're supposed to be right now. When you understand this, you ignore what others are doing and focus on nurturing your own business.

What you believe you lack is exactly what your community – your prospective customers need. Your community needs fresh voices and new ideas. You can offer these things when you decide to stop playing small and **COMMIT** to embracing your own journey and **decide to play BIG**.

HOW TO TACKLE IMPOSTER SYNDROME

At the heart of the "I don't have enough education or experience" fear is the impostor syndrome. This is the term used for people who feel like a fraud and deem themselves unworthy of success. It affects business owners, creatives, teachers, and even doctors.

You recognize the impostor syndrome as the little voice that says, "Who are you to run a business? What right do you have to come into this industry with your product? You'll only succeed for as long as you can fool people. You're not talented enough or smart enough to succeed. It's just a matter of time until the world catches on."

This voice makes you duck into your shell. Instead of stepping up and sharing your awesome product with the world, you launch it with a mumble. Instead of displaying all the lovely things your clients say about your work, you tell yourself they were just being polite.

Don't let this fear sabotage your business. Here's how to tackle it.

- Focus on the value you provide. When you doubt your abilities, change your thoughts. Instead of climbing onto the self-doubt train, pause what you're doing. Take a deep breath, shift your focus to how you can provide value to those you serve.
- Say something positive, "I release self-doubt. I am worthy of any and all success I encounter because I serve my community the best way I can."

Tackling the impostor syndrome means you must. It's easy to downplay compliments. It means you must take responsibility for your success.

Many of us have been taught to be modest and not brag. As a result, you tell people, "I was just lucky." Or, "I was in the right place at the right time." Or, "It wasn't that big a deal really. It was pretty simple."

But when you say this, you send a message to yourself that you aren't worthy of success. So, your self-doubt grows even stronger and you work harder to prove you're good enough to be successful.

When success comes your way, say something gracious. Say, "Thank you for your compliments. I worked really hard on this project." This allows you to take ownership of your success and sends the message to yourself and the universe that you're worthy.

Be open and honest about what you're dealing with. For example, if you're a mom and a blogger who feels inadequate when you measure yourself against all the Pinterest-perfect parenting tips, talk about it.

When you give yourself permission to be honest about feelings, you give others permission, too. Share your behind-the-scenes thoughts and feelings with those you trust. Your community may feel the same pressures and stresses you do. They may be just afraid to say it until you verbalize their thoughts.

Everyone struggles with impostor syndrome at some point. But it doesn't have to control you or keep you from the business and the life you crave. Remember you are worthy. Right now.



TURN YOUR BRAND INTO A CASE STUDY

Some new entrepreneurs find it easier to work on their brands if they view themselves as a student of their niche.

For example, you want to start a fitness brand. But you're obese and have several health problems. You worry no one will listen to you or take you seriously.

Don't use this as a reason to give up. Instead, position yourself as a student. You can build your brand by talking about what you're learning on your weight loss journey.



Emily Ho did just that when she started a blog called Skinny Emmie. She eventually re-branded her site as Authentically Emmie, where she still talks about her weight loss journey.

Even if you view yourself as a student in your niche, reach out to other solopreneurs and business owners in your niche. Build relationships with them. Let them know what about their content resonates with you.

Share their fan pages with your community. By doing this, you'll get comfortable in your niche and you'll be networking with friends who may turn into joint venture partners or affiliates later.

There's nothing wrong with viewing yourself as a student in your niche. It can be a great way to overcome your fear and get started. But don't let it be an excuse to play small. Stay focused on providing value to your audience while making a profit.

MONETIZING YOUR BRAND

While you are a student of your niche, you also have a business to run. This means you still need to be thinking about monetizing your brand as you go.

You don't have to wait a certain amount of time before you can begin making money from your brand. You don't have to "pay your dues" for the next two or three years before you can earn a profit. Be focused on monetizing your brand from the start.



Become an affiliate of products and services you trust. Link to the products or services in the content you produce. For example, if your business focuses on weight loss and you found a set of portion control dishes you love, talk about them on your blog or podcast. Then provide an affiliate link so readers and listeners can purchase the same dishes.

Some beginning bloggers and marketers worry that linking to products is spammy. But if your links are relevant to your content and the products are high quality, then don't worry. Your community won't be angry with you – they'll want to thank you!

If you are an offline business owner, develop strategic alliances with other small business owners who can benefit your customers in a different niche than yours. Negotiate a finder's fee for business you send to them and they send you. Your referral - a recommendation from a trusted small business owner - is more likely to turn into a paying customer than a cold call.

BEING AUTHENTIC HELPS YOU ATTRACT AN AUDIENCE

Authenticity is all about owning who you are and what your brand is about. You don't have to proclaim yourself as an expert or guru to work in a certain niche. All you must do is care about the community you're serving.

When you hear talk about leading your niche or creating a community, you may feel some resistance. This is common, especially when you're discovering a new niche or trying to take your brand in a new direction.

Resistance stems from the negative thought your audience is expecting you to have all the answers and never stumble. But perfection isn't what attracts people to communities. Authenticity is what brings people together.

When someone admits or demonstrates their humanness, it creates a safe place where you can do the same. Authenticity gives you and your community freedom.

So, what if you don't have all the answers today? You don't need them. What if you aren't the biggest and best in your niche? You don't have to be. You don't have to compete with every other leader out there. Be yourself and trust your readers and listeners will connect with you.

Besides helping you attract an audience, authenticity also gives you grace. Grace to experiment, to succeed, and even to fail. As a solopreneur or small business owner, you need this grace. Without authenticity, you can't nurture your brand or your community.

Being authentic grows your confidence. You feel comfortable with your brand. You engage your community on social media. You enjoy emailing your list.

Don't be afraid to be personal and make a connection with your audience. Being authentic empowers your community and allows you to grow together. Just be who you are.



WHEN YOU DO NEED MORE EXPERIENCE

At some point you may hit a wall. You've discovered you can't take your business any further. You know if you want to succeed you need more experience. Fortunately, there are plenty of ways you can gain this experience without needing a college degree or going into debt.



FIND A MENTOR OR COACH

To get more experience, find a mentor or coach to teach you. But don't blindly hire the first person you meet who claims to be a coach.

Spend time researching your potential coach. Do they work with people like you? Who are some of this coach's previous clients? If possible, reach out to previous clients. Ask about their experience with the coach. Ask what they're doing now. Are they further along in their business than they were when they started working with the coach? Have they achieved their goals and now have set new ones? Did the coach track their progress? Offer options to consider? Move them from their comfort zone?

Consider the personality of the potential coach. You want to work with someone whose personality will inspire you



ASK OTHERS

Tap into your network to talk to other solopreneurs and small business owners who have hired a coach. Ask who they worked with and what they got out of the experience. Ask about the coach's process and personality.

CONSIDER DIFFERENT STYLES OF COACHING

Besides choosing a coach that's a good match, look for one who has a coaching style you enjoy. Some entrepreneurs prefer bossy coaches who won't let you make excuses. But other entrepreneurs prefer gentle coaches that will help you clear mental blocks.

One style of coaching isn't better than another one. It's about what works best for you. If you need hard deadlines and a coach that's tough, go for it. If you need a coach with lots of encouragement and a laid-back approach, then search for someone who fits your needs.

Hiring a coach can be pricey. But hiring one will help you look at your brand in a new way and grow your business. Your community will also benefit because you'll be able to teach them more effectively.



CLOSING THOUGHTS

Your thoughts and beliefs shape your reality – in your business and your personal life. Changing your mindset is just the first step. Take the first step. Be prepared to see good things start to happen in your business and in your life. Be open to accepting them.

Keep in mind your thoughts become things. Monitor your thoughts. Every day, think about the type of customers you want to attract. Higher-paying clients will be attracted to you. Think about the type of projects, products or services you want to provide. Products in demand or energizing projects or highly desired services will be yours for the taking.

Be authentic and your brand will align with who you are.

Embrace opportunities and enjoy the strategic change being created in your life and your business. Remember you're the one who created them. Own your success – you've earned it!

Invest in Yourself

As you focus on boosting your income and overcoming negative thoughts, if you need support or brainstorming, schedule a strategic thinking session with me. Just click this special offer [Schedule an Executive Coaching Session](#).



CRUSH NEGATIVE THOUGHTS TO BOOST YOUR BOTTOM LINE

Visit CenterForStrategicChange.com for additional resources to grow your business and your life.

Schedule a FREE 30-minute coaching session to help you crush your negative thoughts so you can boost your bottom line. Go to Judy's Scheduling Calendar

