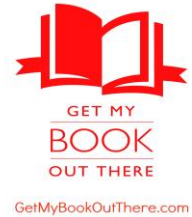


## Get My Book Out There Podcast #16 Coping with Running A Business



Narelle Todd:

I'm Narelle Todd.

S.E. Smith:

And I'm S.E. Susan Smith.

Narelle Todd:

We are the self-publishing author and marketing duo that has sold over 2 million books. But we didn't start out knowing how to sell books. Fast forward, past many failed promotions and a lot of lessons learned, you'll see how we went from self-publishing newbies to hitting the New York Times Bestsellers list and making the USA TODAY's Best Sellers list 19 times and counting. We created the get my book out there podcast to give you simple yet effective marketing strategies to increase readership and book sales, so you know what to do, when to do it and how to do it, as well as some tips for staying mentally and physically well.

S.E. Smith:

Let's get started.

Narelle Todd:

We're going to talk about coping with running a business. When you first started writing, for many people, the whole idea is not to actually be creating a business. It was, you wanted to write, you wanted to share stories. You got into that, you started doing that and then you discovered this whole business that is behind your writing. So today again, I'll give you three tips on how to cope with the business, running a business and being a business owner so that you can free yourself to be able to write more and actually grow that business.

S.E. Smith:

It's funny that you said that because one of the first things is, I always said, I didn't want to be in business because I didn't want to have to deal with all of the logistics that went with it. Once I became successful in my writing and stuff, and I was kind of forced into doing the business part. At first, it was like, "Well, I'm overwhelmed, but it's not too bad." And then, "I'm overwhelmed, but it's not too bad." And you keep telling yourself that, and eventually you actually started to believe yourself.

Narelle Todd:

Or you just get to the part where you go "I'm overwhelmed". So our first tip and I like this first tip because it was one of the very first things that I saw you do. And I just remember how centered it helped you become. It's around creating a visual business plan. So do you want to step us through that one because this is your specialty.

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S.E. Smith:

One of the cool things is I did know just enough about being in business to know what I needed to do, or at least be of it, I may not have known how to do it. And not knowing how to is really the easy part, because you can always go and research it, it's knowing what you should do. I knew from experience that your businesses needed to have a business plan. So I started researching business plans. How do we do it? How do you write one? What needs to be in it? What do you need to look at? And I found some great information online. I found some great templates online where basically they ask you the questions that you need to answer and you fill them in. Well, when you're first starting out, there's a lot of those questions that you can fill out just a little bit, but you don't know all of the information yet, because you haven't gotten to that point.

As I'm filling this out, it's like, I'm going through it, and it's like, yeah, yeah, yeah. But it's like 35 pages or something like that by the time you get done. And I'm like, "This is a great exercise that helps me kind of put things together, but how often am I going to use this? How practical is it?" And I was like, "Not." So I came up with the idea of being a writer. I'm a very, very visual person. I decided, let me create a visual business plan. Something that takes all of those pages and condenses it down to what was my goal? What do I want to achieve? And put it specifically in there so that I had at a glance, I could print it out on one page, stick it up in front of me, anytime I could look at it.

And one of the great things about doing that is it also formatted in my head. So that even I don't have it right there in front of me, no matter where I go or what I do, I always come back to that visual business plan. It's just something that you can create using PowerPoint or Word or Pages, if you're a math person, or just sit down and draw it out on a big piece of paper. Make your circle, what's your business name, draw a line down, make a list. For me, the first thing and what drives my business are my stories. So it's my books. First one, I know that I'm got to be in charge of that part because I'm the one that's creating.

But if you're doing multiple authors, it may be more than just you. And then there's other factors that go with my books, like the marketing and publicity and stuff that I rely on more people to help me get that out, get my book out there. I may have another name there because I'm writing the books, but I also need someone else, part of that team to help me get it out. And having that visual business plan has been so crucial to my success because helps keep me in the overwhelming time, it helps keep me focused. That is very, very important because as a creative person, it's easy to get distracted.

Narelle Todd:

There's always somebody who's looking to sell you a new tactic, or somebody who's in a group saying, "This is the way that you're going to sell books." So having a plan, whether it's visual or whether it's a written one, whatever works for you. But the concept is that you need a plan for your business. What do you want to do with your business? So for you, your various silos or columns are your books, your audio books, TV, etc.

S.E. Smith:

And growth. That's the big thing. I have my books and then I have my merchandise, and the merchandise that can include doing posters, doing a store, creating other media outlets, creating products, having stuff for conventions. Then the next one is my publicity. Where am I going to go? Where am I going to do? How am I going to do it? Am I doing conventions? Am I doing ads, am I taking classes so that I can continuously do self-improvement, so that I can continue to stay on top of all the different changes that are going out there. And then the last column is really what I envision, where I want to go.

Way out their reach. Got to take time to get to. It's amazing when I look at my overall plan, I can see where I started originally. And it's always an ongoing thing. Don't be afraid to change it. I know we're going to be about that. You can change the style or realign your timeline if it's a pandemic that happens to pop up in the middle

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of it. The thing is, have your concrete stuff that you know that you're working on, and kind of build out the things that you are doing and want to do, and then the things that you envision. That's going to take time, but you need to put all these building blocks in place to achieve in that last column.

Narelle Todd:

And that's certainly the important part is your business plan is your building block. And that's where I see a lot of authors struggling. They haven't actually created their foundation. And that's what your business plan gives you, is the foundation. It helps you then stay focused and centered as you say. So the thing that happens when you don't have that foundation is you then are looking for answers to, how do I sell more books? You're looking everywhere for that answer. Whereas in actual fact, if you dialed it back and actually went back to basics, put your business plan in place, then put your tactics on top.

S.E. Smith:

Throwing stuff at the wall is great. Sometimes it'll stick most of the time it won't. The greatest thing about advertising that it works. The trouble is it only works 50% of the time and you don't know what 50% it is that works. Having that business plan helps you not chase after the shiny bubbles. It helps you not throw stuff at the wall and hope something that will stick, it helps save you money in the long run. Yes, there's going to be things that you may try that may not have a good return on investment, or it may just take a little bit longer to get that return on investment. If you have those building blocks, you have that cushion in there knowing that you may have to do this now to get to that long-term range. But when you have that, you're aware of that you don't get overwhelmed or depressed or wondering if you're doing the right thing.

Narelle Todd:

Definitely the business plan helps you stay calm and focused because this is a long haul. This isn't short term money. You're not going to make a million dollars in the next month, or anything like that. And your business plan has helps you cope with all the other bits that come up because you've got that clarity of vision as to where you're heading.

So point number two is around valuing yourself. Of course, the example we were talking about, an experience that I had this week with a person who was providing a professional service for me, one of the things that I was doing was, every couple of weeks I'd be emailing and just saying, "Where's this stuff that you said you're going to get to me?" I sat down to write this email yesterday and I just went, "Wait a minute. I am this person of professional services, right? And I'm chasing."

And I was like, I needed to value myself first before somebody else will value me. Instead of being passive about it, being grumpy and upset and stuff, I actually took action and wrote and said, "Look, this is it. Drawing a line in the sand. My time is really important, but every time I need something or waiting for you for six months and stuff, way too long". But I was allowing that to happen. I mean, she was not providing what she needed to, but I was allowing. It's almost like I enabled her to do that.

S.E. Smith:

It's so important to be able to trust people that you bring onto your team. When you're bringing it on, you have a lot going on in your business. You can just take one look at that business plan and know, this is all the stuff you need to get done. And you also know that it's part of that foundation, and if your foundation isn't solid, then it can come crashing down around you. Having somebody that you value and you value their professionalism, which is why you took your business to them. But if they don't value your business in return,

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then you do need to say, "Listen, this is costing me time. Time is money. This is costing me stress. Stress is not good for my health. This is costing me because my business is not running as efficiently as it should."

And it's not running as professionally because they're not doing their job. But if you continue to not let them, or you say it's okay for them not to do their job, and ultimately being the boss of the business, you are the one in charge. So it ultimately comes back on you. You need to just finally say, "You know what? This isn't good for me. This is why it's not good for my business. It's not good for the value. Not good for the stress. I need to find a team player that values me as much as I value them."

Narelle Todd:

It doesn't matter what it is in your business, if you know your own value, that's not acceptable in my business, or this is the behaviors that I like in my business. So it could be with external people. It could be with your team. It could be with somebody directly employee. It could be anything there. So it's very much about the value you place on yourself and what you're willing to accept from other people. And recognizing that it's about you. Each one of us needs to make that decision and not allow things to happen to us. Because that's all that is. In this case, she's not doing her job, but I allowed that to happen. You need to take responsibility for your role in whatever's not working.

Certainly, a key lesson for me yesterday. And a good reminder to actually say, "Well, personal responsibility as the boss in my business is so important to coping with the business." Having that kind of difficult conversation is not something I particularly want to do. And I must say, I did feel a bit ill having. But at the same time afterwards, it was almost like a weight had lifted off my shoulders. And I was like, "Okay, there's some things I need to put in place in order to move forward now, because I have to go find somebody fill the role." But at the same time, it was also a sense of like, "This is how things operate in the business. So you need me as the boss needs to put in place and make sure that each one of the components in my business is at the level I want it to be at." And that's all on me.

S.E. Smith:

Feel's so much better when you've done that. When you put those, yes, you're going through that stressful time, but it was already a stressful situation. And what you're doing is you're removing that from your life. You're putting procedures, I guess is a good way. A procedure. Let's go ahead and set this set in. Now I'm not advocating that if someone misses one deadline that you fire them, unless they don't have a good reason. But just try to once, yes. Twice, maybe. Three times, no.

Narelle Todd:

This had been going on for a little while.

S.E. Smith:

What's our tip number three for today?

Narelle Todd:

Well, tip number three is be prepared for change. Change is going to happen whether you want it to or not. And we certainly all discovered that in these last 12 months. I think you just need to go into business knowing that every day you're probably going to wake up and something could be a bit different. Being able to go with that flow, is so important to your mental health, and just being able to cope with being in business. So rather than get upset, or jump onto a Facebook group, going back to our tip number one, when you have your

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business plan in place, it doesn't matter so much if the tactics change because you've got your foundation. You've built it on concrete rather than on sand.

Let's say Facebook ads for example, lots of people are having problems. They're getting shut down. Their accounts are banned, all sorts of stuff happening. That's one tactic in your business. So what are some of the other tactics that you've got going? And that's where it's important to have the plan, because you're not just relying on, say Facebook ads, you've got a couple of irons in the fire. So just being able to then go, "Okay, Facebook's out." You might want to hide under the sheet for a day or two, but then you're going to get jumped back into it, have a look at the other avenues that you've got, or the other tactics that you've got in place with your business.

So that ability and that resilience to just roll with change, I think it's right up there. It's almost number one. Business plan is still number one, but it's right up there as I think one of the best skills that we can develop as business owners.

S.E. Smith:

Saying that two of the things that I think of is when I was a teacher. One of the things that I loved about teaching is no two days were ever the same. So it was never boring. Because you never knew what was going to happen. There's always going to be something. You may have everything planned out organized to a T, but there's always going to be something. Whether you walk in and that great plan, the kids didn't get it, or they had a fire drill in the middle of it, or you have tornado come through, or the power went off or somebody flushed a whole roll of toilet paper down the toilet. Got 34 kids that can't use the bathroom. Something's going to happen. And that's the way it is with your business.

Being able to be flexible. Okay, Facebook ads not working right now, instead of taking that as a crisis or seeing that as a negative, where else can I go? Where else can I look that I may not have looked if everything went perfect that day? It kind of keeps pushing you forward. It pushes you out of your comfort zone and it makes sure you're constantly reaching out there for something new. I equate it to having the business as mountain climbing. I'm terrified of heights, but just the idea of I don't look down where I've been so much, unless I'm on a really good ledge where I'm ready to reflect back on where I've been. And I don't look straight up all the time.

I focus on doing one step, one climb at a time. Because otherwise that overwhelmingness, if something doesn't work, it's like climbing without equipment up a tall mountain. If you're only thinking about the fact that you don't have this equipment or that you're on this massive cliff and you're a thousand feet to fall, then you're going to get afraid. You're going to get overwhelmed. You're going to get point where you're hyperventilating and a paper bag underneath the bed. And everybody's like looking going, "Okay, what's wrong with you?" Take that time to focus, don't be afraid of that change. Roll with.

Narelle Todd:

Yeah, definitely. So there's our three tips for today on coping with business, being the business owner, the CEO of your author business. So firstly, make sure you have a business plan in place, visual, written, whatever, but have that plan in place, a good foundation. Make sure that you know your value and that you actually demand your value from everybody that you work with and from yourself as well.

S.E. Smith:

You will get respected for that.

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Narelle Todd:

Yes. And thirdly, be open to change. Change is going to happen whether we want it or not. So if you're open to it, roll with it, it's going to just be much easier and way less stressful.

S.E. Smith:

Whoever knows? You may be stuck in the middle of a global pandemic one day. Thank you everybody for joining us.

Narelle Todd:

Hey, thanks for joining us today. You know, we've got way more information we want to share with you to increase your book sales. So please come and join me @facebook.com/Get my book out there.

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