

EXPLORE YOUR ENTHUSIASM

EPISODE 59: THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS.

HOW DO YOU GROW YOUR BUSINESS?

This question seems like a big one, with a million answers, but the truth is, you can narrow your focus on just four levers to create massive growth in your business. In today's episode I'll discuss these four levers and how they impact your business growth.

Whether you're just starting out and you wonder what to do after you put some things in your shop, or you've been working on your business for years, but you want to super-charge your growth and move to the next level - the answer is the same.

There are four foundations of business that are the levers of growth. By building the foundations or improving them, you'll make the biggest changes in the results of your business. Every single podcast episode I've recorded or blog post I've written or class I've taught, and in fact, most of the business advice you consume, it's all about these four foundations.

Once you understand what they are and what the variables are in each foundation, it becomes easier to make the exact change you want to make.

I call these foundations, but you need to work on them - to tweak them, strengthen them and experiment with them - no matter how long you've been in business.

Another way to think of them is as levers that are most related to the results in your business. After working with, and talking to, hundreds of businesses, these four foundations are the most effective levers at growing your business.

What do I mean by an "effective lever"? Let's look at an example.

Now, worrying about Twitter followers, without having a plan to convert them to your goals, is an ineffective lever for most businesses, because if one variable changes (more followers), what does the lever move?

But an effective lever would be your profit margin of your most popular item. If you increased your profit margin by \$5 (either by raising the price or decreasing the costs), and you sell 20 of those items a month, you've just increased your profit by \$100. Clearly, the profit margin is an effective lever of growth.

By focusing on the effective levers in your own business, you can build your business faster by building and improving just four foundations of your business ... and you can ignore all the other business advice out there that doesn't relate.

So what are they?

1. Know what you want.

This is the uber-lever, this is the absolute foundation that everything else in your business is going to be focused on. Why?

Because you don't know HOW you want to grow (in which direction, with what tools) until you know what you want from your business, until you're perfectly clear about where you're going. Yes, you can absolutely grow a business without knowing what you want, but you're not going to know if you're going in the right direction, and that leads to a lot of second guessing and slows down your motivation.

Once you're clear on what you want, you have motivation to move forward, you have a clear picture guiding you forward, and you have a filter you can apply to the many decisions you have to make.

The importance of this foundation is why I have every new member of Lift Off and the Starship Chart their Stars. This is a workbook that guides you through identifying what matters to you in your business. And then we make a map for the next quarter, so you know exactly where you're going and you can decide what will help you get there fastest.

2. Profitability.

Let me perfectly clear. When I started working with makers, I had no desire to talk about money. I had my own issues with money. I grew up with a single mom who was putting herself through college, we just had very little money, all of the time. So I did not want to get into money issues and profitability.

But soon after my book, Market Yourself, was published, I started to work with makers who had gotten their marketing in order and they were selling a LOT more. Some were at capacity and yet - they weren't making any money. At all. So I realized that if you don't first have a profit margin, if you're not clear on your break even point, none of the marketing in the world is going to give you a profitable business.

So I put together the course Pay Yourself and Pricing 101, which gives you three different equations for determining the price of your product, so you can pick the one that makes the most sense with the rest of your business and your goals.

So whether you have weirdness talking about money or not, you absolutely need to get perfectly clear about the numbers in your business and start tracking them monthly.

The more you learn about profitability and your numbers, the more variables you'll realize you have - there are so many small variables you can change to make a big difference to your bottom line. Pay Yourself walks you through each of these, and it's the first class you take in Lift Off.

3. Marketing

Now, this is the part I just love, but I know for many of you it is super stressful. But without telling people about your work, no one will know it exists or buy it!

Remember that Marketing = All communication with your customer. That's it. It's not something scary that you don't understand.

I think this gets stressful for makers because they look at all they COULD do, instead of using what they want from their business as a filter. In Craft Your marketing Plan, I teach you how to use your own skills and likes as a filter to choose the tools that'll be most effective for you.

The fact is, Marketing is the one foundation that's going to change the most often in your business, you can change your messaging, your tools, your schedule, way more often than you'll change your profitability or what you want in your business. And that's part of the process!

Marketing is also one of the most effective levers, because you can be nimble and quick. As soon as you learn that what your customers really love is X, you can change your marketing to focus on X. For example, perhaps you thought what was great was your materials, but what your customer gushes about is your COLOR. So you can change your messaging and focus to be on your COLOR.

The lever of marketing is actually many smaller levers, along the life cycle of the customer. Marketing brings people to your thing (traffic), communicates the value of your thing (conversion) and then delights them afterward (which builds loyalty). You can adjust or tweak or experiment with any part of that process, and cause your business to grow.

If this all feels overwhelming, don't worry! You can create a marketing plan that will guide you step by step through each area of your marketing, with my book Market Yourself and the course Craft Your Marketing, which both come as a part of Lift Off.

4. Effectiveness.

What I mean by this is what some people call "time management", but it's not just about TIME, it's also about keeping track of and managing your tasks, your priorities, and your energy.

You see, once you know what you want from your business and you know what you need to do in marketing and daily production and administration ... the question becomes: how in the heck do you get it all done? How do you manage procrastination and low energy and distractions? In Wrangle Your Time, which comes as part of Lift Off, we walk through this step by step.

With this lever, you can impact every area of your business - if you can make more products, you can sell more. If you get effective with your time management, you can get distracted less, and sell more! If you manage your energy, you'll have more of the business you really want!

Now, those are the four foundations of your business: Knowing what you want, Profitability, Marketing and Effectiveness. Can you see how everything that would impact the growth of your business comes one of those four areas? So instead of pulling advice from all over and just going at things willy nilly, you can look at one foundation needs the most work, right now, and work on just that. Within each foundation is so much space for you to make your business exactly what you want, and to experiment with what will work for you and your business.

Now, Lift Off, which is now open and will close this week, on June 12th, will guide you, week by week, through building each of these foundations in your own business. You can find it at taraswiger.com/lift.

I've gotten a few questions so I want to clarify - all of the classes I've mentioned, along with the entire Lift Off series, ALSO comes as a part of the Starship.

The difference is: Lift Off is a week by week series of classes, delivered via email with videos, workbooks, and audio lessons.

The Starship contains Lift Off *PLUS* a 24/7 community where you can ask all of your questions and a weekly chat, and ANY time access to the classes ... and if you choose the Warp Drive option, you also get 2 1:1s with me. So while Lift Off is the classes, one at a time, the Starship is that PLUS a community of your fellow makers. The Starship starts boarding on June 22nd. If you're subscribed via email, which you can do in the big pink box at the top of TaraSwiger.com, you'll be notified when the Starship is about to open.

If you have any questions, feel free to email us: vulcan@taraswiger.com, at any time! And don't forget to check out Lift Off before it closes at taraswiger.com/lift.

Thanks again for listening, and we'll be back next week with an interview with a fiber artist!