

EXPLORE YOUR ENTHUSIASM

EPISODE 66: GET THE SUPPORT YOU NEED.

Over the last few weeks we've been talking about growing your business, and in last week's blog post I mentioned the things that I hire out. That generated some questions about where you should start, if you need support. We talk about this all the time in the Starship, so I wanted to share what I tell my clients. I'll walk through your options, the exact support I get in my business, and the steps to hiring your first help.

Now first of all, please note that I am specifically *NOT* saying "employee". For 99% of you, you don't need or want to hire an employee. Here in the States that requires a totally different level of tax paperwork and compliance. Most of us are hiring "contractors", which means that the person uses their own equipment to finish work in their own space, on their own schedule, and they determine how they are paid.

Here are some links about the distinction:

- ★ <https://www.sba.gov/ucontent/hire-contractor-or-employee>
- ★ <http://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&-Self-Employed/Independent-Contractor-Self-Employed-or-Employee>

If you have any questions, consult a CPA, or your local government offices.

As an example, Jess, my Number One, is a contractor. She works out of her own home, during the hours that she sets, for the price per hour that she set and she invoices me weekly (so she's determining when and how much she gets paid).

WHY DO YOU NEED TO GET HELP?

I'm a HUGE proponent of hiring people in your business, as soon as you are consistently profitable! Why? Because there are just SO many things that a business requires that is outside your own zone of genius. Instead of letting that hold you back, hire someone to do those bits so you can focus all your energy on doing what only YOU can do, in the way only you can do it.

I've seen, time and again, that hiring the right person to do those things that most distract and deter you will absolutely transform your business.

That is, *IF* you turn your freed-up time to focusing single-mindedly on what you do best.

If you're starting out, don't worry about this, go on and hit pause and save this episode for when you are profitable! In the beginning, you do need to do almost everything in your business, so that you learn how it works, and you know when someone's doing their job right. The only exception might be advanced tech stuff. You don't need to learn how to host on your own servers, or code your website by hand. You hire that by buying hosting and installing a pre-coded theme on Wordpress.

What you can hire someone to do is nearly limitless:

- ★ Graphic design - everything from designing logos to laying out PDFs
- ★ Editing
- ★ Copywriting
- ★ Bookkeeping
- ★ Website design or implementation
- ★ Customer service emails
- ★ Text knitting or sewing
- ★ Making up samples for photography or to send to shops
- ★ Packing up your stuff and shipping it
- ★ Writing press releases or pitches and pitching you to the press
- ★ Production
- ★ House keeping!

MY OWN SUPPORT:

Jess: I call her my Number One, because she is absolutely the First Officer to my Captaining. She helps me think through challenges and comes up with solutions and I just love her, and our working relationship. Now, her actual defined job duties include editing everything I write, wrangling Mailchimp + CoSchedule, and project managing. This means she is often the last pair of eyes on everything I dream up and create. She works 5-10 hours per week, depending on what we have going on.

Jay: He just came on in April, and is officially the daily graphic designer and producer. This means that he lays out all the PDFs, including the weekly podcast transcript (hi Jay!) and makes the weekly blog and podcast images you'll see at TaraSwiger.com/blog. As a producer, he edits my podcast interviews and all video and audio class lessons. His big project is updating all the classes and content that are going to Lift Off students and the Starship - so that everything, even the 4 year old Map Making Guide, the 3 year old Pay Yourself, and the brand-new Craft Your Marketing, has the same visual style.

Side note: He's been editing the current Pay Yourself videos and we have some ideas for how we can make them even better, so we're taking Pay Yourself out of the shop entirely and re-shooting videos and updating everything and re-releasing it in a new format in 2016. If you want it for its current price, join now at TaraSwiger.com/profit and you'll get immediate access and be automatically upgraded!

Hiring these people has freed me up to focus on the things my business is built on: writing + recording content - like this podcast, my classes, and a book!

HOW TO GET STARTED:

You do NOT start by hiring people!

1. Make a big list of EVERYTHING you do.

Everything!

2. Categorize each item - either:

I love doing this and it's in my zone of genius.

I love this, but someone else could do it.

I don't like doing this, but I need to do this. (You need to do it either because someone else can't do it, or because you need to do it to learn more about your business - like doing your monthly numbers.)

I hate doing this, and I don't need to be the one who does it.

I hate doing this ... and it really doesn't need to be done.

3. Eliminate, automate, and systematize.

Nope, you're still not hiring a person yet! Before you do, you need to work through all your actions to become more efficient and systematized.

First, eliminate all the things that don't have to be done. This might be that you've been handwriting your labels, but you realize you could print out the details and it'd be faster. Or maybe you make yourself post on Twitter 10 times a day, but Twitter doesn't send traffic to your site.

Then, systematize FIRST the things you don't like doing and you don't have to be the one to do it. Search for automation solutions, like you can use CoSchedule to schedule social media posts to your blog posts and pages - and you can schedule as many as you want, as soon as you write the post!

After you've looked for an automatic solution, write out your system in a checklist and include EVERY step. I do this in Evernote, so that I can put the checklists in a shared folder. Here's an example from a student of her system for launching a new pattern. Work through all the tasks in your business and document how you get it done. (This will be absolutely invaluable if you fall ill or need to get help in a jiffy!) Keep track of any customer service questions you get regularly and copy your ideal response. Even if you never hire anyone to do this, it will save YOU so much time as you answer the same questions over and over!

4. Write up who your ideal person is.

Now that you've identified some tasks that you might hire someone to do, and you've systematized those tasks, so you know exactly how they'll be done, it's time to think about WHO would you hire? Before you go looking, take some time and write down what you want. Write the tasks the person will do, what programs they need to be familiar with, and even define how you'll want your working relationship to work - how often do they communicate? Are they cheerful?

5. Let the world know what you're looking for.

You can post your written description on your website and link to it on social media, or you can send a few emails to your fellow business pals. You can post it on Craigslist, job boards, fiverr, or even on Ravelry, if you're in the yarn industry. My clients have had the best experience when they've gotten personal referrals first, so I'd recommend you start there.

6. Audition!

When you have some respondents or referrals, it's time to see who's a good fit! I'm a fan of the audition, where the person does a few jobs for you or even starts working for you for a predetermined period of time. At the end of the period of time, you both check in to see if it's a good fit.

You're not just looking for competence; attitude is much more important than skill. People can learn stuff and software, but they can't learn to be positive and keep your workday happy, which is much more important to me! When Jess started, she had a month-long audition, where we acted like she worked for me (I paid her and started her on projects), but we had an agreement that if at the end of the month, if either of us didn't think it was a good fit, we'd just move on, no need to explain. I've had clients do this with 2-3 people before they found a good fit.

If it's something like a website redesign and you can't audition them, you can still use the initial email replies as an audition: Do they respond in an appropriate amount of time? Do they keep a friendly disposition? Do they make you feel stupid or are they cheering for your success?

7. Start Small!

Remember those checklists and documentation you created? It's time to train your support to do things exactly as you want them done. (The exception would be something technical like a coder or designer). Don't just give them your documents - walk them through (on the phone or Skype) how you do everything. Ask them for input on streamlining it. (Remember - if you're paying per hour, you want to streamline and systematize as best as possible!). Have them do it one time, and check over it before it goes live. Expect to spend at least 2-3 cycles of a task for training every new task you ask them to do. This isn't because they're slow, it's because you are particular, and you want to be sure you guys are 100% on the same page.

You can also start small with the hours you hire for. I started with 1-2 hours a week with Jess, 2 years ago. We got up to 5-7 hours a week before I hired Jay, and he worked on just one new task per week ... he's still not doing 100% of what he will eventually.

And that's the process of getting the support you need in your business! I've written about this before, and I'll link to those posts in the shownotes!

I'd love to hear about your support solutions! Share them on instagram with the tag #exploreyoureenthusiasm!

And if you don't know if your business is profitable enough to hire someone, check out Pay Yourself - it will walk you through all the math you need to do to plan for a new expense like some support! Join BEFORE Thursday, July 30th at TaraSwiger.com/profit.

Have a supported week!