

# EXPLORE YOUR ENTHUSIASM

## EPISODE 81: BEING AUTHENTIC DOESN'T MEAN BEING A HOT MESS

At School House Craft Conference, Caitlin Bacher said that, and it sent the room into a round of giggles. I tweeted it, and it so many people responded and retweeted.

And it got me thinking of this balance that we're all trying to strike online: Between being ourselves, and connecting as REAL people, vs being just messy and unstructured and throwing it all out there. So I wanted to talk about this more with you today.

To start with, a big percentage of my listeners and readers feel uncomfortable putting themselves "out there" at all. They struggle to even put their first thing in a shop, or mention their business on social media. And so these people often deal with their discomfort in two ways:

1. They remain silent and say nothing, and no one knows they have a business.
2. They just throw it out there, because they want to get it over with. An example would be people who just have the automatic "XX was just listed on Etsy" messages on Twitter. Or just writing the bare-bones shop description.

If you do #1, no one can ever buy anything, because they don't know they CAN!

If you do #2, no one pays attention, because you sound like a robot, so no one feels connected or understands the VALUE.

But I know most of you are so afraid of seeming like #2, that you do NOTHING.

And this is where the advice to be AUTHENTIC comes in. Experts tell you, you need to be yourself on social media. You need to sound like a real person. You need to be your authentic self.

And this is all true: You're going to have a MUCH easier time connecting with your customers if you sound like a real person and not a robot.

However, what Caitlin was talking about is the propensity for some people to take "authentic" to mean "share your whole hot mess" or oversharing. Or just sharing things that don't serve your

audience at all, and would be better suited to a conversation with friends, or with your therapist or pastor.

Good news: There's a simple solution!

The simple solution to all of this is not to worry about being authentic, or a robot, or oversharing, but instead to ask yourself: What is your intention?

What is your intention for your business?

What is your intention for this marketing tool?

And then: How can you behave in a way that is in integrity with that intention?

These questions are going to keep you both from being weird and robotic and from over-sharing ... and from avoiding the tool altogether.

And we talk about this all the time, right? I'm always asking you: What is your goal? Who are you talking to (ie, who are your people?)? And how can you reach them?

When it comes to using a tool EFFECTIVELY, stop thinking about authenticity, and instead think about your intention and integrity.

Integrity isn't a moral judgement (good vs bad), it's about everything lining up and making sense. It's about wholeness.

Once you know your Intention for a tool, your job is to make sure everything you share on that tool has integrity - does it line up with that intention? Does it make sense for who you want to be talking to?

*For example:* My intention for my business is to guide makers and artists into becoming their OWN business expert - to give them the tools to answer their own business questions. My intention for this podcast is to help you, the maker in your studio or office, to know you're not alone + to talk about the real experience and issues in running a creative business. So: What do I talk about? Anything that is in alignment with those goals. I talk about being introverted, I talk about fear of marketing, I talk about confidence and self-doubt. Because all of those have integrity with my mission for the podcast (you're not alone) and all of those have integrity with the intention of my business (to equip you to deal with your own biz issues).

I share my own stories and struggles ... IF I am at a place where I can turn it around to be a lesson that serves my intentions. If I'm still in the middle of it, and I can't find anything useful to say about it, I don't share it yet - because that wouldn't serve my intention.

Now let's apply this to a maker's business (I'll use an example from one of my students). If you make handmade jewelry, your intention might be to make your customer feel beautiful and loved. Your jewelry is all about love and the relationships in her life.

When it comes time to use social media or any marketing tool, the question is: What's your intention for this tool? For Instagram, it might be, "To share my jewelry + loving messages, to help my ideal person both see my jewelry and FEEL THE FEELINGS my jewelry will bring in her life, which is beloved ... and maybe to share things that reflect this in my own life, to guide her to spot those feelings in her life."

So what's in alignment with that? Pictures of your messy house? Probably not.

Pictures of your jewelry, with a story of a happy customer or a description of how to wear it? Definitely.

Pictures of your kids along with the story of how grateful you are for one particular moment? Probably. Stories of their most recent annoying thing? Probably not.

But you see, if you had a different intention, those answers would be different. If your intention, like it is for many bloggers, is to show "real life isn't Pinterest-worthy", then you would absolutely show all those things.

But if you tell yourself, my intention is just to be real, I want you to ask: In service to what? What does your realness serve? How are you providing value to your audience with this realness? And how does that serve your business?

For some people, the answers will be simple, and this is definitely the right road for them to take. An example of someone who is providing value by sharing "real life" is Jenny of [the Bloggers](#). Or even Stephanie, of the [Yarn Harlot](#).

For others, it just doesn't make any sense. An example of a business who has a very strong brand and whose Instagram feed provides value to her right people (jewelry buyers) is [Megan Auman](#).

In other words, there is NO answer that is always right or always wrong - it's conditional on what your business, and your intention for that business and a specific tool, is all about.

You don't have to figure this all out perfectly. It's an iterative process. You'll try things. You'll get some things right and some things won't feel quite right. I've been experimenting with this for the whole 9 years I've had a business. Every time I start using a new tool, I have to go through the process again, and do some more experimenting.

To review - the most effective way to use ANY marketing tool is to ask:

- ★ What's my intention for my business?
- ★ What's my intention for THIS tool?
- ★ How will that serve my Right Person?

And then experiment! With each thing you try, ask yourself: Does this have integrity? With my bigger mission, with my intention for this tool, with serving my person?

I hope this helps you navigate your feelings around sharing your work, being authentic and all that. If you're not sharing your work because you just don't feel confident, then check out my new [\(Free!\) Business Confidence Challenge](#). We started it last week, but if you can still sign up and join in, at any time - you'll get links to anything you missed. Even if you're listening to this long after October 2015, the Confidence Challenge will be come automatically when you sign up at [TaraSwiger.com/List](http://TaraSwiger.com/List) + you can share your own business intentions with the hashtag #exploreyoureenthusiasm.

Have an authentically enthusiastic day!