

EXPLORE YOUR ENTHUSIASM

EPISODE 84: TRACTION: HOW TO GET RESULTS IN YOUR CREATIVE BUSINESS

How do you get traction in your creative business?

How do you move from "stuff in your shop and ready to sell" to "actually selling"?

Last year (almost exactly a year ago!) I wrote about the [four stages of a new business](#).

Those 4 stages are:

Thinking

Just hoping and dreaming of it.

Plotting

This is different for different people. For me, it involved a crazy amount of research (mostly business books) and writing down every idea I had. For others, it involves sending emails to people who might help (like me!). Or reading the Etsy forums. Or finding some blogs.

The difference between this stage and the first?

Intention.

At this point, you know that you will do this sell-what-you-make thing. You will.

You may not know how. Or when. But something has shifted.

It's real.

But it's still not a business.

Doing it

This is the stage where you make it happen! This is where you are actually DOING the things to set up your business.

Doing it and doing it consistently.

This is where you spend the rest of your business life - this is where you become consistent, both in how often you show up for your people (new items listed, new social media posts) and in how you show up (what kind of language, visuals). This is where your "brand" develops.

And this fourth step is where you start to gain traction. You see, in the first three stages, you might be working your butt off, trying to make things happen. But just showing up once, just listing the first things in your shop or starting to post on a social media tool, that's not enough. It's not enough to drive sales and it's not even enough for strangers to know your business exists.

And this is where so many makers get dejected. If you have done the work of putting it all together (which, is, actually, quite a lot of work!), you want to see some results! You might not know why it's not taking off, but the reason is simple (and it has nothing to do with you or if you're any good or not) - you're not there yet. Just listing items isn't enough to make sales. Posting to Instagram when you feel like it isn't a marketing plan.

In order to make sales, and make them regularly, you need to gain traction with your market. That means that people need to know that you exist, know what your benefits are, and actually care about it. Your product has to have made an impression on them.

How do you do this? How do you gain traction + get your customers thinking about your product and wanting to buy it?

Get in front of people:

I loooove the internet. I love how easy it is to sell online. But getting people TO your online shop is hard. You have to go find people, where they are, and bring them back to you. You can do that via advertising, or getting featured in a blog or magazine your customers read, or by showing up on a hashtag they search. But all of those take time and a lot of good research.

One of the easiest ways to boost sales is to make a sale face-to-face. Just go into the physical world, where your person shops, and sell to her there. This can be a craft show or by wholesaling to a shop she buys from. Many of my clients had their first sales in person, and then transitioned those sales online.

It's just much easier to get someone to buy from you online if you have a great product that they can see in person.

Does that mean you're doomed if you never do a show? No, not necessarily, but you are going to have to spend the time and energy to get in front of your people in one way or another, and a show has the benefit of not only putting you in front of your customer (if you pick the right show), but also giving you immediate feedback on what she loves about it

Consistency - show up, where your people are, consistently.

This can mean:

- ★ add new items regularly
- ★ post on social media regularly
- ★ send emails to your list regularly
- ★ Show up with consistent messaging and branding everywhere.

Clearly describe the benefits that your customer cares about.

Be sure that your descriptions, your posts, your emails, focus on the customer: her life and how your product fits into and adds value to it. Let your customer see it in her life, write about (and take pictures demonstrating) how she's going to use it, and how it's going to make her life better. For example, if I told you that my 6 month program, [Lift Off](#), was something I'm proud of + it's got my best classes, or that it took me hundreds of hours to build... that has nothing to do with you. But if I told you that it will guide you through building the foundations in your business, that it will help you identify your profit, your people, and your platform... that is about you, the potential customer.

An example in a maker's business would be your jewelry - yes, you made it by hand, but what do I, the buyer, care about? I care about how I'm going to wear it, where I'm going to wear it. I care that it serves as a message of love, when I give it as a gift.

We discussed this in detail in [episode 42](#) - What your customers care about. My book, [Market Yourself](#), has a translation guide in it, that will help you translate YOUR features of the product into the BENEFITS the customer cares about. You can find it [here](#).

Consistency of message

If you're consistently showing up, and you're describing the benefits of your item, you also need to make sure that you're sending the same message everywhere.

This means you're:

- ★ talking to the same customer, every time, so she KNOWS you're talking to her.
- ★ highlighting the same benefits
- ★ looking the same.

Now, many makers, when they start out, don't have an official "visual brand" - I certainly didn't, for the first 6 years I was in business - not until I worked with a professional to create one. But that doesn't mean you can't decide on a consistent "look" and aesthetic and apply it to everything you do. For example, for my yarn company, 90% of the time, I made neon bright yarn - that was part of my brand. I also took the same 5 shots of every skein of yarn, and I put them in the same order on each etsy listing. That way, when you saw a shot of my yarn, in a search, or anywhere else, if you'd already seen my shop or my website, you would immediately know it was mine.

You know how traditional marketing advice says "You have to see an ad or product 7 times before it sinks in"? Well if you don't have a consistent look, people don't KNOW they're seeing you!

You can apply this consistency to:

- ★ photos in your shop
- ★ the way you write your descriptions
- ★ Pinterest-ready images you put on your blog or website
- ★ Instagram posts.

You're not going to get this consistency down in the first week of your business. In fact, you're going to be refining it and improving it for the rest of your business life! I'm improving on this all the time.

Continuous improvement.

You see, in the beginning you're just guessing. You're guessing about who your customer is, you're guessing what she cares about, you're guessing at what makes your product awesome. The only way you learn for sure is to LISTEN.

Pay attention to:

1. Who buys your product
2. Why she says she buys it
3. How she uses it
4. What she compliments and remarks on

I talk more about listening in [episode 48](#).

And then: Use it! Use what your customer tells you, both verbally and by her actions, and apply it to everything we've talked about. If she tells you she's on Instagram, go get on Instagram. If she tells you she uses your product because {something specific}, change all your descriptions to talk about that!