

EXPLORE YOUR ENTHUSIASM

EPISODE 90: THE 8 BEST BUSINESS BOOKS FOR YOUR CREATIVE BUSINESS

Today I'm going to share my most favorite resources: BOOKS. This topic was suggested by Ana on Periscope. I broadcast these podcast recordings a whole week before they hit your stream, on Periscope. So if you'd like to get early access, follow me on [Periscope.tv/TaraSwiger](https://periscope.tv/TaraSwiger). I also publish a video version of this podcast on YouTube along with a new lesson every week - you can find those at Taraswiger.com/YouTube.

Now, **BOOKS!** I was super excited to talk about this, because after having conversations with makers and artists about what's working for them, books are the absolute best resource of ideas, suggestions and frameworks for your small biz. And we can't all have conversations with other makers. In fact, most of my time I'm in my PJs at home in rural East Tennessee, so what I have endless access to is BOOKS.

I first started using books to run a business, back in 2005, when I started managing the paint-your-own-pottery studio. I had to hire a new employee for the first time, and I just didn't know where to start. So I went to the local library and got all the management books I could find. Then, when I had to fire someone, I went back and did the same thing. I grew up reading dozens of novels every summer, and my Bachelor's degree is in French Literature, so I was no stranger to the library. But for the first time I realized that there were non-fiction books. Really really interesting non-fiction books that could basically teach me to run the world. Or at the very least, run my own small business.

Back then, as I was starting my yarn company, the only craft books I could find were from the 70s. I read everything written by [Barbara Brabec](#), as she had the only books. The first modern small business book I found, that was actually written for someone like me, was [The Boss of You, by Lauren Bacon and Emira Mears](#). Even though it was written for service providers and I sold a product, it helped me think about systems and scaling in a new way.

Since then, there has been a boom in tiny businesses like ours and a boom in books published for us!

But Ana asked me what the best books were, what books I'd recommend most, so I'm going to boil them down to that. What I realized as I started making this list is that it's hard, because ANY book can change your life and help you see the world in a new light - but only at the right time. *The Boss of You* was the perfect for where I was, but it wouldn't tell me anything new, 7 years later. You're going to need different books at different stages of your business.

So instead of telling you just the Top 8 Books Ever, I'm going to suggest a book based on where you are in your current business journey. You can find links to all the books at TaraSwiger.com/podcast90

If you have no idea where to get started with having a craft-based business - you don't have a name, a web shop, or anything, start with Kari Chapin's two books. Her first, [*Handmade Marketplace*](#) (disclaimer! I was quoted in the first edition, so I might be biased), will help you get started from scratch.

If you're in the first year of your business and you'd like a bit more businessy advice, go with [*\\$100 Start Up by Chris Guillebeau*](#). It's packed with practical advice and examples of starting without any money. Chris outlines the path I took, but also includes some great advice I started applying later (I read this book after being in business for 7 years and I still learned a lot).

If you don't think you're "the kind of person" who makes money or is successful or can sell stuff or... anything. If you think of yourself as someone who is static and unchanging, read [*Mindset by Carol Dweck*](#). It's not strictly a business book, and I skipped the bits about sports, but it's full of research that shows that in EVERY area of life, you can change and grow... but only if you believe that's possible. I talked a lot more about this concept in [episode 49 : The Key to your Business Success](#).

If you struggle with fear, but you feel passionate about making your art: read [*Big Magic, by Elizabeth Gilbert*](#). She talks a lot about how you must commit yourself to Ideas (or they'll find someone else), how to keep fear from holding you back (she doesn't think you need to defeat it completely, it'll always be with you) and how to share your work without caring what others think.

If you are terrified to ask for the sale, to get paid for your art, read the [*Art of Asking by Amanda Palmer*](#). In it, she expands on her popular TED talk to explore what it means to have a real community, one that supports you. If you ever doubt you need a mailing list, Amanda's story will convince you.

If you want to get better at marketing, if you really want to explore how your messaging and words work on your customer, read [*Influence by Robert Cialdini*](#). The book is full of research about what convinces people to do things and it will help you shift the way you look at your own communication.

If you struggle to do what you want to do, you might need to figure out your habits, and how to make new ones stick. In [*Better than Before, Gretchen Rubin*](#) explores habit-forming. The part that has inspired me (and my students) the most is her discussion of the 4 tendencies - how we handle inner and outer expectations. I talk about how this applies to your craft business at length in [*episode 61: The Four Tendencies*](#), How to make real change in your business.

If your business is doing well, and you feel anxious, or you notice that you keep sabotaging yourself, or holding yourself back, read [*The Big Leap by Gay Hendricks*](#). The first couple of chapters, especially, have recently helped me go through a big biz change, and several of the Starship Captains have recommended it as well.

And that brings us to the end of my list! These are not my favorite books, or the best books for everyone, but the books that I hope will help you in a particular place in your business. I hope I suggested a book for what you're going through right now, but if not, let me know! Post what kind of book you're looking for on Instagram with the hashtag #exploreyourenthusiasm! I'll be sure to comment with a suggestion.

If you enjoyed this podcast, be sure to sign up for [access to the transcripts and more free weekly goodness](#). And remember that you can find everything I mentioned today at [Taraswiger.com/podcast90](#).

Thank you so much for listening!
Have an enthusiastic, book-filled week!