

EXPLORE YOUR ENTHUSIASM

EPISODE 168: HOW (AND WHY) MY BUSINESS HAS CHANGED OVER THE YEARS

I started my first business in 2006. 11 years later, it's changed a lot on the outside, but the overarching themes and my own Mission have remained surprisingly cohesive. Today, we'll look at how the message and intention have remained the same while the delivery has changed.

Welcome to episode 168 of Explore your enthusiasm, with me, Tara Swiger. Today we are going to talk about business journeys and where mine has taken me.

I'm gonna be honest: I had planned to record a different podcast episode today and to talk about all this in a few weeks, but I just felt like I had to share this with you today.

If you've been listening for a while, you likely know my story: I started a business selling my handspun yarn, grew it until it replaced my day job salary, quit my boring office job and went fulltime as a handmade business owner in 2009. I soon was overwhelmed with questions about how I did it, so I started answering those questions more and more until I wrote a class walking people through how to share their work online (ie, marketing), created more online classes, then created an online community with a whole library of classes, wrote a book about marketing your work in 2012, and started teaching in person at conferences and trade shows. By 2013 teaching and writing for other makers became my full-time job.

Since the very beginning when I started my own company in 2006, my mission has been about financial independence for women. First for myself and the women's co-ops where I sourced my yarn, and very soon I knew I wanted to help others with their independence. I started helping people who wanted what I was doing at the time: financial independence through our own handwork, handcrafted products. In fact, the first name of what is now TaraSwiger.com was Craft Your Independence. From the start of talking with other makers, it was clear that thing that was holding them back from financial independence via their business was just that they weren't sharing their work - ie, they weren't marketing effectively, if at all. So I taught classes and wrote a book about sharing your work.

And that - sharing your work effectively - requires a certain amount of confidence. You have to trust that if you focus on serving your right people, and giving them what they need, you'll be ok. You have to step back from the desire to make it bland and say "it's for everyone" and get really clear on what ONLY you can do, and share it with confidence knowing the right person is going to LOVE it.

That, what I just said, is a summary of my book [Market Yourself](#), my class [Craft Your Marketing](#), and a lot of the work I do with makers inside the [Starship](#) and my in-person workshops - I teach the basics of marketing and help you come up with your own message, but I also help you build that confidence and self-trust.

After helping so many makers with their marketing and meeting people who were at capacity but still not making money, I went back to the root of what I wanted to do: create financial independence and confidence. I realized: even with great marketing, people need effective pricing and profitability in order to create their desired financial outcome, so I created [Pay Yourself](#). Charging what your time is worth and clearly communicating the value... it comes back to confidence.

Over the years I realized: this confidence thing is huge. It's the REAL thing missing behind a lack of effective marketing and logical pricing. By confidence, I mean: Knowing you'll be ok no matter what. Whether you succeed or fail, you'll be fine and so you take action.

So I developed the [Biz Confidence Challenge](#), a free e-course and Instagram challenge that runs once or twice a year, that guides you through the basics of building the confidence you need in your business.

Over time of talking with y'all about confidence and fear and independence, and my own journey of getting better at serving my right people and getting more vulnerable and authentic on this podcast, the conversation has expanded into the related issues of emotions, feelings and mental health. We can't build a sense of confidence if we feel unworthy. We can't have a productive workday if we're depressed and can't get out of bed. And SO MANY of us do suffer from depression and anxiety, I just can't keep talking about effective marketing and sharing your work and all that if we don't acknowledge: hey, sometimes we don't have the inner resources to do this stuff, no matter how much we want to.

Talking about mental health, happiness and emotions, that brings us back to confidence: it's one thing to know you'll be ok if you do the scary biz action, it's like Next Level Confidence to know

you'll be ok, even if you don't *feel* like it now. Even when you can't remember what it feels like to be ok.

All of this: mental health, emotions, happiness, confidence, it's as related to creating financial independence as goal-setting, marketing, and profitability is. In fact, it's the foundation.

THAT has been the evolution of my work and what I talk about here on the podcast, and that is why I'm so thankful we have this weekly space to explore things more. I don't feel led to create official classes on everything that we still need to talk about. I like to keep my classes very action-oriented: if you take Craft Your Marketing, you're going to make a marketing plan. If you take Pay Yourself, you're going to know your own numbers and profit math. But we gotta talk about all this not-action oriented feeling-stuff, in order to navigate the long and winding path of having our own businesses.

Now that brings us to today and really, last summer. The more I researched and read about the emotional brain and the more it started to come up with conversations with my Starship Captains, I wanted to do MORE with it. Since last summer, I've been looking for what the next step on this path is. I honestly spent a few months considering and looking at Clinical Psychology programs and going back to school to get my PhD.

I decided that's not the right path for right now for two reasons:

1. the PhD programs require scheduled hours in the clinic and I really like my time freedom and I don't wanna give that up right now. And
2. The outcome of a clinical psychology PhD is client work. 1:1 work. And I already know that I feel best-used, most in alignment, when I do group work - either a live workshop with 10-100 people, or an online group, like the Starship, or here on the podcast where I'm sharing with thousands of you, or writing books to reach thousands more.

But I was still looking for the next step, another way to help women achieve financial independence, instill confidence and start to deal with our emotional lives in a healthy, integrated way with our entrepreneurial ambitions. I wanted to do more of that while also really growing and challenging myself and doing something totally new... and while still being able to keep doing the work I love: the podcast and the Starship.

During my endless search of psychology programs this spring, a friend contacted me about her new business. It was about mentoring a new group of women and would require a significant amount of my own personal growth. I would have to learn a whole new biz model. And I would

get back into a product-based business. I have to tell you, I was super hesitant (do I really need a second business?!) but also really excited to try something totally new.

I said yes after a LOT of research. The decision had a lot of aspects, but it comes down to 3 main reasons that are important to my Mission:

1. The product is a tool for managing emotions and taking responsibility for our health and wellness. It's a tool I use alongside meditation and journaling and processing. Sharing the product would be INSIDE what I was doing already, when I'm researching happiness and emotional well-being. (The truth is I've considered starting a million product-based businesses over the years, but I've held off because they either didn't fit with the work I'm doing teaching, writing, and leading women OR because I really didn't want to have to ship and package a million packages each week. Luckily, this biz requires me to ship nothing. :))

2. The company sources the products in a sustainable method: Sustainable for the earth, as they train the growers in sustainable harvesting and growing practices, and sustainable for the growers as they pay them fairly. And their active philanthropic arm goes into the growers' communities (which are often in the third world) and builds wells, schools, roads and needed infrastructure. My favorite bit is that one of the charities that they work with the most, Days for Girls, provides menstrual kits with washable pads and education, so the girls in developing countries don't miss school when they're on their period. THAT is what empowering independence is about.

3. The business model is one that allows for both financial independence and time freedom. It's certainly not for everyone, but for the people who absolutely love the product, the business model gives them everything they need to share it and make a profit, quickly. Basically, you get to work educating people about natural solutions and emotional well-being, they love the product and buy it, and you don't have to ship, package, source anything. You help them sign up for their own account, they order the product from the company, and you keep providing education and support.

It's not easy money, because you have to do the work of sharing the product, just as you would in any business, but it's simplified. Unlike in your own from-scratch business, you don't have to choose between a million paths. There is a clear path and you can always be sure of the next step. Oh, and there's tons of education and support. On my team we have a thorough 2 month e-course for anyone who wants to build a business and weekly personal mentoring with me or one of the other experienced biz partners.

So I joined doTERRA back in April and got my first essential oils, to try it for myself. I didn't want to share it with you, or recommend it, either the products or the business, until I was sure of three things:

- ★ It didn't take your money just for the promise of a business.
- ★ It didn't promise unachievable results.
- ★ It was a viable business model for someone with no business experience.

I'll be honest: it was easy for me to make a business out of it, and I was profitable in my first month, but that's because I've spent a decade learning the skills and tools to build a business. So earning over \$1,000/mo from a new income stream didn't convince me. I needed to help someone with no business experience work the system and see if it worked.

In my first month, I found my first willing guinea pig. She's in love with the products and was driven to create a profitable business that paid all her bills and above all she was WILLING to do the work, even when it was hard, even when she doubted herself. And she's done it. After three months of teaching 1-2 workshops a week, she has a sizeable new income stream, and within the month she'll replace her current part-time salary as a nurse.

I want to be really clear: I went into this with a lot of skepticism, but a real desire to come to a firm conclusion. I had no idea if this would work. I am 100% sure it WILL NOT work for everyone. If you don't do the work, you won't earn money (hey, that's true in any business). If you aren't willing to push past your resistance, you won't build a business (also true for anything!).

I also wasn't entirely sure it was possible to do direct-selling with integrity and authenticity. I didn't want to get involved in anything where the norm was blasting crappy graphics and "I sell this, please buy it" all over Facebook. But I soon realized: I create the culture in my team. I can teach them a better way to share, a better way to educate and not "sell."

And I absolutely wasn't going to recommend a business model based ONLY on getting other people do the business. That's why I love doTERRA: 68% of people who try the products buy the products at least once every three months (in most direct selling companies that retention rate is 6%). 86% of people only ever buy the products, they don't do the business - so when you share doTERRA, it's not about the business, it's about the awesome, sustainably and fairly sourced essential oils. And it's about the mission - bringing natural solutions for physical and emotional well-being into people's lives.

All that said, I am NOT telling you this so you join me, or try essential oils, or even add a new income stream to your business. I am NOT telling you you should TOTALLY join me in the new project I'm excited about. No, no, no.

In fact, in the back of my mind, I had decided I was NEVER going to talk about it on the podcast. But this morning I woke up at 5 am with a burning desire to explain all of this to you and with the certainty that I needed to do it TODAY.

I am telling you all this for two simple reasons:

1. This podcast is all about following your enthusiasm, even when it leads you in totally weird places, and that's what I'm doing. I wanted to share with you the ways my enthusiasm has led me from marketing classes, to teaching confidence, to talking about anxiety and sharing tools I've found that help with that anxiety.

I'm doing a new project and I've shared it in bits and pieces on social media, and have gotten a lot of questions about it. I wanted to answer those questions and really explain it fully, all in one place, so when you see me doing a workshop on essential oils and emotions, you get that this is my new passion and my new project and a really exciting new income stream. It might not be for you, so in that case just ignore it. I want to always be honest and real with you, so I needed to talk about it because this is what's going on in my own business life.

2. To let you know that even though I have a new, second business, my primary business isn't changing at all, and I'm still spending most of my week working with makers and designers - in the Starship and here on the podcast. In fact, the second business has allowed me to get really clear about what I want my work and my products to be. Nothing in the podcast is changing and I'm focusing my handmade-business-mentoring energy inside the Starship, where I keep adding upgrades! Oh, and I've signed a contract to do CreativeLive again in October, so you'll hear more about that soon!

In fact, because I DO want to talk about the essential oils and mindset and mental health and business side of things so much, I've started a second podcast! It's myself and 3 other hosts, sharing recipes, DIYs, research and all kinds of stuff. It's brand new and it might not be on iTunes yet, but you can find my new baby website for it at EssentialEnthusiasm.com. If you do wanna learn more about essential oils, you can follow the podcast or my new instagram [@essentialemthusiasm](https://www.instagram.com/essentialemthusiasm).

To sum up:

My mission of creating financial independence, confidence and self-reliance in women, through the medium of building a business, has taken me down a lot of paths: online classes, books, conferences, this podcast, YouTube, and now essential oils. I've added another income stream and a new method of mentoring entrepreneurial women, but I don't plan on changing up what we talk about on this podcast: your handmade business and the stuff that comes up as you create a profitable and sustainable business.

I'd like to turn this around to you. I've shared the places my enthusiasm has taken me and the overarching themes of my work, and I really appreciate you listening in. But how about you?

WHERE HAS YOUR BUSINESS JOURNEY TAKEN YOU? WHAT HAVE BEEN THE OVERARCHING THEMES IN THE WORK YOU DO?

I'd love to know your answers and hear all about your business journey! And hey, I bet your followers would too! So post your answers to these questions on Instagram and use the hashtag [#exploreyourenthusiasm](#). I'll come by and cheer you on!

And hey, I want you to know, if you listened to this episode and you don't like, or you don't approve of, my direction; or you have opinions, I have good news: you are in control of what you listen to and participate with. You can hit the unsubscribe button on iTunes, YouTube, or to my emails. No need to keep listening and no need to let me know, just unsubscribe and go in peace! If, however, you're interested or curious and wanna learn more about any of it, the oils or the business, just shoot me an message - you can use the Contact form on my website, or send me a IG or FB direct message, or you can listen to my new show [Essential Enthusiasm](#).

Thanks again for listening to this and for sharing so much of my journey with me. I SO appreciate the way you and your messages have helped me grow and change over the years and I wish you an enthusiastic day.