



Podcast #047

Developing your Creative Business Mindset

Hi there listeners, and welcome to The Marketing Menu podcast. We're thinking that with the New Year firmly behind us have many of us actually set some business goals for the year ahead and how many a month or two, later on, are on track to fulfil them. How are you doing, Nicky because I know you've been thinking about setting yours?

Well, Liz, I confess I'm probably in a bit of a world of pain, but I think it's more denial in reality, are you going to help me out with this podcast?

I certainly hope this podcast is going to help. I certainly know what you mean. I think when determining goals, they really need to come from a purposeful place so you have the conviction or meaning behind them to actually commit to doing them.

But of course, if we're talking about running our own business, it's important to get it right and right from the very beginning.

It's perhaps fair to say that a lot of people love the idea of being their very own boss. I know I did when I first started but most of us have little idea of how to actually go about it. So I hope this podcast will give listeners a few ideas to work out on their own.

I guess initially you have to have an understanding of what your idea is that you're going to turn into reality, but certainly there are massive changes afoot at the moment. I'm thinking perhaps the B word here at the moment. So whether you're just starting out or whether you are actually wanting to grow your business, we do need to have a sharp dose of reality, I think. Today's business world is super, super competitive. Plus we also need to recognise that every business will have its ups and downs. So recognising that there are going to be those moments when it is going to be stressful is something that we all need to take into account.

Yeah, naturally, but let's assume listeners have either already taken the decision to become self-employed...

In which case we're going to congratulate them because that's already a big step!

Indeed it is as it was for both of us coming out of full-time employment to start our own businesses or perhaps you're planning to grow your business or, in the case of Brexit, you may feel that it's an important moment to re-evaluate how you conduct business. Either way, we're suggesting that now, two months into the New Year, is a good time to sit down and think very carefully to at least begin to generate ideas as to what it is you need to do.

However, I'd say you do need to have confidence in yourself to take that all important step because getting into the business world is not something for the faint-hearted.

And if you have no confidence in your own abilities, how can you ever expect other people to be confident in you and your business? Clearly, the key is to think very carefully about yourself, to determine if you're actually cut out for the challenges ahead in the first place.

So true. So, Liz, we've come up with 10 personal characteristics that we believe are required to be a successful entrepreneur. Or Solopreneur, I'd like to suggest, because I'm not a fan of the word entrepreneur, it's slightly misconstrued. So shall we run listeners through those before demonstrating some quick and easy ways to highlight some goals that you can put into place right now, which will help you get a clearer mindset? So we're going to presume that you're either working for others and you wish to upskill your marketing activity, or perhaps you're thinking still of setting up a business because you've identified a gap in the market or perhaps you're looking at your existing experience and you wish to expand on that or maybe perhaps you're running a franchise, all manner of things. First and foremost, we hope you're doing something that you enjoy because having that mindset is really going to help you get the most out of these points.

Generally, I'd say there are a number of key characteristics that are pretty much required in order to be an entrepreneur or solopreneur. To be a success in business, you do require more than just a wonderful and workable idea. Instead, these characteristics are seen as being essential to increase your chances of being able to take an idea and turn it into a profitable reality, which is what we all want to do. I think the key to being a successful entrepreneur is to understand how to play to your strengths. You must understand what they are and how they can perhaps be manipulated to your advantage so that your business will get off on the right foot and build from thereon in.

So I suppose, first up, surely you've got to be goal orientated then.

Yes, this is an important personal characteristic as it means that you're likely to continue to push yourself onto bigger and better things simply by having a target and being willing to strive towards it. Setting goals and then being able to achieve them is certainly something that's a basic thing that's required to win a business really, isn't it? Then I'd say you need to be a hands-on type of person and this is something that we've experienced as individual business owners where you have to take on every role within the business. In order for things to be a success, you have to be prepared to put in a lot of work.

Oh, good grief. Yes. Many hours.

Then you have to be committed. If you're the type of individual that has a go at something and then gives up quite easily, then going into business won't necessarily be for you. Instead, there's a need for you to be the kind of person that's not willing to give up and is fully committed to whatever you need to do in order to make your business a success.

Unfortunately. I'd also say that you need to enjoy that uncertainty a little bit though, which I can attest, come wearing a little thin once the novelty's worn off.

It's nice, isn't it? When you think, oh, I've quite like things coming along. Not when you're overwhelmed with work, but certainly a number of successful entrepreneurs will tell you that part of the thrill in business is the uncertainty surrounding it. They love the risk. They love taking those chances and seeing them actually paying dividends.

And this is the difference for me between an entrepreneur and a solopreneur. Because solopreneurs is not necessarily wanting those heady risks. They want a little bit of success and to sustain their lifestyle. So I'm going to add that you must be able to listen and learn. Entrepreneurs must still, I think, be willing to listen to others. They also have to be very aware of learning from their mistakes or learn from the advice of others. Obviously, if there's stuff that you don't necessarily know. If you think you can do everything, I'm afraid you're inevitably going to fail. It's all fair and well, you know, being confident in your ability but competence can also turn into arrogance, is that not what they say, and that's often where problems can

begin to develop. So be willing to open your ears always to what others say and then, hopefully, you'll find your business will grow from strength to strength.

Think about whether you're really good with people too. And I think you have to be really honest with yourself here. All of this requires a huge level of honesty. Having people skills in business is essential because, without people, you're not going to have any kind of business. This doesn't mean that you have to be good at selling to people, but you also need to know how to manage them in order to get the best out of them.

So number seven of our entrepreneurial characteristics is that you need to be the type of person that seeks out new opportunities. We don't always mean a brand new business opportunity. They could also apply to finding a better deal or a better way of doing things for your existing business. Something that you can maybe improve your products or your service or perhaps reduce your costs. This is clearly going to be a benefit to your business, but it is essential that you have the quality whereby you can identify these opportunities to begin with.

Now although each and every one of these is super important. I think for me the biggest of all is that you need to be a positive type of person. You do have to remember that there are going to be ups and downs and that's the reality check. It's not assuming that everything's going to be plain sailing. Much as you think yours is a brilliant business idea and you know there are going to be challenges, you have to be very practical.

And I think the difficulty for me is when you're also then trying to get new clients, you can never project that. So it's always like a false sense of security. Everybody else is really, really doing well and I'm the only one that isn't. So it's not necessarily a truism if you know what I mean.

Well, being positive means that you'll have the ability to keep your head high and to look at alternative solutions in order to resolve challenges, which brings me on to the point that you need to be good at problem-solving. You must remember the business is something that is fluid and changes constantly and you need to be flexible because you never know what is around the corner. And we've even spoken about the fact that entrepreneurs love the uncertainty, but that also means you must be able to solve problems in order to cope with that uncertainty.

So true. Okay, so finally I'm going to say that you must also be creative and creative in everything you do. That means being creative in the creation of your business, to begin with, mixed in with being creative with how you're going to deal with those issues, also how you're going to find those solutions and how you're going to improve your business moving forward. Just staying within the box is simply going to restrict your ability to work as a business because those that are more successful are going to be able to think on their feet and they're not going to feel to be, I suppose, obliged to stay within the norms of what might be the business world in your area.

Well, listeners, what would you add? We'd love to hear from you if you feel we've missed anything out. There are clearly going to be a number of other qualities that have not been covered here. Some that can be very specific to the type of business that you're involved in. For example, if you're working in a technical area, then the qualities that you require must be linked to those technical aspects and the list goes on and on. However, the qualities we've listed above are certainly key no matter what kind of business you're running.

So what can we conclude from all this then, Liz? Then they say,

Well, I'm glad you asked. We've established that you are the main source of inspiration when it comes to your own potential business, but that there is a real need to spend time trying to come up with various ideas that are not only good but are viable propositions. We've also looked at the different key characteristics that are required for an entrepreneur to be a success, and as you can see, there's nothing too onerous about them. However, it is the combination of these characteristics that mark the type of individual that's going to really stand out from the others.

We've talked in our training about the business characteristics needed for successful business because it's inevitable you're not great at all of these things, so it's working in partnership with others who can balance you.

And working to your strengths, as we said at the beginning.

Si, in a sec listeners we're going to take a quick look at some quick and easy ways that you may visualise some of those goals if you need to start making them so that you can take your ideas further forward to hopefully produce a business that is capable for working and generating a profit because that's what we like. So this may be a good time to grab a pen and some paper.

Somebody very smart once said how we spend our days is how we spend our life. Life doesn't usually change overnight as much as we might think it does sometimes. It changes because we make the little tiny tweaks in our daily habits. Something that we do intentionally, but a lot of times we just start off, doing something a little bit differently. We may not consider it a significant change but these small actions I guess add up to make huge changes over time. So do remember it's small steps that matter, you know, if we're looking to lose weight, I think quite often I know in the New Year, new, we rush down the gym, and you think, 'Oh, I'm going to be down there three times a week'. But nutritionists say that it's enough that if you cut out 250 calories a day, which is about the equivalent of a Mars Bar, I believe, effectively you could lose 26 pounds a year. The point being that in the long term it will pay off, but for some weird reason none of us does this or doesn't adopt this philosophy.

You're right. And I think the way we pick, set and pursue our goals is largely to blame because when we decide on what it is that we want to achieve in life, we rarely think small changes over the serious period of time. Usually, it's the other way around. Massive action over the next two weeks, but then we're doomed to fail because it's all or nothing. However, there is one very simple yet powerful exercise that helps us to shift focus from short term gain to smooth and steady long term results. And that is the goal-setting exercise that I'm about to share with you. It's much more realistic, effective and creative. And it's called 'the average perfect day'. Now the name gives the game away. All you have to do is sit down and ask yourself one question, 'what I want my average perfect day to look like'.

So this is presumably about visualising your success?

Exactly. So take a piece of paper or open a blank document on your computer and write down your perfect schedule for the day. What time do you wake up? What do you once you're awake? Do you kiss your beautiful spouse? Do you open the windows and head to the beach? Or do you do 20 minutes of meditation? Then what do you do? Write it down, as detailed as possible, following your average perfect day, step by step. Now, another key here is to focus on the word average. So it shouldn't be a day when you're going on holiday or getting married or going out shopping. It should be a day that you would relive over and over again. Without getting bored, exhausted or overwhelmed. If you dig deeper, you'll take away quite a few insights from this exercise. First, you'll clearly see little habits that you can start instilling in your day to get yourself closer to your vision of an average perfect day. Some of the changes may seem bigger and more overwhelming, but that's okay. Just by having a clear goal of what you want your day to be like, that's going to get your subconscious mind working to get you there. So you'll notice the opportunities that you haven't seen before and you'll do things a little differently. There's a lot of reading you can do around this. It's like a positive mindset and visualisation. Start with the smallest changes and work your way up. So pick something simple that doesn't require you to move to a foreign country or change your career. We all have enough time, motivation and determination to stick with one tiny habit for 30 days. Remember that's the time it takes to make it an automatic thing. Then you can move on to the next little goal and so on. So one of my goals would be that I need to change is to actually sit at my table with my laptop and work from my table. I need to do that so that I feel more business focused. Okay, so go ahead and do it right now. This is one of the most powerful goal setting exercises ever. And it can be eye-opening in terms of setting the right priorities. Why? Because how we spend our days is how we spend our lives.

It's not groundbreaking is it, but it does enable you to just think, it sounds a bit namby-pamby but it's not meant to be. So I love that idea. That's brilliant. So one thing I'm trying to do is set out some goals and some actions for the year ahead. So listeners, goals are things that I wanted to achieve at actions are the steps I'm going to take in order to get that and I'm going to share them with you.

You do realise Nicky, that by sharing with our listeners, you are certainly going to have to commit to them?

That's the ideal, Liz, so I've set myself several goals and I'm going to share a couple with you. Now it's important you don't want to make too many because then you're just setting yourself up for failure from the get-go. So my first one is to prioritise me. So in 2018, I got lost to be honest, in the challenges of running two businesses, being a single parent and juggling just way too many balls in the air, which meant I've had to commit a stupid amount of time to get our life back in order in which I confess, I've lost a little enthusiasm. So in 2019, I want to live in the here and now a little bit more. I want to do more creative projects and look after myself better. Which is going to involve some exercise, but I do want to prioritise me and give myself a little bit more self-care by which I'm hoping work will be less all-consuming and I think that's a hugely important word if you're running a business, all-consuming is what it can be. But hopefully, I'm going to acquire other interests which will balance that.

So a bit of work-life balance?

Yes,. So next I'm going to make the business work for me. By which I mean, by the end of this year, this needs to provide a regular income so I stop getting so stressed about it, but I would like us to build an audience who, by liking what we do, help do some of our marketing for us. In that way, we can have the time to develop new ideas and new opportunities for others by having to commit less time to the marketing element. So I suppose what I'm saying is we're driving less and delivering more. So next we come on to my actions. These are the steps that I'm going to take in order to achieve those goals. So for me, I'm going to publish a book by the end of the year. Not quite sure how we're going to go about that but we'll give it a go. Now Liz will know that I wrote a book, which is still in digital form before we started The Marketing Menu, but I do think it will be a valuable tool to help us get word out and I feel it will be a great tool as we've got a lot to share. So that's my number one action. My next action is I'd like us to run more workshops because I love the interaction of groups and hearing everybody's stories and helping them work on their specific issues. So while having our courses online is obviously awesome and it plays to so many learning advantages for those who take them, there is nothing like it for me, sort of getting under the hood and working on those issues together. So that's my second action. Finally listeners, I've created my word of the year.

Listeners, I can testify to this as the word is framed and actually sat on Nicky's desk as we speak. So I'm going to post a photo of it too.

I'm putting myself out there, aren't I?! What's that word?

It's energised, Nicky!!

Choose a word that you feel will enable you to bring about your goals and then your actions. What is the word that you want to feel in order for that to happen? Now I've chosen energised because I know that for me, ideas flow, positivity improves, and work-life balance feels more balanced. So think about what your word could be and how you want to live in 2019.

So that's that, listeners. Think carefully about what your personal characteristics are and how well they match our entrepreneurial characteristics. Remember, if you feel that you lack in some areas, they can always be improved, but having awareness is very much the starting point. Then having done this, spend a few minutes visualising what your goals and actions are for the year ahead and then finally wrap it up with a good word that encapsulates how you need to feel in order to help you achieve these. And of course, as we always say, let us know how you get on.

I suppose, Liz, if listeners want to be brave like me, they could head over to our Marketing Menu page on Facebook and share theirs there. Take a photo and show us what you've come up with. That would be great. I know it's a big ask, but you know there's nothing like a little bit of accountability.

Well, Nicky, you've got that in spades now because you've put it out there in the public domain. Omg.

So listeners, thanks for tuning in. I appreciate this is a longer podcast than average, but I trust you feel that there are some important points here. Next time we're going to be sharing some marketing stories that we found of interest and discussing some ideas on what it may mean for you in business or perhaps just in the wider context. So until then...

It's a goodbye from me, Liz Gordon.

And it's a goodbye from me, Nicky Matthews.

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