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Podcast #89

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Common Mistakes Business Owners Make  
And How You Can Avoid Them

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Hello and a super warm welcome to this week's episode of the podcast and as always, I'm your host Teresa Heath-Wareing. How the devil are you? Okay. I've been doing some major batching and I feel like I'm on, I think I've done about four episodes of podcasts, so it gets to a point where I'm like, I don't know if I can talk to myself anymore in this room or it feels like I say the same thing over and over and it's not the content I'm saying over and over. The intro and the outro always feels like the same. So when I welcome you guys onto the podcast, I always feel like I'm saying the same thing and especially when you've just done four in a row, it definitely, definitely feels like that. Okay. So this week is a solo episode and this week I'm going to be talking about some of the mistakes I see people make, not just a social media majority social media, but some generally.

And when I'm talking about businesses, I'm mainly talking about small businesses, although that actually this applies across the board to any size. But when I think about some of the examples in my head, it's tends to have been small businesses that I've been dealing with and basically this episode is coming out of a place of love. It's coming out of a place of take my experience and hopefully a bit of my knowledge and make sure that you're looking at what you guys do and just be conscious of, am I doing any of those things? Does it fit right for me or my business? And that's the other thing for me to say. Okay. When I come onto the podcast and I give my opinion, obviously it's based on many, many years of experience over 15 years now feels like, wow, I did it. It feels like less or more actually, it just sounds too many. And also having worked with thousands of businesses and seeing really good businesses do

amazing things and seeing some businesses not so great doing dreadful things. So hopefully, although it's my opinion, it comes from a hopefully smart place. So I'm hoping you don't mind me going over these things, telling you the kind of mistakes that I see and ideally, hopefully you won't be making these mistakes. So let's get started straight off. Now I've given you like my caveat of please don't hate me for speaking so honestly about these things.

Okay, let's start with the first thing. One of the very first things I see small businesses do is they don't invest in their branding. Now I get it. Totally get it when you're starting your business. And if you heard my story about how I started my business, I'm going to link to that in the show notes.

But I can tell you it wasn't all big money and investing and you know, people helping me out. It was very much on my own. No savings, no salary. Oh my word. I've got to pay my bills and my mortgage so I didn't have loads and loads of money to start with. So I totally get that. Sometimes when you're setting up, you've gotta be really cautious where you're, where you're spending your money. But for me without a doubt, spending your money on some branding is really, really important because this is the face of your business, whether you're going to be a shop, whether you are a service, whether you're a product, whatever it is that you're going to be. One of the things they're going to see first is your branding. And we all know about sort of what we like and what we dislike and what looks good and what doesn't look good.

So let's take for instance like, Hey, the branding can affect your business and I'm going to use some big examples. One that I like to use all the time is supermarkets cause it's super, super easy. So let's take Asda versus Waitrose. So when you look at Asda, it's very bold, clear font, it's very in your face. They use prime colours because prime colours, bold fonts and for words is very easy for everyone to understand. They, their branding is all around saving

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money. It's bright, bold, primary colours, which are attractive to people. They are very simple in their marketing and that's who they're trying to, as opposed to that's what they're trying to target. They're not trying to target simple people, I'm going to have a barrage of people going, I show up at Asda. What are you trying to say it about me?

But basically this brand is trying to be more applicable to everybody. And then when you go into the store, it's big, it's bright, it's about saving money. It's about quick and efficient for children and families and busy people. Then you look at Waitrose and how you believe you are not in the U K so as there is, um, well I wouldn't even say it's a low end supermarket. I would just say it's a more family accessible supermarket. Probably cheaper, well not, not that much cheaper actually, but anyway, you get my drift. But Waitrose is our kind of whole foods. So if you're in the States, that's whole foods. I'm trying to think of what might be an example of what Asda might be. Well Asda is Walmart, so, but I don't know, if Walmart's the same anyway, you get my drift. Whereas Waitrose, the colours they use are not primary colours. They're much more subtle. They're much more muted. The font in which Waitrose is written in is not big bold, bright brush in your face. It's saying we're much classier than that. When you go into the store, it's not about price, it's not driven on, look, you can buy five of these for half the amount of money. It's driven on the quality of the food. It's driven on the welfare of the animals and the health and the taste of it and the experience. So those two brands know exactly who their audiences are and they are producing a brand that will attract their audience. So if you are more concerned, more discerning, not more discerning shopper, and you want to make sure you're being healthy and you eat organic and the animal welfare and you have a bit of money, then Waitrose will be very attractive to you.

You might not be attracted by the bright, bold price slushing, you know, use of Martin from Asda. I hope that makes sense. I hope I haven't offended anybody, but I just wanted to let

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you know that how important the branding is. Now, the other thing I always think about your branding is, and again, I'm going to be really careful here, is sometimes we create stuff ourself and we think it's amazing, like we look at it and think, I love it. It's brilliant because we're not graphic designers and because we've created something, we're really proud of it and absolutely. Why not? Totally. But there is a reason why graphic designers exist. And I'm only saying this because having worked in marketing for a very long time and being okay when it comes to creativeness, I think I've got a creative eye. I still absolutely would never create a brand for myself or for someone else.

I would always get a designer to do it because that's what they're there for. That's the thing. And honestly the difference they can make just by even like taking your concepts. So even if you know what you want, but getting a design as a finish it, they'll just get the spacing right, like the typography of things. People will look at your brands and if you haven't got the spacing right on your letters, people will look at that and think what's wrong with that? You know, it's little things like this and I notice that the thing got to reason right and start a business. I haven't got time to be thinking about these things or go back and you know, look at what you've done already and think I haven't got time to have a rebrand. It's not always a paper. And it doesn't have to expensive and it doesn't have to be timely.

It's just the fact of, honestly I would much rather hand over something that I know I am not, not qualified to do. You know, and like I said, there's a reason graphic designers exist. Now obviously there are marketing agencies out there who are amazing and have amazing graphic designers. There are freelance graphic designers, but sometimes when you're starting the business you can't afford to do that. So go and look at things like fiverr.com and people per hour and that sort of thing. Now the quality is going to differ massively and some people you might stumble across someone. I know someone that's found a graphic designer

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on there, that actually they absolutely love and they're amazing. Me - I've never had that much luck. I have a graphic designer that I've worked for years and years and he actually comes to my house. He's the only one who comes to the house and works with me here and, but he likes to spend a whole day so he doesn't do the kind of, can you do me that project? I hire him for a day. I fill his day full of work. But like I said, it doesn't have to be super expensive, but I honestly for me that's some mistake that lots of people make, but that literally is your shopfront. That's the clothes you wear, that's the way you speak. That's how your hair looks like and if you have done all that yourself or you've got someone who's pretty good on draw to do something for you, it's a very different thing. Like I said, I'd highly recommend going to professional to do that. For me that is super, super important and it can honestly make a massive difference. So that's the first one. Okay. Going off the branding, one of the things I see all the time, and the reason I'm saying this because my husband and I were sat having cocktails in the town where we live and we were looking over the road and there was, this town has lots of small businesses, sort of you know, independent businesses.

And there was a shop and I thought, gosh, I'm sure I know the owner of that shop. And I looked at the name and I looked at the brand and I thought, I sure I knew that that business owner, so I was like, Why not, I'll go and have a look at their social media in order to, I'm sure there'll be a picture of the owner on there as well, so I go on social media, I go into Instagram, I start typing their business name in. I looked down the left hand side, all the pictures, the profile pictures as they're coming up in the search and bear in mind, and I think lots of people forget this, when people are looking at you on social media, that picture is teeny weeny tiny. Okay. But I'm literally sat there looking at the shop with the logo thinking that's the logo I'm looking for and I scan all the way down and I scan all the way up, can't see anything, come off it, go on to something else, something else.

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And I'm like, this is ridiculous. I'm absolutely positive they should be on there. Went back to Instagram, started clicking randomly some of these accounts that the name was very similar to and ended upon this one account. That was the account of the shop I was looking at. The only reason I could tell was because we'd been over the road, had a look inside, and we could tell that that inside was the pictures that were on this Instagram. The picture on the profile was something to do with what they were selling. So actually they were an estate, they weren't an estate agent, they were a travel agent and it was a picture of a beach. Right. And it's like there was no point where I could have instantly gone. That's them. And that's the speed we need to do it. Because you know, if I wasn't looking for a reason, I would've gone. I can't find them. Let's not bother with that. But often I see this happen all the time.

People either use images of their product or service or the thing that they're selling, or they use some random image or they use a part of their branding, but not the branding. And honestly, I need that consistency. We are so busy that I need to be able to see a shop front or a bag or something and I need to be able to go to social media, or I've been on your site and go to social media or whatever, and I need to see that logo instantly. I need to have to go, Oh yeah, look, that's that. You know, I'm going to sort of say suggestions in there. Like I'm sure paper chase, they do this. So if you go to paper chase and you look in the shop, there's the branding.

If you go to the website, there's the branding. If you go to their social media, there's the branding, but everywhere does it. You know, all the big places do, and often small businesses think they're being creative. But I promise you sometimes the creative stuff just doesn't work that way. So your profile pictures should absolutely, unless you're a personal brand for me, be your logo and I don't want it stretched. I don't want it squashed. I want it to be as clear as possible. Sometimes you might have to have your logo tweaked. Again, I'd use a designer

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in order to put it into that circle space, cause everything circle now online. But you really want a clear logo so that when I see it in that teeny tiny space, I see it in stay in, I know that's who you are. So and it needs to be consistent across all platforms.

So use the same logo across all platforms. So that was absolutely one thing that I see people making that mistake all the time. Then not using that logo properly on their profile picture. So go check out yours, make sure you've got that there because I want people to see it and go, Oh that's so and so. And I recognise that from there and there and there. Okay. The next thing that I see people making a mistake or not making the most of is your cover image on places like Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. So your cover image is that big image at the top of the page. Now, one thing I see all the time, and in fact I saw it just the other day, someone contacted me or for some reason I was looking at someone's business on LinkedIn, look to their cover photo and their cover photo was the picture of the building that they're in and the name of the building, which has no reference to the actual business and what they do. And it doesn't show anything. Like if I go to there, I would think of what are you selling signs like, is that what you are and what you're selling? So again, think about that. What are you putting on that cover photo? So I've talked about this on the podcast before, but I think it was a really long time ago. My suggestion is that you change it every quarter, keep it with the seasons. So if I turn up to your page in winter and you've got a summer picture, I'm going to think, ah, you're not very active on here, are you? So make sure you keep it in the seasons and make sure on that cover photo you have an image of the thing that you sell or the thing that you're trying to promote and you put some texts. So use Canva. Canva is amazing. I'm going to change your life if you haven't used it already, but put some text on that cover photo that says we sell houses in Shropshire or finding your perfect holiday needs or whatever it might be.

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Put it on there so that people can actually see this is what you do. My cover photo at the moment is the podcast because that's my main thing that I push all the time. So therefore that's why how I've used that space saying listen to the podcast, but absolutely is that covering is don't just put an image up there of something nice or pretty or whatever. Even if, so for instance, I was at a wedding venue awhile back and they're wedding venues beautiful and they had a picture of their wedding venue and I was like, that's lovely. But what I would do is I would just add a few words on there saying exclusive use, wedding, luxury, wedding, whatever, whatever. Just so that when someone comes to it, it doesn't leave them in any day what it is you're promoting or talking about or selling. Okay, so that's three down.

Next one your about and this is going to be, this is going to spam both your social media profiles and your websites and anywhere where you talk about the mistake I see people making here is a few different ones. First off, they're not writing from a personal tone of voice. So from I'm going to say for me, and I just thought that about mine, I haven't looked at mine for ages. This is always a case of do as I say, not as I do. Okay? You know that you should definitely know that by now and I'm going to go back and check and hopefully check before this episode comes out what mine says. But the idea is you want to hear your tone of voice in it. You want it to be personal to the business and to the people that are in the business. The other thing you want to do is you want to talk to your customers.

People often use it a bit like a description, a bit like a CV. We sell this or we do this, we are this and people, you're not writing to a human, you're writing to a robot. So I want you to think about the fact that what if your ideal customer is reading it? What do they want to hear? We help business owners like you do X, Y, Zed. We sell beautiful shoes, we help people find the perfect holiday. So again, think about those things. How you're writing your about. Go back and review it again. This is something that we try and review when we're working

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with clients or we do still do have some clients but we do sort of every six months I'm laughing cause I haven't reviewed mine for ages. Like I said, I feel like a bit of a fool, I'm going to do this before the podcast episode comes out.

But yeah, so go and check those reviews and like I said, put things like, Hey, I am Teresa. In fact, I'm absolute positive if you go to my about page on my website. That's what it'll say on my about page. Hey, I'm Teresa, this is what I do. So try and be quite personal about that, but keep that customer in mind. What do they want to know and what do they need to know? The minute they read that bit, the minute they read your bio. The other thing is that I just span until some of my other things, but let me just talk about it here. The other thing is be direct. Make sure you tell them who you are and what you do and who for but in a nice customer way. But don't be some people sometimes, especially the big brands, they can get away with it. With these, they can be quirky, they can be a little bit, it's kind of, what's the word I'm trying to think of whether or not being absolutely clear and they're being a little bit clever with their marketing. And do you know what? If you're massive and you've got a big marketing budget, then absolutely love some clever marketing, but for the rest of us, we need to take the most of every opportunity and therefore we need to be quite direct so that when someone falls on our page, looks at our profile that they can see this is who we are, this is what we do and this is why we're great. So I want you to think about those three things when you're writing your bio's and your about sections. Okay?

The next one I see again, lots of small businesses make is they don't want to share their information. Now, I'm not going to team this with it's all selling, but I do see that sometimes I do see people going, we've got this thing, we've bought this thing, we've got this new product, this has just come in and it's all product focus and it's all sell, sell, sell, sell, sell. But I don't see sometimes a whole lot of here's some free information. This might really help you.

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This might be of benefit to you. And that add value thing is really, really important because people need that so that they can trust you and they know that you know what you're talking about. So being able to add that value by putting free content out there is really, really important. Now, when I first started four or five years ago in this business, a lot more than that, but this was about the time, but four years ago I was exactly the same.

I didn't put any content out there. I didn't have blogged another podcast and have anything. And my worry was if I put content out there and I tell people how to do it, and I know lots of other people have this worry, I'm not going to get the customers because they're not going to come to me to do it if I'm telling them how to do it. And the other thing I used to hear from lots of businesses is my competitors. We'll know who we're dealing with or how we do things and what our processes and I totally get all those concerns. However we live in a world now that is the best, most informative world that we've ever lived in. If I want to find something out, there are so many ways in which I can do that. If someone like this, you know, you, you could be listening to the podcast every single week and never pay me a penny.

And that's absolutely fine. I mean obviously ideally I need to pay my mortgage and I do like getting customers obviously, but you don't have to. And there's lots of people who obviously I listened to podcasts where I've never bought something from them because of the fact that there is so much information out there, you can get so much information for free. However, there's a big difference between being scared of putting that out there and not putting anything at all. Because what happens is if you are not putting something out there, one, how are you proving to anybody you know, what you're talking about and to when they go searching for it, who are they going to find if they're not going to find you, they're going to find a competitor or someone else. So it's really, really important for lots of reasons, but mainly for the fact of you're adding value to people so they're going to be very grateful of the

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help and the support you're giving them.

Obviously be conscious of what level of detail you're giving away, but do you make it useful? I give it all away on the podcast, but the difference with the podcast is, or the difference with the way I view content is you don't get to control the content. I decide every week, although I'm always happy for you to come and give me suggestions, so please. Please do that. I'd really like you to sometimes because sitting here and thinking my brain just goes blank anyway, so you can't decide what content I share with you and it's not bespoke to you, so that's why someone would pay you. That's why they come to you and you know what? There are people who are going to be listening to your content or watching it or reading it and thinking, that's lovely. I do understand it, but I don't want to do it, so absolutely give stuff away.

I don't mean free product. I mean give away your information, give support, give away help and make sure that people know you do know what you're talking about and that you are giving away that content that helps them and adds value to them. Okay.

The other thing I see, the other mistake that I've got down for today, and this is my last one, I mean there are obviously lots of other things, but I just wanted to give you a few to go out today is that I see businesses spreading themselves too thin. In fact, I'm going to caveat this with something else because it's just jumped in my head and I think it's really important spreading themselves too thin and trying to be too widespread in that business. So let me, I'm going to cover these offers too, so I did just this last one. I've added a bonus, so spreading themselves too thin, thinking they should be on every single platform because they get FOMO, they get fear of missing out and they think, I should be on Facebook. I should go on Instagram. I should be on Pinterest. I haven't done a vlog. I haven't been on YouTube. I

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haven't got a podcast, I haven't got this. And they literally sit there and think I need to do it all. And you absolutely don't. You don't need to do it all. You don't need to be on every platform. I would much, much rather you do one, two, three, whatever's comfortable with you. Then try and do all and do them awfully. It's so hard to keep up with all this content. I have to say I'm off on everything obviously, but because of the world I mean, and because the fact that I teach you guys how to do social media, so it's very difficult for A, for me to try and teach if I'm not doing it myself.

And B, that's what you would expect as a person who sells a product or service. I don't expect you to be on every platform. And I do always say to you my most favourite is Instagram and you'll find me there most often. So like I said, it's about not spreading yourself too thin and not trying to do it all. And it can be really hard. We get like shiny object syndrome, don't me where we see someone else's success, so we look at someone else's podcast and think, Oh my God, they're doing amazing. I definitely need a podcast and then, and I've done this, I look at like Andrew and Pete's YouTube channel and think, Oh, I really want YouTube channel. I think I need to do that and I know there's absolutely no way on earth I would have time to do all that. So don't spread yourself too thin.

The other thing that I just touched on there is sometimes as business owners we try and be everything to everyone and we can't. So my business from my core, what I offer marketing support or help digital marketing, social media has not changed since I started my business. That's what I was known for. I started, that's what I'm known for now. Now my offerings have been tweaked and have been slightly changed. So when I first started I was a marketing consultant. Then I went into more agency staff. Then I came kind of, it's a bit more consultancy and now I do online stuff. So my product offering has changed, but my core message hasn't and sometimes people go, okay, this is what I do, but actually I also

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do as well and if that's confusing, so I've had someone in the past, he went from the beauty industry to then selling a product like a clothing product and it was like, are you known for the beauty thing or do you want to be known for the product thing because it's going to be really difficult for you to do both.

I had someone else who was known for fitness and she wants to come out as a, as a kind of person that helped women over 50 develop, you know, Hey, they run their lives and at the age of 50 and above and it's like, can you do both? Is there a way that you're seen as both? Because if you're trying to create a business over here and this is your target audience here and you're trying to create a businesses and that's a different target audience, then that is going to be so, so difficult to do. And sometimes we're not patient enough with ourselves to really see out to see whether that's worked and therefore we feel like the word pivot has been on my tongue this whole time cause it's like I hear that a lot in some of the groups I'm in, not my groups, but other groups I'm in where they're like, I going to have to pivot. This isn't working. I'm going to pivot. This is an absolutely fine. You know, if something's not working then yet tweaking it, changing it, but literally one day offering, I don't know, shoes and the next day pitching yourself as a coach, it isn't, you know, that is a big leap. So sometimes that pivot is a bit too quick and a bit too far from what you're doing originally.

So like I said, but I think it's this kind of need for, I want this to be a success and absolutely, I'm in exactly the same position. I want it to be a success too. But sometimes we just have to hold faith and hold out and do that consistency bit and show up when no one's watching and just do it and do it and do it and hope that one day someone will. So I hope this has been useful.

It's been a really quick one. The ones on my own always are quick, but I like it to get in, check

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some stuff at you, give you some things to do and then go and leave you to it. So hopefully I've given you some things. Think about do go check some of those things out and just, you know, have a look and think, well I wonder what happened if I did do this. So you know, it's always worth having a look. Anyway, I'm back next week with another interview. Have an amazing week and I will see you then. Take care.

