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Cami MacNamara - The Habit-Driven Web Designer – Strengthen Your Business with Better Habits

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Hi everyone.

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Let's talk about strengthening your web design business with better habits. I'm Cami McNamara and I run a one person web design agency called WebCami LLC based in Seattle, Washington. I've been building websites for small businesses and nonprofits since 2002, before mobile friendly was even a thing. When I started my business, my son was just starting kindergarten so my work hours were limited. I worked while he was at school in short blocks of time and called it a day when I picked him up from school.

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As he grew older and more independent, I had more time to grow my business. By the time he started middle school around 2008, I was working pretty much full time. And that's when I really started to see momentum build. In 2010, I joined a local BNI group. Some of you may be familiar with Business Networking International.

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It's weekly networking, one seat per profession. It was a big leap for me as a solo designer, but it turned out to be one of the best decisions I've made. In fact, I'm still a member today. That's when things really took off.

I was finally getting consistent referrals, meeting other business owners, getting my name out there.

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My confidence was growing and so was my client list. And because I'm a people pleaser and because I didn't have strong systems in place, I said yes to everything. Someone needed a site redesign. Yes. Someone's cousin needed a new website.

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Yes. Someone needed a site. Move from Wix to WordPress this weekend. Sure, I'll squeeze it in. Someone needed business cards or letterhead.

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I'm not a graphic designer, but I would try. Need help setting up social media or a quick logo or help with email? All figure it out. And I wasn't charging enough. I was pricing like I was still a brand new designer.

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Even though I had been in business for years, I didn't have a minimum project size or a wait list or a plan. I just said yes and hoped I could keep up. Even after raising my hourly rates, I was still drowning in projects. So by 2015, I found myself in a situation that no solo web designer should ever be in. I had 44 active projects in progress at the same time. These weren't landing pages, these weren't minor edits.

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These were full blown builds and redesigns, each with their own timelines, clients, themes and plugin stacks, and of course, expectations. I was tracking projects on spreadsheets and emails and in my head. My to do list was basically a panic attack in a bulleted list. WordPress was evolving fast.

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New features, new updates, new vulnerabilities. It felt like I was constantly updating plugins and checking security notices. And around that time, I'll never forget it, I experienced my first WordPress website hack. I had been using Backup Buddy and luckily had a backup. But

restoring that site, dealing with the client, writing the apologetic email, it was terrifying.

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Soon after, a client that I built a website for who had never reached out for follow up service, had their website disappear after letting their hosting lapse. They had no backup and I had to rebuild their site in a hurry, using the WaybackMachine as a reference. It was an inconvenience for them, but it was a nightmare for me because it added to my already overwhelming to do list. I had the realisation that I was one person trying to support dozens of websites without any structure behind me. I didn't have a maintenance system, I didn't even have a client support protocol.

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It was just react and hope for the best. And here's the kicker. This giant backlog of projects, it looked like a windfall on paper. I had more work than I could handle. But that month, it was the worst revenue month of my business life.

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I was so overwhelmed that I couldn't send out invoices. I was doing all the work. I had no time to bill for it. So I was in so deep that the business side of my business just stopped. And that's when it hit me.

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This wasn't sustainable. I couldn't keep doing business this way. Something had to change. So I paused everything. I hired an in person professional organiser.

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Not a developer, not a VA. I also hired a marketing coach. The organiser came to my office and helped me reset physically and mentally. We cleared clutter, we sorted files, we made a list of what I needed to finish and in what order. The marketing coach suggested I stop taking new work for a few weeks.

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And when I did, it did open up the doors again and started telling people, yes, I'd love to help but I'm currently booking three to four weeks out. Those changes created space to think, space to breathe, and space to finally work on my business instead of just reacting to it. And that's when I decided I needed to make some big changes. I needed a plan. A care plan, to be exact.

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I remembered a free webinar I'd seen from Troy Dean. And that's when I started building my first recurring service. WordPress Care Plan. I took my time. I mapped out what I wanted to offer, how I wanted to support clients, and what it would look like for me to maintain the websites long term.

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Most importantly, I built it into my workflow. I didn't launch it with a big splash. I offered it quietly to a few existing clients each month. After four months, I had over 20 clients enrolled. By the end of the year, 70.

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And with that steady income, I finally had something I hadn't felt in a long time. Stability. It was the first time I'd stepped out of survival mode. And that habit of building recurring revenue into my business became the foundation that allowed me to grow. Because when you're not constantly chasing the next invoice, you can start focusing on the work that actually moves your business forward.

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That's what habits gave me. Structure, clarity and a way to keep growing that didn't require burning myself out. So today I want to walk you through 10 of the habits that help me grow and sustain my agency with more focus, more calm, and more consistency. Let's start with the first habit.

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It's the most important habit you can adopt. Creating recurring revenue. Let me be clear. This habit changed everything for me. Adding recurring revenue to my business wasn't just a good move.

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It was the most important decision I've ever made as a web designer. Because before that, I was living from project to project, always chasing the next bill, the next redesign, the next paycheck. Some months were great, some were stressful, and all of it was unpredictable. But when I launched my care plan offering monthly website support to my clients, I finally had a foundation I could build on. It gave me breathing room, it gave me stability, and it gave me the confidence to start thinking long term instead of just trying to make it through the month.

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Now, here's the thing about recurring revenue. It's not one size fits all. You don't have to follow anyone else's model. You can shape your care plan around the business you want to run. For me, that meant offering basic maintenance and support, plugin updates, backups, uptime monitoring, security scans.

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I use ManageWP to handle all of it. It's reliable, easy to use, and it fits how I work. But that's just one option. Your version might include newsletter writing, blog content, SEO support, marketing strategies, or even a block of design time each month. You get to decide what's included, how it's priced, and what makes sense for your clients and for you.

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The most important part is this. Make sure every single client has the opportunity to enrol. Don't treat it like it's an afterthought. Build it into your process. Talk about it during the project proposal.

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Make it part of the plan from day one, because the goal here isn't just to upsell a service, is to create a stable, predictable income that supports your business month after month. When you know you've got recurring revenue coming in, you stop making decisions from a place of panic. You can raise your rates, you can say no to the wrong fit, you can take time off without everything falling apart. So if you're still relying on one and done projects, I want to encourage you to start building your version of

recurring revenue now. It doesn't have to be big or fancy, it just has to be consistent.

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And over time, that consistency gives you freedom. Freedom to be more selective, freedom to improve your systems, freedom to finally grow the business you've been trying to build. This habit gave me the solid ground I needed to change everything else, and it can do the same for you. My next habit is to focus on one framework. Early in my career, I built websites using whatever WordPress theme the client brought to the table.

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They'd come to me with something half finishing in fold or an outdated theme they downloaded for free or something a friend of theirs had hand coded years ago. And I do my best to work with it. Let me tell you, it was chaos. Every project felt like starting over from scratch. Nothing was consistent, right processes were different for every build.

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And worst of all, I never felt truly confident in my own workflow. That changed when I found StudioPress and Genesis. I fell in love with the clean design, the structure and the simplicity. Brian Gardner's work really resonated with me and I made the decision to only build with Genesis themes. Moving forward, it was a turning point.

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Suddenly I had a foundation I could trust. I built muscle memory. I could estimate timelines more accurately, I could streamline how I set up each site and how I supported them after the launch. Later on, I dabbled in Divi, but it wasn't quite the right fit for me. Eventually a friend introduced me to Beaver Builder and everything clicked.

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I started using it with Genesis at first, then switched fully to Beaver Themer and Beaver Builder Child theme and that's been my go to ever since. But here's the important part. This isn't about convincing you to use what I use. This is about helping you find your system, your

framework, your tools. The best page builder is the one that works for you and makes you feel confident, not the stranger on Facebook who says you're doing it wrong.

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If that's elementor for you, great. If it's Gutenberg, wonderful. If it's something niche that only you love but gets the job done, stick with it. When you use one system for all your builds, everything improves. Your workflow becomes faster, your troubleshooting becomes easier.

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Your confidence goes up because you're not guessing your way through every decision. Because when you simplify your tools, you free up energy to focus on what really matters. Building beautiful, functional websites that serve your clients well.

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Next up is a habit that gave me structure when everything used to feel like chaos. And that's time blocking. Now, I've been using time blocking for years, but I'll be honest, it took me a long time to get it right. It's not a set and forget kind of thing. It's more like a muscle you have to build.

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The concept is simple. You divide your day into blocks of time, and you assign specific tasks or types of tasks to each block. But the real magic time blocking ships you out of chaos and into daily structure. Before I started using it consistently, my workdays felt like a game of Whack a Mole. I'd be jumping between tasks, checking emails, constantly trying to do three things at once and not finishing any of them.

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But once I started blocking time, even just one day a week, at first I knew what I was working on, and when I wasn't chasing the day, I was leading it. Now, I don't always follow my blocks perfectly. Some days get messy. That's life. But even when I stick to time blocking for half of the day, it's a win because I'm making fewer decisions on the fly, I'm reducing context switching, and I always know where I'm supposed to return to if I get pulled away.

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Here's how I recommend getting started if you're new to it, start with Mondays only. Get comfortable and then add another day each week. Use consistent time increments, nothing too short or too long, just enough to focus deeply and still take breaks. And don't forget to block your breaks.

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They matter just as much as your work. Personally, I use Google Calendar to lay it all out visually and I colour code everything. Client work, admin, creative time, even lunch. And here's the thing. Time blocking isn't about creating a perfect day.

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It's about building a structure that keeps your business moving even when life doesn't go exactly as planned. It gives you more control and it gives your brain one less thing to stress about. The next habit builds right on top of time blocking. And it's something I rely on daily to stay focused. It's called the Pomodoro technique, a fancy name for a simple concept.

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You work in 25 minute increments and take five minutes breaks, five minute breaks, and repeat that cycle four times. After that, you take a longer break, maybe 15 or 30 minutes, then you start again. That's it. It's one of the most effective tools I found for maintaining energy and focus throughout the day, especially as someone who wears all the hats in my agency. On the days I use this method, I get more done, I'm less distracted, I stay present with my work, and honestly, I even remember to stand up, drink some water and take care of my body.

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The beauty of the Pomodoro is that it gives your brain clear expectations you're not trying to push through five straight hours of deep work. You just need to focus for 25 minutes. That's it. And that little break at the end of each session, it's like a reset button. Now, I'll admit I sometimes forget to pay attention to the timer.

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I get in the zone and suddenly it's like 45 minutes later. But I've learned that even when I don't follow it perfectly, the structure still helps. If you're just getting started, try it for an hour or two in the morning. Don't overthink it. You don't need a special app.

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Just type in 25 minute timer into Google and go. You can even customise it. Try back to back Pomodoros with a longer break. Alternate between sitting and standing. Keep a sticky note nearby to jot down distractions that pop up and then get back to them later.

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It's a flexible system. Again, it's not about perfection. It's about staying engaged, giving yourself permission to rest, and learning how to work with your focus instead of against it. The next habit I want to share with you might sound extreme, but it's something that's honestly one of the best tools I have for my business. I schedule focus weeks.

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A focus week is exactly what it sounds like. Five consecutive work days where you don't take meetings, don't book calls and don't let your schedule get hijacked. You're still working, just deeply working. In a weird way, it's like taking a vacation. Only instead of relaxing on a beach, you're catching up on projects, clearing your backlog, brainstorming, finishing projects, and getting in flow.

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This habit has been a game changer for me. Before I started doing it regularly, I was constantly in reactive mode, responding to emails, hopping from call to call, squeezing in project work wherever I could find a spare hour. But when I blocked off a full week for just focused work, mark my calendar as busy and stuck to my plan and shut out the noise, I was amazed how much I could get done. Design work got better. Backlog tasks finally moved forward.

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I felt more in control and way less burnout. And here's the best part. Clients don't need to know. I don't announce that I'm in a focus week. I just mark the days as booked on my calendar.

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If someone reaches out, I simply say, I'm currently booked this week, but I'm available next week. It's professional, it's respectful, and it preserves my boundaries. Of course, if a true emergency comes up, like a website goes down, I respond. But everything else can wait. And here's the surprising benefit I didn't expect.

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The clients are totally fine with it and they respect the boundary. They wait. And it reminds me that not every request is urgent, even if it feels that way in the moment. The only challenge I've run into forgetting that I'm in a focus week and accidentally scheduling things anyway. So now I add visual reminders and block off the time in advance, ideally once a month.

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If you're curious about trying this, I recommend starting with a Wednesday to Tuesday block. That way you get the flexibility without sacrificing a full calendar week. Mark yourself as busy, mute notifications, check email as scheduled, but otherwise stay in the zone. This is the time your to do list shrinks and your confidence grows because you're finally in control. And when your business stops feeling overwhelming and you start feeling better, it's a job you will enjoy.

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In the early days of my business, and honestly, for many years after, I treated every client request for a meeting like it was a fire drill. Somebody asked for a quick call. I'd reply with, sure, when is a good time for you? And it was always right. Then someone called me out of the blue.

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I'd pick up even if I was mid project or about to step away. If someone wanted to go over something in person or talk something through right

now, I drop everything and make it happen. Because I thought that was a good service. I thought that being constantly available meant I was being professional, responsive and trustworthy.

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But what I didn't realise, I was giving away my most valuable resource, my time without any boundaries. And eventually I noticed something important. I had no time to actually do the work. That's where the habit of limiting client meetings was a necessity. I spent hours each week in back to back calls, most of which could have been short email or shared screen.

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And I'd find myself working after hours or on weekends just to keep up with the actual deliverables. The very thing clients were hiring me for, designing, building and updating their websites was getting squeezed by all the talking about it. That's when I decided to change how I handled meetings. Today I limit my available client meeting time to just over six hours per week. That's it.

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Here's what that looks like. I offer one hour on Monday afternoons for client check ins. I alternate availability on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. So one week it's Tuesday and the next week it's Wednesday. Thursdays are my meeting heavy days when I open up multiple appointments.

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And Fridays I keep them completely free and use them to catch up. If I ever have to take an emergency call outside of those windows, I grab the time back later by removing it from a future meeting slot and reclaiming that time for a block later. My goal is to always have at least two full days per week with no meetings at all. And that's where the deep work happens. That's where I get ahead on projects, improve my systems and plan what's next.

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It's not just about what's urgent. And you know what's funny? Once I put the system into place, clients respected it. They liked knowing when I

was available. It made scheduling easier and it made me look more professional, not less.

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You don't have to be available 24/7 to give great service. In fact, when you give yourself time to focus, your clients get better service and your stress levels go down. This habit changed how I think about being responsive. Now I don't react to every meeting or request, I respond to it with a plan. And that has made all the difference.

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The next habit is something that's been with me since my early work days, way before I had a business, clients or even WordPress in my life. It's this. Keeping a daily work journal. When I worked in corporate retail, we used to have steno pads to jot down notes what happened that day, what we promised our CEO and what we needed to follow up on.

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And that stuck with me. Today my steno pad is turned into a Google Doc. But the idea is exactly the same write it down so nothing gets lost. This habit doesn't have to be fancy. It's not about deep journaling or writing essays about your workday.

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Simple way to keep track what you worked on, what meetings you had, what you told a client, you deliver what popped up unexpectedly, and those tiny little wins we often forget by the next morning. Personally, I use a template in Google Docs that matches my time block calendar. That way I can quickly fill in what I actually did during each block, whether it was client, work, admin, email or unexpected tasks that popped up. It helps me compare what I plan to do with what I actually did, which is great for making adjustments going forward. Here's why this habit matters.

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When you run a one person agency, no one else is keeping track for you. A work journal helps you follow through, hold yourself accountable, and most importantly, stay out of your own head. And here's something I

didn't expect. On days when I feel like I haven't done enough, I look back at my notes and it reminds me how much I actually accomplished. It turns out a win doesn't always feel like a win.

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When it's happening, a journal helps you see it clearly. I'll be honest, mornings are easy for me to track, afternoons not so much. My notes get shorter and sometimes I skip logging those last few hours. So one thing I've experimented with is building in a reward. Something as simple as taking a break to walk outside or planning lunch with a friend after a few consistent days.

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If you're new to this, start small. Try journaling on Mondays only for a couple of weeks, and when that feels natural, add another day. Even just bullet points are enough to make a difference. Because at the end of the day, this habit isn't about just staying organised, it's about building confidence. And it's about noticing your patterns.

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And it's about creating a record of your own growth one workday at a time. The next habit has probably saved me more time than any other. Create a Library of Email Templates. This habit really started to take shape back in 2017 when I decided to invest in the business side of my business. I enrolled in two trainings, WP Elevation with Troy Dean and Profitable Project Plan with Jennifer Bourne. Both were incredibly helpful.

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But one takeaway that stuck with me from both programmes was the idea of email templates, especially for client communications. Jennifer's onboarding email sequences were especially impressive. They were thorough, professional and well thought out. But what really made a difference for me was taking those templates and rewriting them in my own voice. When I did that, my communication felt more personable and more effective.

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To this day, I'm still refining those templates. I update them as my processes change, as my tone evolves, and as new client situations come up. I now use a tool called Mixmax to store and organise my template library and I've built up more than 300 email templates. Those cover everything from onboarding and offboarding to referral introductions, project updates and follow ups. And it saves me countless hours every week.

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I don't have to reinvent the wheel. I don't have to search for that one email I wrote that one time. It's all right there, ready to go with just a little customization if needed. Even better, some of these templates are part of Automations. New client signs a contract. Boom.

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Automated welcome email, next steps and a link to schedule their kickoff call. This habit is kind of like content repurposing, only for communication. You don't need to write something new every time, you just need a solid base you can reuse, refine and recycle. If you don't have an email template library yet, start simple. Save that email you find yourself rewriting more than once. Put it in a folder, give it a name you'll remember, and tweak it the next time you use it. Because once you start building this habit, you'll never want to go back.

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It's a game changer for your workflow, your energy and your client experience. Let's talk about one of the biggest productivity killers in any web designer's day. And again, we're talking about email. The constant inflow of pop up notifications that just click here reply that turns into an hour in your inbox. It adds up fast.

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That's why this next habit has made such a big difference in my workflow. I only check emails three times a day. Morning, midday, late afternoon. That's it. This structure protects my time and gives me more uninterrupted hours to focus on actual client work.

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Not reacting, not ping ponging between tasks, just working. When I first started doing this, it felt a little strange. There's a reflex. We had to just make a quick check to stay on top of things. But I realised that most emails aren't urgent.

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And the ones that are, like a website going down. Well, those break through the noise. Anyway, for everything else, sticking to three check ins has dramatically reduced distractions and improved my focus. Here's how I manage it. I use CloudHQ to create a Focus tab in Gmail.

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This is an empty tab and hides the emails landing in my inbox while I'm working. I've set up labels in my email for urgent, soon and later so I can triage quickly during each check in. And with Mixmax, I can schedule emails to send during my email blocks, even if I write them outside of those times. That way, clients get used to a rhythm of communication, and I don't train them to expect instant replies. It's not about being unavailable, it's about making space to deliver the quality work your clients expect.

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I still reply quickly when it's something time sensitive, but for everything else, I let the schedule guide me. And when I stick to this, I feel the difference. Less stressed, more mental space, and I make more progress on important things. If you want to try this, start small. Block three email windows on your calendar.

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Use a tool or browser extension to hide incoming messages, and stick to the system for a week. See how it feels. Cutting back on email interruptions will lead to clearer focus and a whole lot more finished work. The last habit just might be the most important one of all, especially for web designers and especially for solopreneurs. Stop chasing the perfect day.

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You know the one I'm talking about. The day where every task gets checked off, where every email gets answered, where your clients are happy with your projects moving forward, your schedule flows, and nothing unexpected happens. We're all searching for that day, and if we're being honest, we're all We've all built an entire fantasy around it. And here's the truth. That day does not exist.

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At least not in the way we imagine it. We run businesses where things change constantly. Clients shift priorities, domains expire, a quick update is always needed, a plug in breaks, a project goes sideways. Trying to focus on a utopia where none of that happens is not where our energy should go. It will wear you down.

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Worse, it causes us to miss the actual joy of work. When I finally stopped chasing the idea of a perfect day, I started to feel focus on something much better. A sustainable day. Instead of asking how do I finish everything? I started asking how do I feel about what I did get done today?

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And that mindset shift has made all the difference. Now I embrace the constant flow of change and requests. I accept that some things will move forward and some things will wait, and some days feel a little messy. That's part of the rhythm of a creative business, and I try to build a mindset of abundance, not scarcity. There's always more to do.

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There's always progress to be made. So instead of aiming for Perfection. I focus on small wins. Finishing one page, sending one email, cleaning up one task task that's been bugging me. And when I do, I celebrate it.

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Because the joy in this work doesn't come from checking every box. It comes from inside of you and from knowing you're building something real one step at a time. Because once you let go of the perfect day, you

can finally enjoy the real one you're living in. And that's where good habits stick. And that's where businesses grow.

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When I first started building better habits, it wasn't about becoming more productive for the sake of the hustle. It was about survival. It was about getting out from under a mountain of projects. It was about building something that could last. And over time, these habits haven't just helped me survive, they have helped me be really happy in my job as a web designer.

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Today, I still run a one person agency. I now manage over 200 websites and I do it with more calm and more confidence than I ever thought possible. And it started the moment I said, I don't want to run my business like this anymore. I didn't want to keep reacting. I didn't want to chase the perfect day, and I didn't want to burn out doing the work I loved.

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Recurring revenue gave me back breathing room to take control. My habits helped me stay in control. Together, they've helped me build a business that works the way I want it to. And I hope this talk helps you do the same.

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Thank you so much. If this talk resonates with you, if you're ready to build a business that truly works for you, I'd love to keep the momentum going. You can subscribe to my weekly newsletter at webdesignerhabits.com. Every Monday I'll send you one habit, one tip, and one small shift you can make to strengthen your solo web design business or your agency. No fluff, just simple steady progress. And if you're looking for community, I'd love for you to join Webcammy Cafe, my free Facebook group for web designers.

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You can find it at facebook.com/groups/webcammycafe. Web design can be a solo journey, but you don't have to go it alone. It's a supportive

space to grow, connect, ask questions and meet other web designers. And one last thing. If you sign up for my newsletter this week, you'll receive free access to my private web designer habits circle community through the end of the year.

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We're all in this together. Here's to building a business that feels good to run. And I'M cheering you on every step of the way.