

Episode 52: How to Stay Focused on What Matters Most to Grow Your Firm with Melissa Shanahan

Hey, everybody. Welcome back to the, uh, what is this called again? The business growth advantage show where we're in the middle of a rebrand. And I'm so excited to have my friend coach mentor Melissa here, because I feel like so often, if I were to ask somebody how they were doing, they would say fine. And I think the business owner equivalent of that is like, Hey, how's business going?

And people say fine. And I know so many people right now who, if you really ask them how business is going fine, isn't good enough of an answer. And they want things to be better. They want their business to grow. And if that's you, you're in the right place because Melissa has helped me in so many ways, I'm excited to dive into it.

you're the type of person who, like you say fine, and you mean it, well, this might not be the show for you. I know I can go into a story where Melissa flipped my own thinking on that type of a question. but if you guys, I know I've been promoting this a lot to people who know who Melissa is, because she's a bigger and bigger name in the law firm owner community.

What's up, Nick? Uh, no, I don't have my hat today. but if you don't know Melissa, she is the founder of the last day work. I refer to her as one of my coaches, even though that's not necessarily one of her favorite terms for herself. She is, uh, both accountability and facilitation advisor partner.

We've worked together for years and so much of the success of myself and my team, is really something that Melissa, I think shares the responsibility for. what's that, can you talk a little bit about what you do for people now and the story of, of how things shifted? Recently before you founded velocity work and decided that law firm owners were the niche that you wanted to work with.

I have a deep background in coaching since 2008 was my first certification and started my own business and then ended up working for a consulting company where I did coaching with private practice owners beyond the states. I was, I would travel a little bit internationally and, I would work with them on strategic planning.

I would work with them on, owner coaching and on their team development, basically. So I was, that was my role and the company eventually I was traveling full time and I wanted more freedom. I really loved the work I was doing, but I could see holes in it. I knew that there were ways to improve it, but working for a larger company was hard to get any of those changes.

So I thought, okay, I'm ready. I can go, I'm ready to do this kind of work on my own. So I left and I started, velocity work and I didn't know exactly who I wanted to work with. And so I just was, you know, a small business in general. and that's actually in that era is when I met you. And then about a year after working with you, I just decided I was going to do law firm owners only.

It translated really well into my understanding of, you know, what it's like to own a practice and to build that from the ground up and grow pretty sizably. So I loved it was just like, okay. Finally, I find my people, these law firm owners are, in my opinion, some of the most amazing humans who have the courage or.

Maybe that isn't the word they would use at the time, but they did have to exercise some courage to hang their own shingle, start their own thing, not do the typical route with big law or working for someone else. I love these people. There's, you know, you have two full-time jobs, you have law, and then you have building the business and that's really difficult to navigate, especially if you don't know how to build a business.

it's just fun to work with these people and help them find freedom in their own ways and on their own terms and, grow beyond their wildest dreams. Not at the cost of them.

Mm Hmm. Yeah. I know so many people. In the groups that I'm involved in in of velocity works, that the people who work with you love, love your approach to things, love your personality around things.

If you are another law firm owner, by all means, continue to tune into this conversation because it's going to be particularly relevant to you. And, I know that Melissa has a couple of different ways that she can help law her owners specifically, if you're not a law firm owner though, continue to stick around, lean in because the stuff that, we are working on that we're going to be talking about, I know has helped me more universally.

And I know that it applies to my business owner, clients, friends, colleagues, outside of the law firm owner setting.

These are, you know, I told you earlier, I was just focusing on small business. If it was easy to market that I would've stuck with. And the reason I say that is because these principles are not just for law firm owners, I just happen to help law firm owners implement these things and grow this.

So I'm just making the point that if you're not a law firm owner and you're listening to this, there's still going to be good conversation, that and takeaways it's not lost specific. Yeah.

Yeah. And, and on that note, one of the things that I love about you is you're so dedicated to really listen to not only the problems that your clients are having or the people in your programs, but the obstacles that they're facing as you're helping them, and what's making it more difficult, whether people are inside your programs or not, what do you think are the biggest mistakes or traps that are in the way of business owners growing their businesses?

I think the one that first comes to mind is just being caught up in the busy-ness of it all. I think, you know, with the best of intentions and we have places we want to go and things we want to

do and, and projects you want to implement. And, and even if you don't have that, but you know, like you want to get there and you have like, that seemed very far away and we just don't start.

We don't do the things. And even if we start, we don't finish and it's because there's a lot to juggle. So if you're, with lawyers specifically, if you're a lawyer and that's a big part of your job as lawyering, it doesn't leave much time unless you deliberately change that. It doesn't leave much time.

Like you, no, one's going to hand you the time to go work on your business, right. That doesn't happen. It's easy to get caught up in the success. The very thing that creates your own success is the very thing that will squash you. If you aren't careful, because. It's just how you manage it. So I think you're asking about, maybe I think you used the word mistake.

I think it's just easy to get caught up in the spin of lawyering. And even if you do spend some time on the business, are you doing it in a way that moves the needle? That's that's tough without a coach or facilitation? I think that would be the main one that stands out.

Yeah, I was, I was so lucky to have connected with you early enough on, in my journey as a business owner, to where I didn't really have to do a lot of kind of course correcting terms of this idea of quarterly planning and identifying what are these areas of focus that we're going to commit to throughout the quarter.

And it was still a real challenge quarter by quarter for me, and eventually my team to say. Even if we're midway through and this doesn't seem to be as effective as we thought, or we think that there's this new idea that now we want to make a priority. We're going to see it through to the end of this.

Yeah.

Stick with your plan. Yeah. Wow. That's I mean, okay. So yeah, that's another mistake. I guess that's a good one. I mean, that's so common is that you, you know, even if you do make a really great plan, then halfway through the quarter or at some point along the way you change your mind or. You're you're focused switches and it's sneaky.

Sometimes it's not even like intentional. Sometimes you're not saying I'm going to leave this in the dust and I'm going to go over here. Sometimes it is that which you gotta, you have to stop doing that, that, and the reason, even if you're right and it wasn't the right thing to pick, you have to change your behavior around sticking with your S your stuff.

there's that, and there's exceptions, of course, there's exceptions, always exceptions where if it really makes sense to pull out of a project, but typically it's not going to hurt anything if you actually finish that stuff. So finish it and then get onto the, the thing is in your mind, it's people leave there, they get started and they switched their focus.

If it's intentional, it's one thing, but sometimes it just slips away and they allow it to slip away or fall out of focus. That's just another way of quitting on the project. Yeah, that's a big, that's another big like, quote unquote mistake. I'm saying mistake, it's human, but this is the kind of stuff you have to start to override because if you're going on default, you'll spin in this cycle and you have to start to override that and create a new normal for how you operate so that you can get where you want to go.

Yeah. I know you have a framework that really goes through some of the stuff that we've already started talking about. Can you break that down? Cause I know it's a huge part of what's inside your program.

So I call it the focus forward framework, but it's essentially three parts. You have to aim specifically know exactly what you're shooting for.

you could define that many different ways. It doesn't have to be this beautiful vision statement just needs to be some bullets of like what you're trying to like, what's the destination in your GPS. Basically, once you can figure that out, then you can reverse engineer and you can make a really great plan to get right.

Is your plan going to go just how you planned it. Absolutely not, but that's not the point. You still have to have a plan to follow. So I'm making a really great plan. And then the third piece is honoring the plan. I think with facilitation part one, and part two are easier than part three parts agree, like part one, and part two could happen in a pretty short span of time, like a work session, right?

Like where you get sit down and you get clear. Yeah. But the third part of honoring the plan that takes all quarter, so, or, you know, however long you're making your plan and that is a long time for your brain to stay committed and focused on something. And that, I think that is where, you know, I think facilitation and coaching is really helpful for part one and part two aiming and making a plan.

But then if you don't have coaching or you don't have some version of strong accountability, In the third phase of honoring the plan, it's just natural that you'll kind of you'll get wayward, you know? So anyway, that's, so those are the three parts and each are important, you know, if you don't, if you don't have a plan, there's no honoring.

Right. So, yeah. Yeah. So each are really important. Well,

and in terms of like the human nature aspect to the mistakes on this, I feel like at least what's been true for me and I've seen it in my team and I've seen it in the people that are inside of velocity work when we're in the process of honoring that last step.

And we're, we're falling short in certain instances, I think it's always going to be a default for people to make that mean something yeah. And attach emotion to us, failing or not getting a

thing done or. Whatever it is. And what I love about what you do in different ways is you acknowledge that that's going to happen and help us get better and better at identifying what had happens, pulling ourselves out of it and saying, what can we do to be constantly resetting the dial there, making it more objective and recommitting to honoring the next time?

to me the honor, step always seems like a bunch of micro recommitment to the honoring.

Totally. with planning, there's a macro version of planning and then there's a micro version of planning. So macro, what needs to happen this quarter? What are the priorities? What needs to happen every month?

But then there's the micro, like, how are you going to spend your time every day in order to do those things, right? Like you have to get really, you have to look more closely at your day and your weeks. going to honoring the plan, if you don't really have that, you'll be a little lost. You won't be as efficient or as effective as you could be because you didn't plan how you're going to spend your time, that lines up with where you want to go.

there is an element of that and knowing that sometimes when you're planning your days and weeks, it's not going to go well. And you learn from that, just like you're saying, like, just get objective and there is not any value. If there's no upside to beating yourself up or thinking you should be different or like whatever, the critical talk, we all have all of us have it that you have to learn how to.

Quiet that down or just, don't give it the weight that it tends to. We tend to give it and then get objective, look at the facts, make it facts, not feelings. What exactly went wrong here? Did I not plan well enough? Or did I just not out on the plan? Like I could have, but I didn't and just get objective and look at it so that you can extract the lesson and do something different as you carry things forward.

And, that's not easy. It's, it's worth it, but it's, it's not easy. Yeah.

And I think what I love about your framework is it's basic enough to kind of cover all of these complexities that can pop up inside of it. And one thing that I know again, I've done and I've seen others do is as much as we, as business owners may, might like to complain about planning things and say that we're creative entrepreneurs.

And we just like to go out and do it. There is something appealing about the planning stage of being more internal focusing, you know, you feel like you're working on the business, not in the business, but you haven't yet got to the honor stage where you're executing on what the plan is. And I love that you, you help people kind of cross that line into the honor plan.

So people don't get, they don't stay in tinkering mode with different ideas that they have, but then they're too afraid to push play on

yeah. Tinkering mode. I like that. That's really good. I think of it as it's necessary. there's a concept. I don't know who first came up with it. I've heard Tony Robbins talk about it.

Her CEO, talk about it, but passive action versus massive action. passive action. Isn't bad, but it isn't, there's no output. There's no work being done. There's no creation necessarily like out into the world, but it is necessary sometimes to do pat, you have to do some things that it's you sort of sitting back behind your computer planning is a really good example of that.

but then massive action. That's what gets you the results? And I think of, of like what you're saying, you know, massive action is not tinkering and someone has put the definition before a massive action is taking action until you get the result you want it to get. And if you're tinkering, you're never going to get there.

So. That doesn't, that doesn't count. Right? So what are you doing to move the needle? And, and you might not be right with your first attempts, but you do it anyway and you fail and you learn and you tweak and then you fail and then you learn a new tweak until you hit the result you wanted to hit. Nobody knows how to get where they want to go until you get there.

If we knew that none of us would be here talking about the things we're talking about, that's part of the, it's still, I think if you tinker it's because you don't necessarily know how to get where you want to go. And so you're kind of playing with things and playing small, and then it takes a lot of guts and courage to go, like, do this thing that you think is going to move the needle and you might be wrong, but it's a worthy fail. And then you go do that thing. And there's a lot of vulnerability comes with that because oftentimes you're not right the first few times.

But it's massive action. And you keep showing up until you get the result you want. And then when you get there, then you can look back and be like that. That is how you create what I just created. And there's no way you could've known it until you do it, but you can't know how to do it. So you get there and you can't get there unless you take a bunch of massive action to get there.

And that's that?

I love, I love this. And it also addresses something about what you do that I want to make sure that I touch on. And most of what I say is going to be like a subtle or not so subtle plug for velocity work, but for anybody who is like, well, I'm not a law firm owner, so I can't work with Melissa again, continue to lean in because I think that I'm always learning things just in conversations with Melissa that are helping me.

one thing that is really unique about working with you onto one or joining one of your programs is when you buy most courses or work with most coaches. There, and there might be a sense of this, you know, let's learn about your goals. Let's help you make a plan for how to get there and then let's help you execute.

what's I think really unique about what you do is you don't have a set plan. That's like the Melissa Shanahan velocity work plan for lawyers to grow. It's very much a you facilitating conversations to help law firm owners plan themselves.

Yeah. And this is like a pet peeve of mine. If I had that, you all should run fast for me, that does not exist.

I, it drives me batty when people sell their whole, their whole thing is follow this blueprint to build your business. Like Yeah, no chance, no chance. some of that's just marketing and it isn't really a blueprint like but I, I don't, I think people, oftentimes I used to be like this when I first started my business in 2008, I was looking for the blueprint, man.

I

want, I think it's like, if I'm going to invest this much money in this much time and doing this thing, there better be a payoff and it like, it better be worth it.

Well, I better be told what to do. I wanted a boss kind of like, I wanted someone to tell me, this is what you need to do. And then, then I would know how to spend my days.

And then I would know how to, I wouldn't have to make those decisions. there's principles that I believe in deeply and those I push, you know, in the inside, but I would never push a prescription of action. That and tell you, this is what it's going to take for you to hit a million or 500 K or two and a half million.

Like I don't there, there isn't that there's principles. And there's certain focuses that naturally are going to come up at certain points. Yeah,

no, I love it because I think that, because this has turned into more of a norm of certain people have certain programs or blueprints that for you to follow, in my opinion and experience, it has two negative effects.

One, there's a sense of learned helplessness that business owners develop of. I don't have the answers these people do. Yeah. And so it, it can really take the confidence and empowerment and knowledge that business owners I think do have. Yeah, like these other. Velocity work, other coaches, whatever.

They're not partners in your business, they're not responsible for your results. The other thing that I think happens, and again, I think one of the reasons why I've continued to stick with you is because I think the types of coaching programs and investments that do have more prescriptive blueprints to follow become much more difficult to stay in alignment with.

When you start looking at other people for help, I've had to turn back the dial on certain coaches that I was paying attention to or certain programs that I was investing in because I, I felt bad telling them, oh yeah, I'm not going to do it that way.

I operate from the place and the belief that every client I work with.

Has it in them to figure out their own answers. And it doesn't mean facilitation. Isn't really useful. I mean, I do this work and I get coaching. Like, I think that's important to have someone help you make sense of your ideas, test them out, like B smart about putting your ideas. She is into the world about your business or about, you know, whatever.

And I, I do think there's value there, but my job is to help owners find their voice, their path towards their freedom. uh, any, any prescription that's going to be given in terms of a bunch of action action and what you should execute. no, there's just no one size fits all.

I'm not saying you won't grow, but you don't, we'll have an opportunity to grow on your terms and get really clear. Yeah. About what matters to you, what values you have. all of that can't be taken into consideration with, where you have to answer to someone saying, yes, I did X, Y, and Z. Exactly how you said, I don't know.

I just think, I think I give more credit to peoples, to the people I work with. You have got it in you, you might need a partner, someone to help you kind of think through things and map things out and get really organized and be able to execute and learn how to be accountable for yourself so that you're executing and you're staying on track, like all of that, but that's you and my job is to develop you as the owner, not

tell

you what to do.

And I love that you mentioned like vision and values around that too, because it's cool that we're tackling this in like reverse order. So like aim plan honor, when we move all the way up to the aim stage again, and we talked about this before we hit the live button. You are so good at trying to pull from people.

What it is that they really want their business to look like in a way that is free of judgment. Like it doesn't really matter revenue wise to you, what they're reaching for. and at the same time, you got a really good detector for people who might be playing small or might not be thinking, this through in a way that can really help make the rest of this way easier.

thank you for saying that. I'm good at that. I just keep fishing for new questions that I can pose to people to pull out of themselves what they really want. that's actually not an easy question for people to answer. I've learned over time.

Yeah. And I think it's particularly difficult in the law firm owner setting.

And I know this is the case for a bunch of other businesses as well, but there is such a wide spectrum now of different types of law firm owners and the types of firms that they're building and what they're reaching. again, like your you're not saying that any one of those types of designs for affirm is the, be all end all.

but I did want to talk to you about like, are there any, are there any types of when people tell you what they want or they don't want in their business, that might be right for them, but are kind of red flags for you or it's like, okay, that might be true, but I really want to double down on that before we move forward.

And what comes to my mind is like, when someone tells you, like, I am a true solo and I want to stay a true solo.

So there's two things, what you just said. So we could talk about that. And then the other what's we can get to too, is they have in their head the, how they do not, they are not clear on the what.

And so I can say more about that, and they're wrong, sometimes they're wrong and they don't know it. They just have this like vision of how they're gonna get to something that resembles what they want. So we can talk more about that, but the true solo, I have four, I have a lot of true solo clients in mastery group and in sprints, and I love them, I call, I make sure that they are careful about their own language because being a true solo is not, in my opinion, it's like a circumstance or a fact, but claiming it and identifying heavily with being a true solo will keep you stuck because you're never really a true solo. if you eventually, you can have some help doing some of the admin work. I think we, if you, if you are watching this video, you are not the person who wants to be doing all of your admin work, plus the legal work plus owning a business, right?

If you have anyone helping you, you aren't a true solo. You might be the only attorney, but that's not true solo. So I think true solo, you just have to be really careful identifying with that. You could say, you know, I'm a solo attorney law firm. I like you can identify in whatever way you want to, but don't cap yourself because true solos don't typically have the freedom because they're doing it all.

You don't need to be doing it all. no one I'm working with. No one actually is a true solo right now that I have, I have worked with true solos and they're always looking for a VA or they're looking for someone to support them. That's not true. Solo, stop calling yourself that

I love that.

I love that. Well, we'll clip that out separately. Cause I agree. I think too many people, I mean, even in the outside of the law firm community are talking about being a solo preneur or

whatever it is or saying, like, I wouldn't be able to build and grow my business know without having a team, but like what exactly does that mean?

Is there, and.

So what you're saying, one thing that I've I know from coaching is when you say blanket statements, you are hurting yourself, it doesn't help to say blanket statements. What do you mean by what you said specifically? Tell me how many, like how many hours of support do you want for admin a week?

Okay. Well now you're not a true solo, right? That's not what that is. what'd you say the sentence you said, I don't want, I don't want a team. Is that what you said? What do you mean by that? You don't want to manage a big team. You don't want to manage two people.

You don't want support. Is that like, what do you mean? But I think the clearer you can get, anytime you notice a blanket statement or a thought running through your head, Seems specific, it plays specific, but it's not like, what would it look like if I was a fly on the wall, what would it look like?

it's so I think if you could, the clearer you can get on that, then you're working with real stuff instead of just blanket statements. Well, it's kind of, can I say one more thing? This kind of goes into the same idea that of the flip side I was going to say, people tend to tell me in consults, for example, when I'm just getting to know them and they'll say, like w what are you shooting for?

What do you really want as an owner? I want to have two associates and two paralegals, and they tell me about the team, so to speak. And then they tell me, I'll ask specifically what revenue. Or like, what do you want to take home? What do you wanna be able to take home as an owner? Okay. What does that mean?

The businesses to do in terms of revenue? And we'll talk through that. And the revenue that they're telling me does not require two associates and two paralegals at whatever. So it's almost like they get attached to a vision of what they think freedom looks like. And my encouragement to everybody is don't get caught up in how you think you're going to achieve freedom.

Just put the destination in the GPS in terms of the end game. Like what is freedom?

So can I give you an example? Huh? Can I give you an example here? Yeah, it might be helpful. Or maybe you can help me clarify it. But one thing that has been helpful for our team has been shifting away from goals of like, okay, how many more people do we need to add to the team?

Kind of a thing. And now it's okay. The goal is number one. For the business owner, Joey, to go on vacation for two weeks in the business to function number two for anybody else on the team to go on a vacation and that business to run. Yeah. So if those are like goals, then what needs to be true for that to happen?

Right. And it's more of a case now of, okay, how are we defining certain roles and like substitution roles when certain people out of office or a force out of office for some

reason, right? You're doing it right? Like, I, this is a good example because to me there's goals, which is the end game.

And people think the end game is the vision that they have of the team, or like what it has to look like. But if I make them finish that sentence, what is it? You think it needs to look like that in order to have what, then that answer, that's the goal. and then we can really work backwards and start to figure things out.

But as long as you have a specific route in your mind, if you're really stuck to that, it's going to be much more painful because aren't lining yourself up with the result you really want. You're lining yourself up with the one route to get there that may not be the right route at all.

Right. And I say route, cause you know, when you put a pin in or you put a destination, the GPS in your car, it'll give you different routes to get there. Then you can't have any routes to get there unless you have the destination into the GPS. that's what I think people think that their destination is to associates to pair or like whatever it is for them, but like a specific setup.

And that's not the destination you're that is in order to get you something that something is your destination. Yeah.

And it's, it's always interesting to me when I feel like I'm, I know what my vision is or that I'm getting closer. And then I hear someone tell me something about where they're at or where they want to be at.

It doesn't happen as often as I'd like, but I have these times where I'm like, oh, I want that too. Like I was, and I know that you and I have had really good conversations around it. Having space in your calendar. And what does that mean? And luxury in terms of time. And I was talking the other day with somebody who, he booked a podcast with someone and when the podcast was booked, person who he was interviewing that assistant reached out to him multiple times saying, you know, just want to make sure that you really respect the start and end times, because he's really busy and we want to make sure we don't go over.

But then when the interview started, the guy said, Hey, just so you know, I've planned out my entire morning for you. So if we go over and no problem, and I was like, well, there's, there might be some improvements that need to be made to like the communication there. But I love that idea of having an hour long conversation.

Parked on my calendar for someone and feeling like there's no need to rush to another meeting or whatever. And just saying like, I'm giving you all of my time for the entire afternoon, if you want to take it. so now that I was like, Ooh, that's a cool thing that I want. Okay. Yeah. See now

it's like, okay, what, what needs to happen to the business over the next couple of quarters for me to start to say that more?

Yeah.

yeah, that's great. It's I do that. I think with, I don't have that specific example, but there's times where I just, I want more space before I hit my day. Okay. What does that need to look like then for like, how do I need to set things up so that we can win at that game?

also real quick, circling back. You know, we were talking about true solos and then we're talking about it's the SA it's literally the same problem. You're saying true solo over here. And then the camp over hearsay to associates to paralegals or whatever it's you are, why do you want to be true solo?

like, you think that being true solo means X. It will give you X just focus on X. Yeah. Just focus on X and whatever path you will find your route there. But if you stay so hardcore too, I have to be true. So low in order to get these things, you are not right. I'm telling you you're not right. I know that that's not right.

Same concept applies to the metric of a revenue goal,

to the metric of a revenue

goal. Like if someone says my goal is a million dollars this year, would you push them on, why and identifying kind of the us so that.

Oh 100%. I don't work with anybody that nobody I work with gets, gets away with just saying a number without saying why now, sometimes there's people that say the why is because that would be freaking fun.

That would be amazing. That'd be awesome like that there, that really is

the compelling, but

really is compelling for them. And then there's some people that think, it's so that I can get, I can work, you know, 25 hours a week and be able to take home X amount of dollars. you know, I always start there.

Cause when you do the math, really, you don't need to make a million dollars. You just don't. So how about we come off of that because you shooting for that just means you aren't lining yourself up with what you really want you think. So I always revenue numbers for me come from, at least initially when I'm working with people.

If I worked with them for a few years, this can change. But initially when I'm working with people. We do the math to figure out what the business needs to do based on what they want for their life. And usually that doesn't entail some sort of growth or change in the business and that's fun. And that's great.

And knowing that you're working towards your freedom, whatever that means for you or, or your compelling reason. Sometimes it's not freedom most of the time, it is a, some version of freedom to someone. but yeah, I think setting that revenue goal off of looking at you first, and then what is the for me to do to be able to provide that.

That's amazing. That's an amazing opportunity that people don't take for themselves because they get caught up in just growing the business. You know, there's a route that you could take to grow the business. That's very intentional for you as the owner. And then eventually as you get a team you want to be intentional for your team members.

And what does that look like? What does the business need to do to support such a really healthy, thriving relationship inside? then once you've been doing it for a while, like I have clients now that they've got all that dialed in, they have the freedom, they have the team, and now it's just like, let's see what we're made of.

And they go for bigger numbers because it's not out of a need. It's more out of like, let's keep going. Like our firm, isn't going to stop growing at this point. We have a, we have incoming, so let's do what we can do with this, you know?

so fun in terms of the people that you're helping inside your mastery group.

I know that that's a growing opportunity for people to get it on. And it's something that I, I love being a part of. And there are a lot of words you can attach to a program like mastery group. Something that comes to mind for me is just the accountability aspect of being in that group. and again, like everything else that we've talked about, you take the topic of accountability to a really thoughtful level.

And I think that one thing that we're seeing across the board in business communities, including law firm owners, is this vocalized demand for accountable. Huh? Put that way in terms of people saying like, I want and will pay for accountability around something, or I want an accountability partner or whatever, and we're seeing more and more resources build accountability into they're helping people.

Yeah. I can speak to this all day, but can you talk to. Like where you're seeing accountability in general fall short and how you're building those lessons learned into the mastery group. Hmm.

okay. I just want to clarify accountability falls short, like typically, generally speaking. Yeah. And lessons learned,

make it, like, how does, how does the mastery group help make that more of an efficient process?

So the accountability,

the thing with accountability is you have to know with clarity, what you want to be held accountable for. yeah, it is a lot of accountability. You got to go through some stuff to figure out like, oh, this, this is what I'm doing. I'm putting it on the wall. Everybody can see it.

Like in terms of like rocks, for example, quarterly priorities. There's a tracker at Brae master group CS. We have check-ins you talked about your progress and to get to the place where you have rocks, you have clarity. And that is not an easy path to, to figure that out. I mean, it takes a few hours.

You could do it sitting down, especially if you have facilitation, but it's like, okay, these are the priorities that need to happen this quarter in order to be in alignment with the goal I have set, which by the way, is in alignment with me as the owner. all of this is lined up. So this is what I have to focus on this quarter.

This is what I'm putting on the wall for everybody to see, this is what I'm going to have to answer to. And then my job is to. Walk you through answering for it. So, you know, like every, every time we have a rock check-in call it's okay, this is your rock. And not started in progress or done. You say that, and is it on track or off track?

You say that this is not, it's so funny. It's not rocket science and it's not, it's just a way to say, all right, I've got this, I'm doing this. And if you're not, which that happens a lot too is, then we just work through the barriers basically. And most of the time, the barriers are not very big.

They're small, but this is the space that, that you're supposed to give thought to this. And so this is the space where we can really say, all right, let's figure this out. This is totally figureoutable. Yeah. It's

not just about saying here's what I want. You guys hold me accountable. Like there's some thought about.

Can we get more specific with that? Is it the right thing? Are we looking at that? Is it something that we're holding you accountable to? That's more than just, what are you going to do today or this week? Like there's some type of a long-term alignment. Yeah. That getting done and the results that you're looking for.

Nick's got a good point here on the, on the screen too, in terms of this kind of chicken and the egg scenario of, oh yeah. The groups to increase revenue, but we also want to increase revenue before joining us.

Hi, Nick. I love Nick. Oh, okay. Yeah. So to me, I think in terms of, cause I try to make it facts, not feelings as much as possible.

So for me, I think of, one way that you can look at it is what percentage of your revenue are you planning on investing in coaching? I think that can be one really helpful way to look at this there's times where people come to me and they want to do private client work, but they aren't making enough revenue to, to I'm not gonna say, oh no, sometimes I do say no, I guess, but I'm not going to tell them what they can and can't do, but I will help them look objectively at it.

And if they don't really have the margin and they don't, they don't have a healthy profit margin and this is a chunk of their revenue. plug into something different maybe. Right. So I do try to look at facts, not feelings for myself. I think, 3% of revenue for me has felt good. It feels like I've got some freaking skin in the game and it doesn't feel like an irresponsible amount to spend.

that has been, and I've proven this out with, you know, people who are have big firms. It's still 3%. That makes sense in terms of spend to make sure you are growing in the ways that you want to grow. So I would say looking at an investment from that perspective, if, if this is a, if anybody is in Nick's shoes where this is something, he weighs out a lot, just pick a number, a percentage of revenue that you're comfortable with, and then don't think about it anymore.

Just decide that's what you're going to spend to invest in your own growth and be willing to go all in show up fully for whatever it is that you invest in. You won't be sorry. There's no chance to be sorry. Like 3% is pretty safe. I think that's an easy go-to answer. If someone needs like facts and numbers in order to enter the game, once you went to the game and you start seeing the return on your investment, you don't think so hard about percentages.

It just feels like, yep. That's the next step. I'm going to pay that for the next level. Yeah.

Yeah. I think, I think once you figure out what that budget is, even if it's zero coming up with a plan of some paid or free resource and sticking with that as the plan, I know a lot of my coach friends are struggling because they're in four or five different masterminds.

That's insane to me. I get it though. Again, I used to do this. When I first had my business, I would play, join this and I would join this. And then you end up just taking a bunch of passive action and you're learning behind the scenes, but you're not growing. there's too many voices, too many opinions.

There's it's just too much, so too many inputs into your head and there's not enough output into the world.

I did that for a little bit though, because I, I, I'm hearing some voices of my friends in my head who say, like I invested in this community or, you know, I want to be a part of this friend group.

And is there a way to have it both ways where I am engaging or checking into what some of these business groups enough to continue to be a part of the group there, even though I'm spending like my business owner hat time planning, maybe in one

year, it's just networking then. I think if you, if you're going to be a part of a community because you like the comradery, but you're not expected to do certain things, I think receiving coaching from two different coaches. If it's on the same thing, there's like specialized coaching. That's different. Right. But if you're just like, give a coach over here, you have a coach over here, that's helping you grow your business. You are going to be in conflict a lot of the time and honoring one person's thing, but not the other.

And the other coaches gonna be like, why aren't you doing your stuff? Like it's nothing lines up. I don't know. I think networking is great. I think camaraderie is great. Community is great, but if you're going to actually execute according to something, you need to pick one and go all in and you'll get to, you'll get to the next level.

It doesn't matter who you pick. You'll get to something next and it'll be amazing. And then you can choose again from there.

You know, that reminds me of one of the first business conferences that I went to. I felt very much like a new kid on the block in terms of entrepreneurship. And I remember. Meeting and becoming friends with this guy during the conference where I would be sitting next to him.

And I would be trying to soak up as much as I could on every presentation. And I started asking him questions about like what he was going to do, whatever. And I could tell that he was just like, I'm listening to this stuff and I'll write down some particularly good like golden nuggets, but I'm not, my goal is not to take action on every single person that I listened to at this thing.

And I think that's a part of it is like changing the, the gear that you're in different

rooms. Yes. I agree. I, that's a really good way to say that the gear that you're in, but make no mistake. If you're going to invest in a coach, not an event, right. A coach, you need to be in high gear to be intentional and go all in because otherwise you're not going to maximize your, your investment.

Yeah. That's really awesome.

there's something else you just, oh, okay. This is what's happening in my head. About 3%. I use that for people who have a hard time, right? Like figuring out what should I do. And it's the first time really investing in this kind of thing. But listen, you don't have to stay at 3%.

There is investment that I'm going to make this year. That's probably going to look more like 8%. And I feel fantastic about it. I know. There's like, there's no question. If I'm going to really get use out of that and it's going to make a difference for me. just be, that's not a, that's not a rule.

It's a gun. If you're having a hard time, figuring out how to enter it, you know, you want support, you know, you want coaching. You've never done it before. You don't know what to expect. You're you have all this trepidation about spending or investing. Then you can use that as a guide, but I don't think someone's wrong for spending well over that.

If they're invest, if they're investing, because you will get a return, as long as you show up wholly in that thing. I just want to make it clear that I don't think 3% is the only thing you can invest in. If we're having a hard time, it's a good starting place at the safe starting place. You'll get a lot out of it.

I'm so glad you said that. Because one thing that I've learned is it's not helpful for me to, shy away from opportunities in my life and my business. When the timing makes sense for me to invest more or, you know, my family doesn't need for me to increase my, take home, pay that month or whatever. I don't lose any brownie points for making those investments or not.

Following the whole profit first methodology to a T and keeping expenses low. I, I do think that, being smart and thoughtful and frugal at times in your business is a super smart way of moving forward. but if you have the opportunity to invest in things that you know are smart investments.

Yeah. Yeah. And you have to like your reasons, you can't make a decision based on fear. That's going to get you nowhere. You can't make a decision based on, you know, a lot of people talk about it, like scarcity mindset versus abundance mindset. But really you just have to like your reason, you know, if you make a decision to do something or not to do something, it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks about you doing it.

You have to like your reason. And if it feels smart and you've waited out It feels, right. And you like your reason for it, then that's the direction you need to go. if that's a yes, that's a yes. If it's a no, it's a no, but you just have to like your reason. And, but the second, the decision is made that is it no more?

It's so easy to go back and like roll around. Did I make the right decisions? I not made the right decision. It's done go all in, get your return on your investment and then evaluate. Yeah.

Yeah. you know, now that I'm in the world of also creating like courses and programs for people who might not be able to be a good fit for our one-to-one service law firm, I'm, learning again and again, this, this concept of be the kind of business owner that you want to receive as clients and customers.

Yeah. I'm seeing a lot of my course creator friends, for example, gets stuck in this. Cycle of being frustrated and complaining that customers are backing out or are canceling payment plans or whatever. And meanwhile, they're talking about the same types of issues themselves.

That's so fascinating.

It doesn't surprise me at all. Yeah. Interesting observation.

And that happens across the board, uh, with different types of business owners and industries. But I think that, maybe we'll end here, but there's, there's a phrase that you use and I always forget the wording. Oh. That you didn't coin it.

But, it's like, what is this concept of when we are, when we're raising complaints are, when we're talking about things that are, you don't like, we don't like, it's like, where are we being complicit?

Oh, the quote is. Oh, I'm not going to think of his name right now. He lives in Boulder. He's a coach for startups.

it's a very simple name too. I can maybe search it. Uh, anyway, um, the quote is that the question is how are you complicit in creating the conditions you say you don't want? I love that quote. I love that quote because it just points it right back to the source. How are

we complicit in creating the conditions you say you don't want?

So

good. God, I really do feel like I know this is live, but I don't want to like, let this go without giving this guy credit.

No, that's all good. And, a way that I've heard that, and I'd always comes back to me is, like where, where is the payoff in my company? Okay. It's, it's kind of a cousin to that idea of how am I benefiting from this complaint that I'm saying?

And like, when something that I hear a lot again in the, in the lawyer community is like, it's really hard to find good work these days. that might be true, but it's also a really subtle pat on your own back,

no upside in thinking that thought

none side is, it's kind of an ego boost of,

it's not a net positive.

It's a net negative to think that, yeah, there's no upset. This is, this is, this is discipline and training. Like even if you could prove it true, who freaking cares, you want that story? Do you want to keep going with that? You've got it. You have to flip it to create where is there upside? Result wise, whereas they're upside.

Cause you're right. There's a pay off because it makes it justifies why you're not busy. It just like, there's all these things where it makes you feel better about your situation

for me, my wife, Kat, and I talked about this a lot. So for us, usually the payoff is, it means we get to be right. About something. Totally. One question that we just know to ask each other and cat's got it written in her office is do I want to be right? Or do I want to be afraid active?

I like that instead of happy. I'm really glad that that word wasn't happy. That doesn't surprise me. Your wife is amazing. And she definitely surprised me that I love her.

She wanted that from, one of her supervisors that she works with. But it's, I think as, and you and I have talked about this too, like in order to achieve this macro freedom that we want to achieve, are we willing to give up these microbes? Freedoms. And these things that, you know, make us feel better or whatever.

Like, am I willing to take the dog out? Which feels like a chore in order to work from home and have the flexible schedule that I have and have Phoenix.

you are like, we're, I have a different language for it. What you're saying is exactly what I mean. When I talk about delay gratification versus instant gratification, like you have, you have an urge to do something in the moment that isn't going to give you a net positive result.

Uh, the result that you really want. So you answer the urge, you play small, it's a net negative, but then if you don't and you don't give into that instant gratification, you delay the gratification in that moment. You line yourself up more with where you want to be. it's just like what you're saying.

Like you have

conversations and I, you guys doing it. Why I love being in Melissa's orbit and being inside of her programs because you get this kind of helpful. It's like being part of a podcast in real time. That is helpful instead of just listening to somebody else's podcast.

I've never heard of it though.

Yeah. That's a really

good, I love the conversations that you and I have and that I have inside your groups, speaking of your groups, can you talk to everybody more about mastery group and, any, any links or next steps you'd recommend for people who might be interested in that?

Yeah. Master group is a creation that was born out of the work I do with private clients, and I wanted to make it accessible to people who weren't there yet in terms of revenue.

And so mastery group was all centered around strategic planning every quarter. And at the turn of the year, we do a bigger one, Strategic planning. it's focused forward framework. Like you have to know what you're aiming for and you have to make a plan to get there. We focus really hard on the quarter in front of us.

We reverse engineer down, focus on the quarter in front of us, and then, honoring the plan, which those are weekly coaching calls. And sometimes there's workshops like just support and resources and accountability to stay on track for what you said you wanted to do. it's incredible. The people that are drawn to this there's 30 members right now, the people they're are drawn to this are the most amazing people who are willing to work, who are willing to do what it takes.

you know, every program has some people who are more engaged than others. I can honestly say there's four or five people that I don't interact with that often. and I don't know, I don't know what's going on for them or how they're doing, but everybody else is it's easy. It's crazy how engaged people are and the community and the care that they all have for one another.

There's no fluff. It's all about getting to work. It's we have a good time. so yeah, people can learn more about that. And it's for firms that are under a million really. but it's velocity work.com/join. If you want to learn more about it, you can go there to get some information, it's so fun.

It's incredible.

Melissa is probably my biggest secret weapon that I recommend to other law firm owners that are looking for help with growing their businesses, Melissa, you're the best I freaking love you and everybody else, I will catch you next week. Next Wednesday at 12:00 PM central.

Uh, that'll do it for now. Thanks everybody. Thank you, Joey. 📌