

Sink Handle Episode 50

Hello, everyone, and welcome to Episode 50. So small business evolves over time. It adapts and changes, it changes the world, it changes with your team, and just changes with our lives. And I don't believe it should stay static, we should always be looking at how to make this the best business we can for right now and for the future. And I am the agency model coach, and the director of operations certification. And we have been talking a ton a ton a ton about business models, and what that would look like and how that would look. We have been looking. And we have been talking a ton about business models and how that would look for their businesses. And for many, choosing the agency path is a huge, huge change, and it can be scary. Maybe it's not what they thought it would be. And I think that's one of the most exciting things about small business. You never know where it's gonna go. Like what opportunities you will run into what needs you will find in the market and get so excited that you can fill them. So watching these ladies go through this change this huge transformation. So today, I wanted to share the story of my business with all its twists and turns and all of the stuff to show you how things can change over time. And that's really a good thing. Because watching these ladies go through such a transformation and the do and learning maybe they didn't even know they wanted an agency. And now they're trying to figure it all out and what do we do and what model and it can be so overwhelming. And then sometimes it feels like as soon as you pick something up. Everything changes again, right the world changed last year with this apocalypse.

Last year with this Apocalypse, everything changed. So it didn't matter what your plans were right. Brian, we left out the freak in the podcast, just okay. So we start our story. So we start our story. When I had already left Wall Street, for those that don't know, I was on Wall Street for about 11 years. I worked for Lehman Brothers until the day they closed the doors actually a couple days further. And then I worked at another bank after that. And I was so burned out that I started my own furniture refinishing business. And that is where we start our story. I had already left Wall Street. Wow, that just I just said the same thing. Let's start. Yeah. So we start our story here. When I already left Wall Street. For those that don't know, I was on Wall Street for about 11 years. I worked at Lehman Brothers right through the whole debacle and then worked for another bank. After that. I was really burned out. I had started our furniture refinishing business as literally going in the opposite direction of finance. And, you know, I was making no money. It took me forever to do everything. And I charged no money for it. So not the best start. But in the quest for being able to pay my bills, I had taken on an executive admin role for a partner who owned his orange For his company, he and his wife, and it was local, which meant that I wasn't going to the city anymore. So I thought this was I could, you know, use my brain and not have a commute. Like that was a big huge one for me. And I had, you know, set hours part time, local in person. And that was great, because it was so much better than where I'd been. But after I had my son, like many women, I found I didn't want to leave him. He was cute and snuggly, and I hated leaving him even for a couple hours in a day. I didn't want to not be there. So I started looking around for my other options. And that's when I found out about the whole online world. Well, to be fair, I only found out about a part of it being a virtual assistant. And I thought, this is the greatest thing ever. I get to use my brain and work from home. This was a huge step up from working for someone else and having to go to their business. I could work from home. And it was like the best revelation ever. I had no idea where to

start. So I had taken a kickstart course, on being a VA from Susan Marshawn, a techie mentor. And I started to get my first clients. And a lot of it was like real basic data entry and creating invoices and things like that. And, and there was a part of me that was like, this isn't really very complicated.

After all the work, the crazy work I was doing and trading and all that stuff on Wall Street. But I really didn't care, I was getting to use my brain. And I was making money. And I was home, I got to see that little kid's face all the time. But then you get to the place where you hit a limit on the hours you can work. You can only especially with teeny baby like he was, you can't work all day, every day, even when you're home, even like working at night or all that stuff like you hit a lot you hit a limit. And I needed more flexibility. And I needed to be able to control the work I was doing. Because in the beginning, when you start a business, you take on whatever work you can to pay the bills. And then I got to a point I was like, Okay, well now I want to be able to start choosing the work I want to do. And I knew that I had to uplevel my services. And all of that training and knowledge I had on Wall Street was a different kind of thing that I was going to need here.

Here, I felt like I needed to learn more about management. I'd never managed a team before any of that kind of stuff. So I enrolled in the OBM certification. I told my clients in advance, I was up leveling, like my skills. I told my clients in advance that I was up leveling my skills, and that I was going to be raising my rates, that I was going to have these high level skills and management that were going to be really beneficial to them. And it was a big jump from being a VA to being thought of as a higher level OBM manager. But there were holes in that scenario. And the training is very focused around launches, and marketing. And I gotta tell you, I didn't want to do either one of those. So I started to get very frustrated that I didn't want to I don't like launches. I don't like having to have emergency link problems at 2am on a Saturday. I just don't love it. So what was I going to do next? I was like the finance girl in my group, because everyone else was like launches and marketing. Yay. And I was like so there was no HR training or finance training in that certification at that time, at least. And it didn't really provide any kind of strategy training. I want it to be high level. I wanted to grow my business. So as I was going through this work is coming in, I'm still implementing, I'm going to the certification, all of that. But I got to raise my rates, which was a big jump. That was a big jump from being a VA to OPM. And by now there was more work than I could handle. My clients were growing. And we were their trusted partner. started again. By now there was more work than I could handle. My clients were growing, and I was their trusted partner. I had access to their bank accounts, I knew all their numbers and I had passwords for their whole life. I was trusted and when they grew, they wanted me to stay there and grow with them. I was also bringing on new clients, which seemed crazy to me. Now the amount of work there was at that point. And I was very slow, slow, slowly starting to bring on help. Everyone tells you you just started an agency, but it is much more complicated than that. And I think a lot of people rush to bring on help. And I was slow about it, I was scared to give away those that trusted my work to people I didn't know. So I, I grew slowly there. But having a team meant that I could take on more of that work, and have more flexibility. It wasn't just me anymore. It wasn't just me sitting at a computer all day freaking out that I was trying to get it all done. It wasn't me working the entire vacation that we would go on. Because I had no one else to take over. And a god forbid I actually told people I was going on vacation. I wasn't the only one who could do something now. And more bandwidth for Reynolds OBM meant more money. And me personally working less hours, I had backup. If I want to take a day off, I could be sick. Isn't that amazing? It's incredible to be able to grow that agency to bring on more people to help other people

grow and have to help them grow their businesses, right. Like I have these amazing women that I work with who are growing their businesses along with me.

And I want to say here, I want to make a note of the growth speed. You're gonna hear a lot of marketing people that say to someone that they grew to a certain number in a small timeframe. Sometimes those people aren't telling the truth. And sometimes they are. But please do not compete with that. It's their life and their choice what they're gonna do. You get to pick what you want. I chose to grow slower. I choose, I chose to bring my I chose to bring on team members slowly and make sure that they were really trained well. I didn't just throw people in and hope for the best that is asking for mistakes. I chose to be there at drop off for my son at school every day. And to be at every school play and Mother's Day tea. I chose not to work at night, only when he was at school. So that when my husband came home from work, and my son came home from school, we had dinner, we spent time as a family. I didn't want to just be in my office all the time not seeing my family. That was a huge part of the reason I wanted to get out of the city. I didn't want to do it to myself again. So could I have grown faster? Sure. But what if I liked? But would I have liked my life? Probably not. So don't. So in this evolution your business is going to take make it your own evolution, pick the things you want to do. And work at the speed you want to go at. Don't even look around. There's a reason they put blinders on horses and a horse race. So the horse can't look around and see what's going on. They're just worried about, they can just focus on their own race, on their own running and how they're going to do on their own. Don't look around.

Okay, so back to our story. So now I have a full roster of retainer clients. By the way, the way we worked here, we only have retainer clients, we were in their businesses, managing the day to day operations, you know, taking care of accounts receivable, hiring, helping hire people running all the paperwork, doing all that kind of stuff. That's the day to day stuff, keeping everyone organized and running. And that's what we did. And we did that on an ongoing basis. Every month retainer. I had a team that was client facing. We had grown to a point where it wasn't just me and my team of people in the background like we had client facing people. So my clients knew they were so my clients knew who they were. And they handled it like client, you know, account managers. It wasn't just me. Oh, so let's start again. I had a team that was client facing, taking care of clients and totally kicking ass. They were highly trained, they were really detailed, and really responsible people. It's a dream. But I wanted to grow my skills. I didn't want to be in the day to day forever. And that I gotta tell you was a really hard part for me to break away from. Because so much of my value in my head was the fact that I knew everything. That back in the day, I could rattle off account numbers for clients off the top of my head if I needed to make trades. Or I knew exactly where the folders were, or I knew exactly where everything was, or how to do it. I knew all the names, I knew all the faces, I knew the processes. And I really thought of myself in that light, that that was my superpower. But it wasn't, it was really handy. But that's not what I'm great at. It's not what I'm only great at. That's not I may be great at all that, but it's not the only thing I'm great at. And that was hard to get past. How can I ever get away from that? How can I ever hand over my team? How can I ever hand over these things that my clients need to my team, they're not going to know all the things? Well, I gotta tell you from hindsight, now, they are great. And they have completely done it. And I didn't have to worry, but of course I do.

So I now want to learn like this strategy, I want to learn these. I want to learn high level strategy. I want to be a strategic partner, I want to feel confident offering that. And that is when I found the Director of

Operations certification. So I went through the DOO certification. It was a huge boost for me. Not only was a boost of knowledge with this whole infrastructure and framework for strategic planning that I could take an offer, and I'm licensed to offer as a service, but the confidence to go through and offer that and know that I am well trained in it. And the confidence to know that I have a really great hiring system and all the other things you'll teach us. But the most important thing is that community. Natalie Gingerich who is the founder of the duo has really developed this incredible community. And that has been priceless to me just having that network of women around me or just someone just say, what the hell I've had the worst day and have someone I meet here, you want to talk about it. That's been incredible. So it totally upheveled so many things at one time. But then I had to make a choice about growth, because things are going well. And you think let's just ride it out.

But I wanted to start making some really intentional decisions about what I was doing with my business and my team. Like with a team in place, I could keep expanding organically, right? My clients are growing, they're asking for more of my time or our time. New people are coming in, I'm getting discovery calls, people are looking for strategy. People are like, Oh, you're a DOO now, oh, I could use that whatever. But to continue to expand the agency in a very quick manner, which is against all of what I do. I'm a three quickstart few call me people. I need to change most of my business functions right now into marketing functions. And I would primarily become a marketer. I would become a marketer to feed the growing team beast. When you have a big team like that, you need to keep bringing in work to pay them. And the tricky thing is, as we've talked about, I don't really love marketing. It's not my first love. I mean, I can sit here and talk strategy about it or what I think people should do. But I don't want to do that every day. Not all day. I love a good spreadsheet. I love building SOPs. I'm like the nerd who like loves it. I love the strategy and talking to people and figuring out how to help their businesses. I didn't want to market all day. So there was a conscious effort to not grow this team into a 30 person agency team. So the other option was to keep the agency humming at a certain size. But use my personal time, the time I was spending in the business for higher ticket clients or higher ticket offers. This is where that strategy training came in. And it was appealing to me because I would still be doing the work I really liked doing. And my team would be here to help with that implementation, which means that they would still have more work to do. So I'm still supporting their businesses. And I'm still helping grow the agency, but not at a crazy level. And I'd also get to do the work I really loved instead of becoming a master marketer. So this is how I started thinking about VIP days. So this has become. So we talked about this a few weeks ago, what a VIP day was, and there are short intensive sessions, looking for a huge transformation.

And that short time, these are great for people that don't want to wait to get this, they don't want to sign up for a six month coaching course, whatever. They really would like to get this going right now. Or it's just for people that aren't ready to have us in their business all day every day. Maybe they're not big enough right now to afford to have someone managing that. So this is a way to get like a big jumpstart in your business in one day. I think Gary just started the motorcycle. Let me go. Hold on a second. So that meant even though I didn't want to grow a huge team for capacity, I could still help my business grow, I could still make more money, my team would still be making money and have work and growing their businesses. But it wouldn't get so unwieldy. And that is what how I want to do it. I know other teams have huge agencies and they have all this work. Because they like the marketing. They don't like the doing. I don't. So I built it the way I wanted to have it be. So I've built it the way I wanted it to have.

So I've built this the way I wanted the business today. I think that's one of the most important things if you would listen to nothing else today. If you are building a business, build your business. It's so important because it's what's going to make you the happiest. Okay, so now I've got VIP days and retainers and I'm doing strategy sessions from the strategic mapping that I've learned in the do cert. And I've all these great offers, and it's going so well.

Meanwhile, Natalie at the DOO added the section called the business bootcamp to the certification and one of the things that was doing was taking the four business models in online business and breaking them out and you would choose which path you were going to go through and then you go 12 weeks with a coach to really break down all of these things under that kind of business model and the four if you're wondering our retainer that is like ongoing work project work which is work where you sign up to get a thing done like build a website and then it's over. Really Gary I'm gonna keep going hopefully you can hear this and then products which is you know, selling a product either digital or physical and then agency and she holds please I want to redo the last part just in case. So in case you're wondering the four business models that he broke down were retainer which is that ongoing work month after month, project work which is you know, like building a website, there's like a thing and then it's over products, either digital like templates and things like that or physical products or an agency and stuff. I love the agency, she asked me to be the coach for those agents. She asked me to be the coach for the agency model. And I joke Now that may have been because I was the only one who loved it. So many people will try to build an agency and make a mess of it. They have no systems in place, they don't try to do any, anything structured in any kind of way. And they don't make any decisions. And they rarely make it. That sounds terrible. Many people try to build one, and it becomes a mess. And then they become they. And then they hate the very idea of it. And then they will say how terrible agency is. And there is a method to my madness, I guess. But I love my agency. So I was happy to help others build their agency and love it too. And we did three rounds with the agency model with this business boot camp. And the format is changing now.

So for 2021, it's a little bit different. And they're not going to be that breaking out the agency as much in that same way. And I'm a little sad, because I just got off the second to last call with my last round of agency, Coach Ease. And I love these women. So there definitely needs to be a shout out for Rachel P, Rachel Kay, Joanna won that and Louise you five have been incredible this year. And I'm going to get a little sad about it right now. I have loved seeing them every week, and really helping shape their offers and businesses into something they're really going to love. Even though in the beginning, they didn't even know that they wanted to be agencies. And with the end in sight, one of them in the group reached out to me and told me that if I had a coaching program of my own, she would sign right up for it. And I just like, this was such a shock to my system. I had never, ever planned to be a coach. I kind of made fun of a lot of coaches because they were so cheesy, or they were so bad. And I was like I will never be like that. But after teaching these, these women and a few from the other rounds that really like became my friends and we really got into things and that sounds terrible. But after coaching these ladies and the two rounds before, like really getting into those businesses, it was such exciting work. I loved it. Um, and it made so much sense. Like as soon as she said to me, You should do this. I was like, Huh, well, now my first thought is, that's a dumb idea. And my next thought is, Ah, that's a great idea. So, I have started one-on-one coaching. And my I love the work. And I've come up with a like. So

I have started one-on-one coaching. The day I announced I was good to start. Um, this is rough. You made a comment here. I don't want that. Let me so this makes so much sense, right? It's so exciting.

And as I really thought about how much I love this work, it was so easy to build out what I wanted to do as a coach. And this is going to be like a blend of coaching and mentorship, right? I mean, most people come to me because they want advice about building an agency because I seem to be so happy about it and so many others aren't. And there's not a lot of courses and all the other stuff around agency building. So I came up with this plan. And the day I announced I was going to start doing this. This blend of coaching and mentoring. I got it Yes. And to be clear of this mess with my head. People were asking for a service I didn't even offer yet. I am a person who likes to worry for a long time and need 1000 people tell me it's okay before I move forward on certain things. Things like this that are scary and new. I like to worry about them for a while. And I didn't I didn't worry. I am so frigging excited about this show freak in excited. So I mean, I know my business, and I know my agency. And I want to share all the ways that I've been able to have success and help other women and help other women grow their businesses, it has given me such enormous freedom to have this business. And to see my kid and my husband and my dog, like, I get to work with my dog next to me all day, like that was my dream when I was on Wall Street, working all day and have my dog next to me, and going for walks randomly. And like, That's it, I'm living the dream. So currently, I have gone. So I've gone through all these different iterations of this business, from VA to OBM, to adding in do stuff and strategy and VIP days and all of this. So to sum up here, where the current state of affairs is, I am offering coaching and mentoring one on one to people probably interested in starting small business, or to people that are looking, or thinking or whatever worrying about agency, although, you know, small business in general, do OBM, that kind of thing. I'm offering agency now. Let me start this whole section. So I'm offering this kind of blended coaching, mentoring, one on one to small business owners. I think that, my, my, I think I think that my experience in agency is going to be such a great area to share with people. Because I love it. And it's really let me grow my business. Incredibly. I'm also doing these VIP days based around systems intensives to get that jumpstart operational setup going and I nerd out on it, I love it, I love it.

Then there is strategic mapping, the got it. Oh, I forgot about the fucking name, start over. Offer coaching mentoring, then there's the Get your act together. section of my business. Fuck. So current state of offers to sum up. Now that we've gone through all these iterations of things, we have this kind of get your act together. theme going, we have the coaching with me one on one, this coaching mentoring blend for small business owners that is based around, I think it's going to be a lot of people interested in agency and wanting to kind of map that out and work that out and see how that's gonna go. And I'm so excited to kind of share my experience there. Because I love my agency, and I love my business and my team and being able to, to help other small businesses to grow. I mean, it's incredible, like just the freedom that I have in my life that I didn't, for most of the last 15 years. Then we have the VIP days, which are based around strategic objectives, and that mapping process that I am licensed with the duo, then there's the VIP days with the strategy, then, of course, there's my VIP systems intensive, where you can get a jumpstart to get your business all organized. And then we have these ongoing retainers that we do that, you know, we take on the clients that we really, really love to work with. Our clients don't leave so that doesn't. I've had clients with me for the full five years. They don't leave. We are a really trusted partner. So that was really bad. And then, of course, last but not least, the

Sink Handle Podcast, where I come to you every Tuesday unless I've gotten a COVID shot, which is your paying attention. I wasn't here last week because that thing kicked my ass again.

And this is my place where I get to talk to everyone about what I think I can share with you about growing your business. These different things that we're working on hiring and delegating and getting your numbers in order or let you know bringing out different guests that I think will be helpful to you in growing your business. And that's just for you free to know. We started the Sink Handle podcast almost a year ago. And it's been an incredible journey. So I can't even believe I was almost gonna leave this out. A year ago, we were in lockdown, and everyone was in pure panic. No one knew what was going on. I was freaking out. And I wanted to start a podcast to talk to other business owners and say, you've got this, don't panic. We're gonna get through it together. This is the way I can help you. And just trying to give good solid advice to help people through a tough time. And we just kept going lockdowns Yes, we're depending on where you are. It's less or more. It's been almost a year now that like we've been doing this and I can't believe how many of you are listening. Frankly, it's so exciting to see those numbers. And I do totally look like a nerd at all download members, because I love that you're listening. And you're and you're talking to me about your businesses and reaching out and telling me that something really resonated where you totally needed the ass kicking that I yelled that you totally the ass kicking I gave on that episode. So thank you for listening to this. And I guess, how do I juggle all of this? Well, wine, obviously, if you are on my Instagram, you will see that we do bubble Friday there. So there are a lot of bubbles, where we celebrate wins every Friday. But mostly I do the best I can.

This is a constantly evolving thing. And now I'm working on building out entirely new systems, around businesses around marketing and coaching rounds I didn't even ever plan or dream of being in. And I'm here and I'm so excited. So I mean, some of these things I went looking for. Right, I signed up for the deal. Oh, I signed up for the OBM. I looked at how to get on to being a VA. But other things have just been really just serendipity just found along the way. And that's why I'm so excited for the future and the next year years of this business. So thanks for being along this ride for the last year of other podcasts in the last five of my business last month, April 2021 was five years in this business and it's completely changed my life. This business has completely changed my life. I get to this business has completely changed my life. Going from working part time as an executive admin in someone else's world to running an agency and coaching other women on how to grow their own businesses and paying my bills. right from the beginning. It was just so simple. I just wanted to be able to pay my bills. And now I get to invest in my but I have investments. I can invest in my business. I can take care of my family. And it's so exciting. So thank you for being part of the ride and I'll see you next week.