

On Your Terms Podcast Episode 29:
10 Reasons Why My First Business Was an Epic Failure

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:00:00] Holy cannoli, I've got big news to share with you today. Listen closely if you're way past due for legally legitimizing your online business because this is for you. I'm hosting my very first live workshop of the year on Tuesday, February 15th, and Wednesday, February 16th at 1:00 PM Eastern, 10:00 AM Pacific to teach you how to get legally legit and make this your best business year yet, and I want you to sign up and join me there.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:00:25] The workshop is called Five Steps to Legally Protect and Grow Your Online Business, and I'll also answer your questions during the live legal Q&A at the end of the workshop. During the one hour workshop, you'll learn how to form your business properly to be personally protected, what your website needs to be legally legit, how to properly work with people online, how to keep copycats away from your content, and the number one mindset shift that you've got to make to legitimize and grow your business this year.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:00:50] I'll teach you all that, plus you'll get access to my legal knowledge during the Q&A at the end of my free one hour live legal workshop. Just head to samvanderwielen.com/oyt-live-workshop, drop your email address and name, and I'll send you the link to join us live on February 15th or 16th at 1:00 PM Eastern, 10:00 AM Pacific for the live workshop and legal Q&A with me. If you can't make it live, sign up anyway, because I'll make sure you get the replay.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:01:17] I'll even be giving away some exciting prizes during the workshop, things like mics, cameras, Starbucks gift cards, and so much more for those who show up live, so make sure that you mark it on your calendar and clear your appointments after you sign up just so you can join us live. This is the best live event for you if you're ready to legally legitimize your business, so head to samvanderwielen.com/oyt-live-workshop, and sign up to attend the live Five Steps to Legally Protect and Grow Your Online Business workshop and Q&A on February 15th or 16th now.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:01:53] I'm just going to be honest with you, as always, my first business was a big fat failure. Big fat one, failure, epic mess, whatever you want to call it. It was a disaster. And I'll tell you a little bit more about that and how we can learn from it in a sec. Until then, welcome to On Your Terms. I'm your host, Sam Vander

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Wielen, an attorney turned entrepreneur who helps online coaches and service providers legally protect and grow their online businesses using my DIY legal templates and The Ultimate Bundle. So, each week, I bring you legal tips, but I also share behind the scenes of growing a business and helping you learn how to grow a business On Your Terms.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:02:31] So, if you're new here, welcome. I always start off by doing a little bit of a coffee talk segment about what's going on over here behind the scenes. So, right now, in real life, I am deep, deep in planning mode for a promotion that'll be going on from the end of January almost to the end of February, actually. And you'll be hearing all about it right now, but nobody knows about it right now as I'm recording this.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:02:57] So, it's one of those situations where like we're really heavy into planning, and doing all the social media marketing, and all the strategy, and the emails, and all the tech stuff that has to get set up, and setting up all the webinars, and just doing all this stuff behind the scenes. And it's kind of funny because it always feels like a secret wedding, because you're like preparing to do all these things, but nobody knows about it yet.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:02:57] And then, we just kind of make an announcement, and the door is open, and I've only ever run my free live workshop twice live, and it's got thousands and thousands of people sign up each time. So, it's kind of cool. It feels like we're planning a little secret wedding, but it's always funny to me, because when we do open the doors, I think people don't even realize how much goes into it. It's so wild.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:03:42] If you ever want to hear like the behind the scenes kind of breakdown on how I run live promos, I only have started them last January, actually, so it's been about a year. For like the four years in business before that, I never did any live webinars, I never did any live promotions, anything like that. So, now, I've had a lot of experience doing them. There are a lot of fun.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:04:02] I've learned a lot about them. I've shared on the podcast about that before, but I'd be happy to do like an in-depth one. The other thing I've been working on a lot behind the scenes is developing a YouTube channel again.

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So, I started a YouTube channel a while back and just didn't have the bandwidth or the team, frankly, to support me in consistently developing the kind of content that I wanted to develop.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:04:27] Not to say that you need a whole team of people in order to produce those, but for the kinds of videos that I want to do where I really do have to do like my research and outline when I'm giving people legal tips or something like this, it's very like content-heavy, so there's a lot of prep that I have to do. My business isn't in a place anymore where I can be the person who conceptualizes, outlines, records, uploads, edits, and then markets, and all that kind of stuff, because there's just too much—like I'm being pulled in so many different directions these days.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:05:00] So, I waited until I had the resources in order to have some help with this, and that's been amazing and been very, very helpful. And just like with where I'm at in business, it literally just wouldn't get done otherwise. So, that's kind of what's going on around here. If you're on YouTube, go check me out at Sam Vander Wielen on YouTube. I've been posting completely like separate and native trainings to YouTube. So, if you're over there, come and say hi, I would love to see you.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:05:30] Okay. And with that, I want to get to the review of the week. In case you're new around here, every single week, I give a shoutout to a listener for leaving a review on Apple Podcasts, so this week's reviewer is Reina Crop. Reina left a review on Apple Podcasts, saying she "first stumbled upon Sam through an Instagram ad. I was impressed by the down to Earth ad copy and very quickly decided to buy her course."

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:05:53] She means The Ultimate Bundle. "From there, I found myself on the receiving end of her emails, which, again, were so refreshing. I love how transparent she was in what they were, and I found myself smiling when I read them. From there, I ended up on her podcast, subscribing and listening regularly. The first episode I listened to was her planning one for 2022, game changer. I've already seen an increase in sales, which I attribute to the tips I received in that podcast. I tend to have a million ideas and love following them all, but with her free planner, I decided to focus on just one area this quarter and it's already paid off in dividends."

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Sam Vander Wielen: [00:06:24] So, thank you so much, Reina, for leaving your review on Apple Podcasts. I also want to invite you to leave a review on Apple Podcasts for my show, On Your Terms, and you'll be entered to win a 25-dollar Starbucks gift card. All you have to do is leave a review on Apple, listen to the podcast, because I'll announce a winner each month at the last episode of each month, so be sure to submit your review now. You might even get a shoutout on a future episode and across social media. So, head on over to Apple Podcasts and leave a review.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:06:52] Alright. Let's get into this week's episode about 10 reasons why my first business failed. So, it was a totally different business. I wanted to talk with you this week about business setbacks, failure, overcoming, why some experiences happen to us, because I think we hear a lot about people's success, especially in online business, but we don't often hear about any setbacks or challenges that they've had.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:07:15] A lot of times, I feel like people leave out the gaps when they tell you about—like they don't contextualize their success, right? So, they'll tell you that they've had all this success, but maybe they don't tell you that they had a failed business, or they ran that course five times and it failed, or no one showed up to their webinar, until they finally got to the place where they understood how to better run webinars, or something like that, or they maybe don't talk about like educational experience, or certain privileges that they've had, or family experience and access.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:07:43] And I just always find it really important to be completely transparent and share what I've gone through, and then how that's actually helped. I want you to realize like every experience you have is a valuable one that can build upon each other and can actually be useful in the future. And I definitely don't want you to feel alone if something that you're doing now is not working or you're beating yourself up for maybe something you've done in the past that hasn't worked.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:08:08] So, I think it's really important. I think it's also important because we hear a lot of people share about how like their business skyrocketed to success, right? Like how they had a really quick climb. And first of all, I always laugh when people say that to me, because I'm like, I hope you know that I've been in

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business for like, now, five years in the legal business, but that I had this other first business, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:08:28] So, by no means, to me, that is not like an overnight success. It's a lot of time, and energy, and money, but also, I have had a lot of experiences that didn't go so well, right? So, I think we just hear about, for whatever reason, like this person was able to go from nothing to creating a seven-figure business in one year. And it's like, yeah, but they had two businesses before that that were like a flop or weren't that great, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:08:51] And we also see, as you know, as I mentioned a lot, we see people with very little to no experience touting how much money they're making, and money is often the only focus that you're really ever hearing about, right? And it might be true that they are making a lot of money, it might also not be true, different podcast for a different day, but let's say they are, that's not the only part of the story, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:09:17] That this person might be making a lot of money, but not delivering great results or might not be experiencing a lot of like happiness in their life. Ultimately, it doesn't even matter what they're doing, doesn't matter how much money other people are making or how much success they're touting on Instagram, what really matters is whatever your version of that is and whether or not you're building the kind of business that's going to allow you to have that kind of success.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:09:39] Your success might look different than their success, right? And that's totally fine. I also just think that if we don't learn from our "failures" as usual as I say often on this podcast, let's just all like put air quotes around failure every time I say it, because like every time I say failure, I mean like something that didn't go as we hoped, right? Something that felt like a learning experience or some sort of feedback, some life feedback.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:10:02] But let's just say, if we don't learn from our failures, then we've really missed an opportunity, in my opinion, because I think that because of this kind of like false image you've been sold on Instagram that things are supposed to be quick and easy, you think that there aren't supposed to be any sort of failures, or

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setbacks, or bumps in the road, or ups and downs, right? You think that everything is supposed to be fast, and smooth, and intuitive, but I don't think that that's true.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:10:29] And I don't want you to feel like you're doing something wrong if that hasn't been your experience. That hasn't been my experience and that's why I want to share it with you today. So, for any of you who aren't familiar with like my background or what's been going on, I want to tell you a little bit about my story so that you understand why I started this first business that was a health coaching business, and why I think it was an epic failure, and what I took away from it that I'm hoping you can learn from, too.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:10:54] So, in 2012, I graduated from law school. I was a baby lawyer and I was 23. And I took the bar in two states, passed, and started working at a big fancy pants law firm. And I was super miserable. I've shared about that a lot everywhere, pretty much, but I was super, super miserable, hated being a lawyer. And in 2015, when I was still practicing as an attorney, I started a food blog like just in my free time called Barrister's Beet, B-E-E-T, and I thought that this would give me some sort of outlet to creating some content and developing my passion for cooking and food, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:11:34] That is like, if you know me, you know my literal ultimate passion thing I would do all day long is like cook, talk about food, travel to go eat food, just read about food. I just am obsessed with cooking. So, I started this food blog. My very first recipe was for steel-cut oats that you can make, like meal prep steel-cut oats. It was terrible. The photos were terrible. Everything about it was really terrible.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:11:59] But it just started to allow me to have like some form of expression, like I needed to get this out. I don't know if you've ever felt that way, like you just had a passion, and you were doing something that was so different, and like I had no place to like put all of this energy, and love, and attention for food. So, I started this food blog. And I think it was around that time when I started that food blog that I had really been into food blogs for a very long time since I was in college, I'd say, but in 2015, when I started my own food blog, terribly, talk about another thing that failed, I really fell into this like health coaching world, right?

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Sam Vander Wielen: [00:12:37] Because I didn't even know that that existed. I didn't know what a coach was. I remember having probably all the same reactions to those terms that you have or that people you know have had, when like I didn't even know what this industry was. I didn't understand what people were doing. And I remember much to like my kind of surprise and delight of finding like this entire marketplace of people on Instagram, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:13:01] Finding like, wow, there are like all these people doing this kind of work and like there are people out there who are doing this for a living. And I just needed that first little nudge from the universe to even allow me to see what was possible and that I wasn't alone in feeling like I loved food, or movement, or travel, or whatever it was that people were talking about on social media, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:13:24] So, I think social media really gave me an—Instagram, in particular, gave me this like very visual awakening that I needed to even know that this stuff existed. And I started seeing that there were other people who had been leaving their jobs, leaving corporate, doing all of these things. I met and reached out to my friend, Simi Botic, who I've talked about on the podcast many times, and she was a lawyer who left and became a health coach, and I reached out to her, and we became friends, and I just started to get some of those anchors that I really needed in my life to be exposed to what the options even were, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:13:58] So, as I was working on my baby food blog that was terrible, I signed up for and took a certification program for health coaches, because I kind of wanted to see more about what like coaching exactly was about, really get to know better the scope of practice. As a lawyer, I knew like, okay, I know that I can't talk about certain things in certain ways, but I want to see like, what can a health coach do? How are they working with people? I remember having all the same questions that you probably had in the beginning, which is like, wait, so I just like meet people on Zoom, and we just talk, like that's it?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:14:31] So, I wanted to learn a lot more about that. And I had grown up in a very, very health-focused household. My mom is an integrative physician, so she went to med school when I was a baby. So, like from the literal time of diapers, I've been talking about this kind of stuff. And so, this was always on my mind, very much

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a focus of my life. My mom was obsessed with how food was medicine, all these things. So, I just like dove into this certification program, and I really, really loved it.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:15:00] So, I started that business on the side while I was still practicing law. And in 2016, actually, on August 19th, 2016, I walked out of the law firm doors for the last time. So, I left and I worked on my health coaching business. I had gotten a lot of that stuff, like all the stuff that I teach you all to do, so the registration, the website, the policies, all the contracts, I had gotten all that done.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:15:24] I had started to work on some marketing. I had even started to get a couple of clients, all from like people I knew in real life, and word of mouth, and just some in-person networking at that point, nothing online. And I left on that August 19th, 2016. I walked out, and I went all in on this health coaching business. And I lasted about a year, not even, and it was an epic failure for many different reasons. I'm going to tell you 10 reasons why I think it failed.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:15:57] But when I say failure, what I mean is not that it wasn't financially successful. The business actually did make money, not nearly enough and not for me to like live off of, but it was generating money, and the money was growing a little bit over time. I didn't know any of the things I know now about how to scale or how to maximize some of these things. But anyway, the business, when I say it was a failure, it was not a right fit for me, as you can probably tell for like how much I love business stuff.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:16:28] It just wasn't the right fit. I also think I crossed over this idea of like your passion being your business, and once I got into it, it started to suck the life out of my passion, right? Because it was like, I don't want to document every meal that I make, I don't want to record myself making a recipe, I don't want to like—I don't know. It felt like work, right? It didn't feel natural. It didn't feel very easy to me, which this business feels like the complete opposite, so that was a good sign to me.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:16:56] And I think it was a failure in the sense that I couldn't make it sustainable like long term and everything just didn't feel natural. Clients would cancel, a lot of the same things, actually, that happen to you, because I know because

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you share with me, that people would sign up for a six-month package, and then two or three months in, say, I'm good, thanks, like you can just cancel the rest of my payments.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:17:19] I had somebody buy like a package for his wife one time, and then he told me that once he told his wife about the coaching package that he bought for her, she was like, "No, thanks", and he asked for a refund. And I remember this one day where like a bunch of stuff like that happened back to back, to back, like someone canceled, somebody asked for a refund, and I think I had like a really bad client session, like one of those client sessions where I felt like I was pulling teeth.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:17:44] The person I was on the phone was only answering in yes or no questions, and it was just impossible, and I was just like, what am I doing? I'm so bad at this. This doesn't feel natural, like it just didn't feel right, right? I didn't feel like that's where my power, my strength really was, and something felt off. Around that same time, people kept reaching out to me, and saying, "Hey, I know you're doing like health coaching stuff now, but I know you also used to be a lawyer, so what's the deal with this LLC thing? And like what do I need for my website policies? And how do I handle this copycat?"

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:18:18] Like people are asking me all these legal questions, and I started to notice something very interesting, which was that I was having those kind of miserable moments as a health coach, not loving my sessions, not loving the marketing, not really feeling like showing up, and then when people would reach out to me about this other business, legal stuff, I would get really excited, because I felt really useful.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:18:39] I felt like what I was telling them was actually making a difference and that it was like overwhelmingly helpful, because people would just be like, "Wow, I have been like trying to figure that out for like a week and you just explained to me in like 30 seconds what I needed to know." And I would be like, "Oh, cool. I mean, this stuff is all like buried in the back of my head, I'm a lawyer, right? I know I can help you with this."

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:19:02] And I know that like for me and my personality, it feels really nice to feel helpful. I'm sure that's for you, too. I think everybody wants to feel

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helpful, and needed, and seen, and all these kinds of things. So, I think that that was like the little lightbulb moment that I needed to turn off the health coaching business and give this legal thing a go.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:19:25] So, I want to share with you 10 reasons why I think that that health coaching business was such a failure, and kind of on the other side of the coin, why the legal business has been literally the complete opposite. Not that things have always been easy, and super fast, and successful, but this has gone completely differently for me. So, the first reason why I think that my first business failed and something I really want to caution—and all of these things are things I want to caution you against or help you to to shift through.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:19:54] The first thing is that I tried to be like everyone else, right? So, I think it's very natural when you're coming into a new like field, new world, just like I was explaining to you, like I didn't even know health coaching existed, I didn't know this whole like online coaching, online business world existed. It was so new to me that what I did, I think, subconsciously was just say, okay, here are all these people who look "successful", and therefore I'll just do whatever they're doing, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:20:25] If I just mimic them, and I don't mean in a copying way, obviously, I was still a lawyer and I knew not to copy anybody, but I just meant like, okay, she's a health coach, and she talks about X, Y, and Z, she offers private coaching, a group program, and a course. Okay. So, I'll create private coaching, a group program, and a course. Like it was just like the structure and the way that people were working with people. I figure, okay, if I do it like that, then I will automatically be successful.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:20:49] Funny enough, I feel like, now, I see this with people doing this to me in like the legal space that whenever I've been copied or like I see—people will often write to me telling me, "Hey, so-and-so, who's like a legal templates person, she's copying off of you, or she's using this, or she's like offering the same product", whatever. So, people will reach out to us all the time, and we go and look at it, we investigate it, and it's funny, it's like it's the same thing.

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Sam Vander Wielen: [00:21:12] It's just that they're trying—I think what they do is they look at other people's businesses, and they're like, "Oh, like the way that Sam's offering these things, like that's the structure. And so, I should just like offer it like that, because she seems successful." And I think we often base this off of a lot of external things, like how many followers people have, or if people talk about how much money they make, or whatever.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:21:31] And so, we kind of just like assume that they are successful, and then we try to be like that. The thing that I really want to caution you against is not only is this a bad strategy, but like the fact that we think that the way someone else is running their business is the standard or the structure that we need, I think, sets us up for some failure in the sense that we can't really stand out or be different.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:21:58] And particularly, when we think that like our fields are overcrowded, that there are so many other people doing what we do, it's even more important that you do things in a way that is not only best for you, but maybe that's a bit innovative, right? And I think that's what went like really differently for me when I started the legal business was that I looked around, there were way fewer people doing it then, and I was like, hmm, this doesn't really speak to me, like for whatever reason, like there was something about like the vibe, or the way something was offered, or even like the branding, or the type of person, the niche.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:22:32] And I saw holes and I plugged them, right? I tried to be different. I tried to plug the differences, instead of trying to copy and mimic the things that were already being done, right? So, there's only so much we can do about creating contracts and things like this, but like there are minor differences that can make a big impact, like the way that you offer something, the level of support, the level of access, the vibe, the community you create.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:22:55] There are differences that you can create. So, I would remind you gently not to treat the way that you might see other people in your industry doing something and working with people as like the way to work with people. It's just a way. And you can do things differently. You can offer programs differently. You can

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create something that no one's ever even done before, right? In fact, I think that's a great way to stand out.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:23:19] Okay. So, the second reason why I think that my first business failed, and this is kind of building on number one, is that I was intimidated by the crowded field, right? And so, that led me to some of that like, oh, there are so many people doing this, but clearly, that just means I need to like hop in the water and do exactly what they're doing, right? And instead of looking around at the crowded field and seeing how I needed to set myself apart, I just spent a lot of time being like, this is stupid, nobody wants to hear about this, people are already talking about this, no one cares, like there's no way I'm going to catch up, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:23:53] I didn't even know what like lack of mindset was or like abundance at that time, and I didn't look for any of those sorts of resources, but I just remember being really, really intimidated by how many people were there. Now, if you've heard any of my podcast before or you're in any of my programs, you've heard me talk about how it doesn't matter that there are so many people doing what you're doing.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:24:15] The fast track to making sure that you blend in with the crowd is trying to be like everybody else, but if you actually lean into whatever makes you uniquely you, then I think you will be able to stand out no matter how many other people are doing what you're doing, right? So, for me, for example, like when I started the legal business, I was like, part of why I wanted to—going back to number one, is like, I wanted to be different, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:24:38] I wanted to just be me. I wasn't like intentionally trying to be like wacky and unique, but it's like I just didn't see anybody that kind of would have spoken to me if I were you, and I thought, I want to be like, the cozy, chill lawyer, right? Like not the fear-driven one, not the one that's like, you're going to get sued and you're going to lose everything. Like I wanted the entire business to be based off of you sitting down at a coffee shop, having coffee with me, and just being like, "Hey, Sam. So, like what's the deal with an LLC? Do I need one?" Right?

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Sam Vander Wielen: [00:25:10] That is like the literal scenario and conversation I have in my mind. To this day, five, six years later of creating every piece of content, it's just like, I just want this to be like friends that are having coffee, right? And so, I made coffee a central theme. I made the colors very like cozy, and warm, and inviting. I really thought about it from every angle of like, how can we make this a cozy space? How do we make it inviting?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:25:35] How do we make people feel like no question is a dumb one? Because there are none. I really wanted everything in the business to feel that way. And so, I didn't let the other people who were doing this intimidate me to make me feel like there was no space for me, because I thought about what there was space for, right? So, I want to encourage you to do the same.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:25:55] The third reason why I think that my first business failed was that my content, my post at that time were really more about what I was doing, or like what I was up to, or my meal. We're just like advertising straight to my services, being like I have one spot open, like I have a three-month coaching package like available or something. It was all like this content directly to that stuff, but I didn't make content that was helpful for others.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:26:23] Now, you have to remember, when I started my business, the social media landscape looked very, very different. So, there were no Reels. People didn't create like infographics. Instagram was very much still just like sharing photos, and they were like highly filtered and edited, and all that kind of stuff, but none of the stuff that we're doing now on Instagram was happening then. But if I were you, I just want to make this helpful for you, I want to encourage you to create content that is helpful for other people, for your ideal clients, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:26:51] So, if I were you, I'd be creating Reels, that you can go back and listen to my Reels episode. That's episode 18 of my podcast, On Your Terms. In that podcast episode, I teach you how to create Reels for your business. So, if I were you, I'd be creating Reels that are super value-driven, right? Tips, tricks, tutorials, like all that kind of stuff. I would be creating shareable, digestible infographics on Instagram.

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Sam Vander Wielen: [00:27:16] I would be doing live topics almost as if they were baby webinars. I would be using Instagram Stories these days to more curate like a personal connection and a behind the scenes look of my business, and what I call walk-the-walk content of like showing your customers how you're embodying and doing whatever it is that you teach them to do, right? So, if it's to run a business, then you would show them how you're doing that.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:27:40] If it's to work out in a certain way, you'd be showing them that. If it's about prioritizing self-care, you'd be showing them those little tidbits in your day where you did prioritize yourself or where you did fit in a minute for yourself. So, you'd be showing that embodiment, and that walk-the-walk content, and stories. If you were on YouTube or had a podcast, the episodes would be like this, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:27:58] They'd be helpful for the other person, the person on the other end of the video or the podcast. So, if I were doing it all over again, and one reason why I think that the first business failed is that the polls just weren't focused on that, right? They were focused more on like, here's what I'm up to, which is more of, I'd say, a personal social media strategy, and I think it takes time in the beginning to just learn how to show that content, because that content is still helpful, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:28:26] Like you'll see me share on Stories or something about like making coffee in the morning, or taking Hudson for a walk, or like whatever I'm up to behind the scenes, but turning that into a story about like what I'm up to, and how that relates to you and what I do, whether it's that the business gives me time and freedom, whether this is the place where I go to get creative so that I can think of podcast episodes like this, that kind of stuff. So, it takes time. I think it's like a muscle that we strengthen over time to learn how to convert all of these things that we're doing into how that's helpful for other people. And you'll learn that with time, the more and more you spent time with customers, especially.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:29:01] Okay. The fourth reason why I think my first business failed is that my offers tried to help everybody in every way, right? Every budget, I was like, well, I have to have one option for people who can't maybe spend that much money on this, and then I should have another option for people who want like the premium

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and who like money is no object. And then, I'm going to have this product for like the busy mom, and then this product for like the professional who has no children yet.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:29:28] And I have like all these different ideas for some reason of like how I would design my offers to be accommodating to all these different people so that I could hit all these different people instead of really thinking of like who I was there to help, and then creating products or programs that were specifically designed to that person's lifestyle. Like maybe that person doesn't have time to sit down and have a course, or maybe that's the only thing they have time for.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:29:53] So, maybe that person doesn't have time for one-to-one calls or maybe that's what they love. Like you have to know your client's best, but I wish I would have designed the offers based on the client, and like the best results, and who I knew I wanted to work with, and who I could actually help, versus thinking I could create like a buffet of options, and then that way, I would like pull in all of these different people.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:30:15] My offers also didn't really have a specific spin of any sort, right? So, I just talked with one of my Ultimate Bundle members, Kim, who you're actually going to hear from in a future episode, Episode 31. But Kim is actually a teacher turned entrepreneur. And we were talking about some of the programs and offerings that she's creating right now, including these courses that are meant for parents who want to continue the education at home, who want to help their children work through some question or issue that they're having with learning, with school, with some area of study.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:30:49] And she wants to help parents who want to further that education at home have access to those resources. And so, she has like such a unique and specific spin on like, it's not just like, here's an online tutoring company. It's like, this is a course specifically for parents who want to sit down and help their children work through something but don't necessarily have the teaching skills or tools to know how to do so, right? And she is a super warm, super inviting person. And so, like she's the perfect person to do this.

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Sam Vander Wielen: [00:31:19] And she has the experience, right? She was a teacher of that nature. Like she was doing exactly this kind of work. She does do the private tutoring. So, she has such a specific spin. It was so funny talking with her the other day, and you'll hear her interview on February 21st, but it was so funny talking with her, because I was thinking like how she's nailing it in her first go, where when I had my first business, I was like, here's a general course about how to eat well, and it wasn't like for anyone, and it wasn't even specific about what that even meant. Like it just wasn't good. So, don't do that.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:31:51] Okay. The fifth reason why my first business failed versus this business is that I did not do any research or talk to my ideal clients beforehand. What I did was design all of my programs, my content, my offerings with what I thought they should have, right? I was basically throwing my idea of what I thought was right onto them, and saying, this is what you need, instead of finding out what they actually wanted.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:32:15] So, when I started this business instead, like I said, people were reaching out to me and asking me questions, but then what I did was take those conversations further. So, I used it as a little bit of research development, and said, I don't do this in my business. At that point, it was like I don't do that, right? I wasn't working as a legal business at all. So, I'd say like, this isn't actually like one of my offerings right now, but I'm very curious to talk to you more about what your questions are.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:32:41] Where have you tried looking? What were the things that you got caught up on? Have you checked out anybody who was doing this kind of work? What didn't you like? What didn't speak to you? What was missing? And I used all of those as research. I didn't really know it at the time, to be honest, but I was just curious and I kind of led with that curiosity. As things got closer and I decided to like really go all in on this business, I did have more formal like coffee talk-type things with people who I'd be like, tell me about your business, tell me about that, tell me what challenges you faced, tell me how things were different.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:33:15] So, I did all of that. And I talked to my ideal clients a lot more in this business. Also, as I was building the business, so this isn't something that

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only has to happen before you start your business, as I was building the legal business, I kept talking to people, right? I had free calls. I took notes on every call. I have a Google Doc that's like hundreds of pages with all these notes. Every time people would write to me or ask me a question, I would save it in what I call a sizzle file on Google Drive.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:33:41] And I would put like everything, I'd put their language, what they were asking about, what they do, like I just kept accumulating data, essentially, and that just ended up giving me so much like fuel, and ideas, and all this kind of stuff as the business went on, and I learned how to actually speak my customer's language, not my own, which is super important.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:34:00] And I think that even today, just on Friday, I just interviewed three of my Ultimate Bundle members, like I haven't done that in a while now, and it was so helpful to me to hear about what was going on in their lives and their businesses before they got the bundle, what the bundle was able to help them achieve. All of that stuff, it was so helpful to me. You can't underestimate, undervalue like just the impact that just simple conversations like that can have on you and your business.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:34:27] Okay. The sixth thing that I did wrong in my old business was that I picked a terrible business name. So, it came from a really good place. I was really excited about it. So, my business was called Hygge Wellness, H-Y-G-G-E. And it's a Danish concept, if you're not familiar with like getting cozy, and having small moments, and turning inwards, and it has to do with like light, and the feeling, and gathering, and coziness, and warmth, all these things.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:34:55] Really, it was a good idea. I was like, I had good intentions because the idea here was that I wanted to help people create more of those moments in their life, whether it was through cooking or self-care, but nobody understood the name, right? And so, basically, the first 10 minutes of every conversation was always like, "So, wait, what's the name? Wait, how do you spell it? So, tell me about this again. I don't understand, what is Hygge?"

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:35:17] And it was funny because after I started the business and I think basically after I shut it down, all of a sudden, Hygge took off and became this

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like international phenomenon, but I still don't think that it was a good idea, because first of all, it ended up being very annoying and frustrating. It's very difficult for people to find. They couldn't find the website. I didn't have any traction yet.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:35:39] So, like if you type in my name now with the wrong spelling, like it'll pull at my website, because I've written enough somewhere that it'll pull up something, right? But back then, it was like I had no traction, so nothing would come up, right? So, that was part of why it wasn't a good idea. The other thing I realized was that I didn't really think about the fact that when we create these kinds of brands, they really are personal brands in a sense that we have to be the face in the forefront. And so, I hadn't really thought about like, do I want a company or like do I have this idea that I'm going to be running like large group programs, I'm going to hire other coaches, or like do something like that, where then I could see it being helpful?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:36:18] I don't think your business always has to be named after you, don't get me wrong, but definitely something that would be easier to understand, maybe connote that it's a bit more of a personal brand, and not like—Hygge Wellness almost sounds like a spa to me, like somewhere that you would go, like a physical location. So, I just would have thought about it a bit differently. And again, not that you have to name it after yourself, but that's just something to consider, especially if you ever want to change your business name or like the type of business you're doing in the future.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:36:46] The seventh reason why I think that my first business failed is that I didn't want to create the value pack content that the business really needed in order to be helpful to other people until I speak to my ideal client. And I think that that was a really good way to see that I wasn't really that into it, right? It was more of my passion versus what I wanted to do for a living.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:37:06] So, when I started the health coaching business and I wanted to teach people how to cook, the obvious type of content that I should have been doing was cooking tutorials, cooking tips, cooking demos, having like little lists of things, and grocery lists, and shopping guides, and what people do now, where they like go to Trader Joe's and they show you the top 10 things to get at Trader Joe's right now,

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top 10 recommendations of things at Costco, and all that kind of content, the content that I love consuming now, right? I watch all those videos.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:37:36] I'm a sucker for like any of those Reels at Costco showing me like what to buy, but that was not what I wanted to do. Whenever it came time to actually do it, I'd be like, I just want to cook, I don't want to film it, I don't want to be on, this is my downtime, right? I feel like I have to be on to like go on Instagram Stories, and do this, and that, the other thing. But I just want to cook, I want to be in my PJs, I want to have my hair up, I don't really care.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:38:00] I feel like that was just a really good sign that that's not exactly what I wanted to do, because I didn't have the fire to put in the effort, right? And it might be also that if you're feeling this in any way in your business, it's not always that you like need to completely change the type of business you have, but maybe it's even the way that you're presenting the information.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:38:18] I'm a big believer in like showing up on social media on the platform that you really like, because wherever you really like it, you're going to show up more and you're going to show up better. So, if you really love like podcasting, for example, you just feel like you're in your element, people are going to get the best content from you there, right? So, it doesn't always have to be that you have to switch businesses, but it could be that you're trying to force yourself into one way of like marketing your business, one platform that just doesn't feel as comfortable to you.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:38:45] At the same time, I'm going to challenge you a little bit to try to differentiate between maybe some fear you have about something versus like truly not feeling like it's in your heart to do it, right? So, for example, if you're just afraid of being on video because you're afraid of how people will perceive you, and judge you, and what they'll think of you, or getting a nasty comment, or the way you look, or sound, or whatever on Stories, on Reels, on video, that's not the reason to be like, "Oh, I'll do a podcast, so I can like hide", right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:39:16] In those cases, we have to work on that. And I do think that we have to put ourselves out there, right? That's not the reason to run away. And the truth is, even if you start something like a podcast, you're going to have to be on

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Instagram Stories telling people about it. No one's going to listen to it if you're not marketing it. So, you're going to have to market it in other ways. And people are going to build very intimate connections with you if they see you somewhere on video, hear your voice somewhere.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:39:40] Those kinds of connections are going to go a lot faster and better if we allow people in, in that way, versus just writing, just showing static pictures, or something like that. So, you have to find what your comfort level is. I would just encourage you to like not make it a fear-driven decision. I would encourage you to make it an empowered decision, because it works best for you or best for your clients.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:40:04] The eighth reason why my first business didn't go so hot was that I did not get any help or support, I just consumed. I just consumed content. I consumed other people's ideas. I consumed like the concept of how to run a coaching business, but I never signed up for any sort of coaching program or anything like that. I was terrified to invest in myself. I was terrified to invest in the business, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:40:26] And I definitely, at that time, related to a lot of what you will share with me is that like, I don't want to invest in anything until I make money. And I think a lot of that came from this like, I don't want to invest in something until I make sure that this thing is going to work. I think that's basically what I was telling myself. Now, looking back on it, I think that it does take a little bit to learn and to move forward.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:40:51] Again, this has to be balanced. I'm going to talk about this actually in next week's episode, episode 30, about balancing investments versus like not just doing all this like buying all these courses and programs, and thinking that the next coach's course is going to be the thing that's going to help you finally be successful. It's a balance, though.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:41:09] I think actually being in like a group program environment could have really helped me at that time, because I really needed to have probably a space to bounce ideas off of, a place to talk with other people who were going for like the same thing, and really having some feedback on the way that I was marketing my business, learning more about marketing, learning more about social media strategy. I think that kind of stuff would have been very helpful to me at the time,

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but I didn't do any of that, because I was so terrified to invest in myself, and that was definitely a mistake.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:41:39] The ninth reason why I think that my first business didn't work is that I quit pretty early. So, I think that this comes down to realistic expectations versus why I was able to like build so quickly—or not so quickly, but much quicker in the legal business. I think that going into it, I definitely fell victim to the content that I was being served on Instagram about how quickly everybody else was doing it, and how easy it was for everyone else, and how 10,000 a month is like the new standard, now, 50,000 a month is the new standard, and it just kept going up, I remember when I was like a young entrepreneur.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:42:15] And I remember just thinking like if I tried a little bit, and like I didn't just start making \$10,000 a month or like clients weren't just banging down my door, then I just thought, well, this isn't working, and I didn't stick with it. Now, hear me loud and clear, if health coaching was my passion, if what I was talking about, and teaching people, and helping people with at that time was my passion, then my mistake was quitting early.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:42:40] I think this was, in fact, a very good thing that ended up happening with me is that it didn't work, and that caused me to look elsewhere, and it also just didn't feel like my passion. And I just so happen to kind of like cross through and find something that was, that really spoke to me. And I'll talk about that in a sec. But I think I don't want you to quit early on the one hand if what you are building right now is your passion.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:43:06] I just want you to have realistic expectations, right? And you need somebody who's in your ear telling you like, it's not normal to make 5,000, \$10,000 a month for the first year or two years. Like however long it takes you, it doesn't matter. That's not normal. That's not everybody's story. And I don't care if that's Becky's story, and she's like the one person that's done it, that does not mean that you are failing because you haven't reached that goal yet.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:43:28] It doesn't mean that you're failing if your business isn't growing month over month. That's not normal. These things that you're hearing on

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Instagram just are not normal. These are not standards that like you're not living up to. They're just not standards, period. So, I don't want you to quit early if this is really what you love. There might be a way you can retool this. It might be learning more about marketing.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:43:28] It might be learning more about your copywriting. It might be in getting you a little branding refresh and getting a better idea of like your ideal client, actually talking to your clients more, stuff like that, right? There might be some simple fixes. Your offers might need a tweak here or there. You might need a new freebie. So, there might be some things you can do. If you don't, though, feel like whatever you're doing is the thing that you're really meant to do, I would encourage you to start exploring, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:44:13] You can do what I did, where I was still running the health coaching business, and then I had like one foot out the door trying to figure out this legal thing, and once I got that established, I made the jump. I shut down the health coaching business and I made the jump pretty fast, because I was excited and I felt like it was going to work. So, I think that when somebody says to me like, "Oh, like your legal business really exploded".

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:44:35] It's like going back to what I was talking about at the beginning of this episode, that's somebody who maybe doesn't know what I've just told you like I had a year-plus of experience under my belt in online business where things were not going well, things were failing, right? I was spending more than I was making. And so, by the time I got into my legal business, I had very little money, I had very little time on my end left to like figure this whole entrepreneurship thing happen.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:44:57] If it wasn't going to happen then, I was going to need to get a job outside of online business to support myself, which is totally fine, and I think, actually, that more people should do that, so it doesn't put so much pressure on having to build an online business so quickly, but that was my reality, right? My back kind of was up against that wall. And so, no, it didn't. The legal business didn't explode so "quickly". It's that I had the benefit of building it off of all the mistakes I had already made, so I didn't have to make those again, and that was really helpful.

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Sam Vander Wielen: [00:45:27] Okay. The tenth and final reason why my first business failed is that my heart was somewhere else, right? It was with legal stuff. And it wasn't even necessarily, as I openly talk about all the time, I'm not like passionate about legal, I'm not like, oh, legal stuff, like legal tips is really what makes my heart sing. Definitely not. What I am passionate about is helping people learn how to build their businesses and giving you this information, which I feel like has been kept from you, and which has been like made way over complicated and way over expensive, and held by this, I don't know, like iron gate of intimidation, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:46:00] And I really love making things like just what you need to know, simple, here's what you can get done, no fear, no drama. Like let's just do this, and then let's talk about building your business, because that's more fun, right? So, my heart was in that, and I really just like started to love the fact that I could give somebody a tip, or a contract, or a policy, or teach them how to register their business, and all of a sudden, that person would run off, and start a business, and start helping other people, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:46:27] I thought that that was so cool. And just knowing that I could be helpful in any way in making the stuff simpler, more accessible, more affordable, less intimidating, that was what really made my heart sing. And that was the moment that I knew that the old business, the health coaching business, just had to go, and this was where I wanted to put my heart and attention. And it's been like, how many, five, six years, and I am just so happy that I did.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:46:55] So, I just want you to think back about any of these things that you might be doing, maybe I give you an idea today, I would love to hear about it, send me a DM on Instagram @SamVanderWielen. And I hope that this was helpful, if nothing else, in just making you realize that anything that you're going through right now, anything you're experiencing in your business is all for a reason, and it will be very, very helpful to you in the future.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:47:20] And you might not see it now, right? I remember feeling during a lot of this time that I talked to you about today that I was a failure, that I was going to have to go back to being a lawyer, that I was like embarrassed that people didn't like me, that they don't like the way I sounded, the way I look, the way I talk,

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whatever, I made up a lot of stories about it, right? And I remember feeling really, really badly and feeling really low when like no one showed up to a webinar, or when I ran a group program and no one would show up to the calls or nobody would come to the calls with any questions, right? I felt like I wasn't helpful. Like nobody cared.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:47:52] I was terrified to like run another group program or run another webinar with fear that nobody would show up, right? So, I just want to say from like this perspective now, like look at how far you can come, right? Look how much can change in just a couple of years. And stop letting all of these messages that you're getting on Instagram about how things are supposed to be so quick and easy get in the way of you building a business, a sustainable, actual business. Not a hobby, not a lifestyle, not a blog, which there's nothing wrong with any of those things, but if you are truly building a business, it takes time. It's not linear.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:48:29] Things don't necessarily grow quickly or month over month. And there are months where you spend more or you have to invest in yourself to get to the next level or whatever. That is all okay. That's all part of the process. So, I hope that you enjoyed this episode. Send me a DM. Let me know what you think. Until then, I'll chat with you next week. Next week, we're talking all about the best investments I've made in my business and what I think you should be investing in as an entrepreneur. I can't wait to chat with you about it. Thanks so much for listening.

Sam Vander Wielen: [00:48:58] Thanks so much for listening to the On Your Terms podcast. Make sure to follow on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you like to listen to podcast. You can also check out all of our podcast episodes, show notes, links, and more at samvanderwielen.com/podcast. You can learn more about legally protecting your business and take my free legal workshop, Five Steps to Legally Protect and Grow Your Online Business at samvanderwielen.com. And to stay connected and follow along, follow me on Instagram @SamVanderWielen and send me a DM to say hi.