

**On Your Terms Episode 73:**  
**What 2022 Was Actually Like For Me**  
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**Sam Vander Wielen:** Hey there, and welcome to On Your Terms. I'm your host, Sam Vander 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 trainings.

So, this week, we are talking a little throwback episode all about 2022. I went over everything that has happened this year, kind of both of professionally and personally, and how they each played into one another. All with the purpose of getting really clear about what this year was like for me, what went well, what didn't go well, what I wanted to change so that I take what I've learned from this year and apply it next week in our planning episode when we talk all about 2023.

So, I kind of wanted you to go through this exercise with me, and I want to reflect and kind of hear me talk through what this year was like. And then, you will hear me next week talk through how I take all of that and I map that on to what I want to do differently, the same, better, whatever this coming year, 2023.

So, this episode is really all about reflection, so I hope that you will reflect with me. At the end, I have a couple little journal prompts for you. And as you'll hear me talk about, we got a really fun Yearly Planning Guide for you that's available for free to download. The link is in the show notes.

You're going to love it because it's going to help you reflect on this past year, and then it's going to help you plan and use that stuff to plan for this upcoming business year. So, I hope you love it. This is literally the exact template that I use for

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my own business and with my team that I'm gifting to you for free, so we've got that available for you in the show notes.

All right. So, I want to give a shoutout to the reviewer of the week before we hop into our reflections. FCO2811 said, "Sam is an experienced business owner who is so willing to share everything she's learned to help you out. She's created such a successful business and is so thoughtful in how she runs her company. I really value Sam's advice and love the way she shares it so openly, honestly, and in a way that you can take action on. Thank you, Sam, for always being a valuable resource and a wonderful friend."

Well, thank you so much for listening. I so appreciate it when you leave a review of On Your Terms. If you listen to the show and you love the show, please go ahead and really quickly rate and leave a review for the show wherever you listen. If you leave it on an Apple Podcasts, you'll get a shoutout in future episodes since I can see those. But I really, really appreciate you taking the time to do that.

All right. With that, let's hop in and let's reflect on 2022. This is going to be a good one.

So, I have to let you in on this secret, I have this horrible, horrible habit. And, no, it's not biting my nails. I don't bite my nails. Or, I don't know, insert other habit here. But I have this habit of accomplishing a lot of things in my business and just blowing right past them. And I don't ever stop to celebrate it. I don't stop to soak it in. And then, I'm just one of these people that's, like, constantly marching on to the next thing

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and I just don't ever stop to be like, "Oh. I actually already smashed a goal that felt really huge to me before."

That was true even as I was building my business, you know, when I started from zero. My first year, I technically made - I don't know - \$25,000 or 30,000, I think, but it was a partial year. And then, the following year almost hit six figures, and then hit multiple, and then seven, and blah, blah, blah. I, even then, wasn't stopping to celebrate anything. I was just charging through.

It's a really bad habit. It's something I'm not proud of. And it's something that leads to a lot of still feeling like I have so much left to accomplish when I've accomplished a lot of the things. That, if you would have told me years ago, I would have been like, "That's crazy. I could never do that." And now I'm not even satisfied with it. So, it's not a good thing. Do not do this.

And what I find is that, in general, for every year - and I did start to make this change last year - if we don't stop and reflect and see what we've done this year, then we're not making informed goals and decisions for next year.

And so, something I started doing at the end of 2021, I planned 2021, was really looking back on the year and saying, "This is what I like. This is what I didn't like. This is what I wanted to do but I didn't get to it," all of that. And then, I used all of that to apply what I wanted to do in 2021 and I smashed it out of the park. I did all of those things.

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And I think spending that time reflecting and not just going straight into planning mode was actually really crucial to that success. So, ever since then, this whole reflecting then planning, reflecting, planning has become part of my annual routine.

So, when we talked about sitting down and doing a planning episode for you, which I'm going to have for you next week, I thought, "Well, we have to do the reflections first," because I want to show you how I actually do this in real life. I don't just sit down and start planning. The first thing I do is sit down and reflect. And that's why I also included the Reflection Guide for you because that is exactly the thing that I use. So, the Yearly Planning Guide is going to have the reflection section in it, that is exactly what I used to reflect myself.

So, if you'll indulge, I thought we would take a little look back on Sam Vander Wielen LLC for 2022. If you've been around for a minute, you know it's been a really crazy year for me personally, and then because of that, professionally. And so, I thought I would talk through kind of how I reflected back on the year and then how I'm now kind of using that mix of data and also energy, like looking back at my energy and my intuition, just my gut feeling over what I liked and what sat well and what didn't sit well, and all that kind of stuff.

So, I'm going to talk you through it. I'm going to talk you through my year, really, so it's going to be a little bit of a mix of reminiscing. And then, also talking through the logic of how I look at this and let it influence my year.

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So, let's just start at the beginning of 2022. I came off a really huge year in 2021. Actually, Episode 23 is my recap, like, this episode from last year. If you want to go back and listen to that, it might be a good one because it was the first time I had hit seven figures, and had really intentionally planned it, and had really just catapulted the business from where it had been the year before. And so, it's really interesting to hear what it was actually like to grow it behind the scenes and not what you see on the other side.

So, coming into this year, I was coming off of another really big year in 2021, 2020 was also a huge year. And I sort of slid into 2022 being like, "Okay. Like, I've got this thing down." I've got seven figures down now, so rinse, repeat, success. I'm just being honest with you, that's what I thought. I was just like, I have this formula. I understand what I'm doing. I'm just going to run pretty much the same stuff that I did last year and just do it again.

There were a couple issues with that. One is that I think that marketing has really, really changed, especially this year, especially in a post-COVID world. It seems like as the world returns back to normal, it also feels like things have shifted with consumer behavior, consumption behavior, purchasing behavior, ads, so many different things. So, I think that happened.

But then, I also didn't see this personal speed bump coming along, and I very naively didn't see it throwing me off as much as it did. What I'm referring to is my dad passing away this year. So, this might sound stupid to you when you know that my

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dad had cancer, and maybe it was obvious to everybody else, but I thought I still had time with my dad. I mean, I had gotten to a really weird place with my dad having cancer because when my dad got cancer and I was told he was going to pass away right away, and then not only did he not pass away right away but he just kept going and going.

It was years after being told he had, like, 11 months, we were three, three-and-a-half years in. And there was this point, I think this year, I had finally gotten to this point where I was like, "I'm not going to keep wrestling this all the time. I'm not going to keep struggling about is he going to pass away? Is something going to happen? Could it happen any moment?" I had finally kind of settled into the fact that I was comfortable with being uncomfortable, that's what I would say.

But I had, honestly, also started to question myself as to like, "Maybe he doesn't have cancer." I was going through a denial period as well, where I was so confused. Because I can't tell you what it was like to sit there and hear from a doctor that this was going to happen so quickly. And then, you're sitting there waiting for something to happen, and nothing happens for a really long time.

And for those of you who are in the health and wellness industries, you can only imagine what this did for my nervous system, for my stress levels, cortisol, everything. I was a wreck. I was just a wreck for years.

But on the flip side, I also naively thought that because I had so much time with my dad and I knew that he was sick, when he

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did pass, I thought I'd be okay but sad. Like, that sound so dumb to me now. But, obviously, you don't know what grief is like until you go through it. But I had spent so many years at this point imagining what it would be like without him, and I felt so sad about that, that I was like, "How could it get any worse than this?"

Well, I had another thing coming. It is like a million times worse than the anticipatory grief. The anticipatory grief was horrendous. But this has been way worse. And so, instead of it being okay with me being sad, it instead completely took me out. It has literally completely taken the legs out from under me since losing my dad.

Yes, I did have another seven figure year. I even hit it, like, midyear. It didn't even take me the whole year. But that is definitely not what I'm the proudest of, to be honest. When I did my reflections this year, I wrote like, "Another seven figure year." If I could have tone to my Google Drive, that was literally how I wrote it. It was just like, "Another seven figure year." I don't know, because that's not what comes up for me anymore.

For me, I'm like, "Man, I'm just proud I made it through." I'm really proud of my team that I didn't have at the beginning of this year, which I'll talk a little about how I built the team this year. But I didn't have any employees. And any contractors I did have working for me at the start of the year were working so part-time versus how they're working now.

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So, let's start in January-February. I still had no employees. I did not have any social media help, so I was still doing everything on social, responding, posting, creating, conceptualizing, all of that. I had Leanne, my lovely VA. And I had a tech VA at the time because my business is so funnel heavy and tech heavy, so we had a lot of that kind of stuff going on the background. And then, I had a part-time contractor who was helping me with marketing, so some copywriting for promos. I had to hire a copywriter for a promo for a sales copy. But everybody was just kind of in and out.

And I learned my first big contractor lesson in quarter one of 2022, which I would love to pass on to you. Which is that, I had a big promotion that I wanted to do. I was all ready to go with it. And by the way, I started planning this at the end of 2021 for 2022. And the contractor said to me that they couldn't meet my deadline because they had taken on another project.

And so, I actually moved the entire promo period to be almost a month later than I what wanted to. I run it in February instead of January, and it was still huge. It was a multi-six figure promo. But I don't think as successful as it could have been. And part of the reason, at least in my opinion, was some of the timing because it was a little too late and we tend to see better performance in January.

So, that was a big contractor lesson on my part that I would not plan your promotions around contractor's availability. It's also why you need to plan things so early and have stuff so early.

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So, I had this big promo for the Ultimate Bundle. I hosted a live webinar again. And that was definitely when I started to see the webinar landscape changing a bit. So, my evergreen ads were still running really well. But the live webinar, I could tell, was a little bit different than what had happened previously. And so, it just started to plant the seed in my mind that maybe things were changing.

But it was also during that promotion that I realized, like, my job had essentially changed as a CEO in the end of 2021 and this beginning part of 2022, that I felt like I was like a manager of a million different contractors. And so, I had all my normal stuff still in my plate of producing content, and doing all the writing, and responding to client's questions, and being on Instagram, and doing all the things that I do, and doing all the market conception.

But then, I was also managing, "Okay. Did you get this thing done? Okay. I got to hand that off to the designer. Oh, the designer? Oh, you mean a couple of mistakes here? When you're done with that, can you send that to this person." And then, contacting our website person and being like, "Can you put this up on the website?" I was like managing a million different contractors. And I feel like everybody that I know who ends up building a little bit of a team says that they had a very similar catalyst from their first full hire.

So, that's why in March and April, I realized I needed to hire, first of all, a fulltime employee. That was really important to me because I wanted somebody else who was in the business all

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the time. And I knew that my first hire really should be an operations manager.

And so, I started that process with an HR company, Paradigm HR - shoutout. We've had Kira on the podcast before. I'll link to her episode below about starting to build a team. They also have a really great free workshop for you that I'll link to below.

But I started working with Kira. We started looking for an operations manager. And as soon as I interviewed Lindsey, I was like, "This is it." I feel really good about her. She was great. Thank goodness I ended up being right. She's absolutely wonderful. And I'm just so happy that she's here. But Lindsey ended up starting, I think on April 4th. So, she ended up starting in April by the time we got her up and running.

And behind the scenes, I was working hard on building out a brand new product that was due to roll out for you on June 1st. So, it was a really, really big product that I was working on hard behind the scenes. So, we were kind of getting all this content down. I was onboarding my first employee, which, because I didn't have a Lindsey at the time, was so much work on my end in addition to doing all the stuff that I do. So, it was a lot going on. But that was really what I spent March and April.

I decided not to run a promotion during that time because I kind of felt like I needed to stabilize the foundation my business and get some help in, and optimize some of the behind the scenes processes and stuff before we went on and added something new. So, unlike 2021, where I run a promotion during that time, during that March and April period, I did not run one this year,

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which is super interesting that I still hit the same revenue without running that additional promo this year.

So, now we get through April. May 2nd, my dad had just been here for the weekend. I've done a whole episode about this, so I won't go over it all again for fear of completely falling apart too. But my dad was here all weekend. May 2nd is a Monday. He had just left. I'm reviewing a ton of copy that's for the new product that I had coming out on June 1st. And I get this really panicked phone call from my dad that he had fallen. He didn't know at the time but he'd broken his leg. And it was horrendous, as you can imagine and as I've already gone over.

But even once my dad fell, he was in the hospital, he had surgery right away. I thought he'd be in the hospital. I thought he'd be going to rehab. I didn't have any idea that my dad would pass away, which maybe sounds silly to you or it's much clearer to you or something like that. But I'm just telling you, when you're in it, it did not seem like that.

My dad had cancer, and so breaking your leg, doing clear break of your bone is apparently not great for leukemia because leukemia lives in your bone marrow. And it really set off this horrendous chain of events of his leukemia just spiraling out of control. So, just a couple of days later, on May 8th, which was Mother's Day, my dad passed away.

So, basically, the rest of that month, I took off. And I basically took off until the end of June. And I mean off. And if you know me, most of my friends were like, "You mean off, like

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you've only written seven funnels or you've only recorded 48 podcasts?" I was just, "No. No. I mean off. Like, I was off."

That's what I was saying earlier that this has been a very humbling experience for somebody like myself who would just power through and kind of put on this brave face and keep moving forward. This has been the first time that I physically cannot do that anymore. I still don't feel like I can do it anymore. It's been several months.

Really, the only thing that I did during this time period, this May-June time period, was that I went to the ConvertKit Conference at the end of June. Part of me doesn't even remember going. To be honest, I still feel like I was in such a haze. It was only like a month after my dad passed away. But I had been looking forward to it all year and I really wanted to go. I'm really glad that I did.

And I did a recap episode for you in Episode 54 of all the things that I learned at ConvertKit that I wanted to pass on to you, because what I learned there has permanently changed my business, you know, at least for the foreseeable future. And it's already working really, really well.

And I just learned so many big aha marketing moments at this conference, because this little seed that had been planted in the back of my mind saying, "I feel like something is changing in the marketing landscape. I feel like I'm seeing things differently on social media. I'm seeing people leave social media. I'm seeing all this stuff. And I'm feeling this desire to go back to my marketing roots of SEO stuff and doubling down on

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the podcast, yada, yada." Everything was confirmed and clarified, I would say, at ConvertKit.

The other big thing that happened, well, first of all, I was kind of a mess at ConvertKit. You know, when I was outside of sessions, I was just having a really hard time with my dad. And I was there by myself. And it was tough to be away from home. If anybody else has gone through grief - which, unfortunately, I know so many of you have - it's weird how even just being away from home is really hard.

And so, I had a really hard time, but I'm so glad that I went. But being there, I was in no position to launch this new product that I was going to launch. We had kicked it to July 1st from June 1st, once my dad passed. And then, once I was at ConvertKit, I said to everybody, "You know what? We're going to kick it again until the fall." Stay tuned on that one.

So, moving on to July and August, we run something that has been really fun to do the last couple of years. My Ultimate Bundle birthday promotion to celebrate the birthday of the Ultimate Bundle. We run it for the second time. This is a really cool promotion for me to run because there's no webinar and it's five days of an all out sprint of all fast action bonuses, essentially.

So, it's super simple. I rely really heavily on email and SEO and blogs and podcast versus social media. But it was really fun and it went really, really well. And in August, I decided to go on a cruise because, well, first of all, it was one of the only vacation things we could do last second. And we left from New

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York, so we didn't have to fly anywhere. Flights were still really crazy at that time. If you remember, things were getting cancelled left and right. So, we went on this cruise, but also because when I was on the cruise, I couldn't use my phone.

Stuff with my dad's estate was extremely stressful at this time. And I was navigating selling his home. And I think this is also when, as like the executor stuff started to bubble up, my grief started to bubble up all of a sudden too. Looking back on it, I was much better with grief for the first couple months after my dad passed than I am now, to be honest.

So, just a little sidenote tangent, if you're supporting anybody through grief, please don't use time as a timeline of things to get better. That's not how it works. Everybody's journey is completely different, so it's not like your persons would be the same as mine. But I just see a lot of people in my life who haven't gone through this, their assumption is more time equals trending better. And that's not necessarily how it works.

So, that essentially started happening with me, was that at the end of the summer and this fall, it got much worse for me as the executor stuff started winding down. Going into September and October, I sold my dad's house on Labor Day weekend, and so that kind of wrapped up the bulk of what I needed to do for his estate, at least the most stressful parts. That part was really, really stressful.

And I went into running another live webinar promotion. It would be my last of the year. And I offered a retreat as a bonus, a business building retreat as a bonus, which I have never done

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before. It was so much fun. The retreat went really, really well and we raised a lot of money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Because one thing I always try to do is I always try to give my previous costumers access to new things that I do. But sometimes we have to either charge nominal fees to cover our costs or I'll come up with creative ways to do something for charity.

So, in this case, I asked people to make a suggested donation of \$12. It's my lucky number. It was me and my dad's lucky and favorite number. So, we had to make donations of \$12 to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society in honor of my dad. And we raised so much money for the Leukemia Society, so that was awesome.

Another really big thing that I'm still so excited about that we did in September and October is that we hired my second fulltime employee, Rachael, for marketing and copywriting. And I, as you probably already know and can imagine, I'm obsessed with marketing and I love doing marketing stuff. I still wanted to be involved in conceptualizing things, strategizing talking through concepts, but I can't be implementing as much as I could, not only because of what happened with my dad, but just the business has gotten busier and busier that I can't do all of those things, plus do all the content, plus take care of all the customers, you know, all that good stuff.

So, we also wanted to have somebody who was better at marketing than I am. That's always the goal is to bring in people to the team who know more about these things, can think about things from a different angle, offer a new perspective, a different experience, and that's what we found in Rachael. So, Rachael

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started a couple of weeks ago from when I'm filming this. By the time you hear this, she's been here for a while. But she started a couple of weeks ago. And she was even able to join us for our planning retreat in 2023.

So, I hosted for the first time a little Sam Vander Wielen LLC company retreat up in Hudson Valley, New York. And we stayed at this really cool place called Ynez. It was out in the beautiful mountains. And we had private cabins. And we got Trader Joe's snacks. And we went out to eat a whole bunch. And we just had such a nice time. And we planned out the entire year for next year, which is what you're going to hear about in next week's episode.

I would also say during this September-October period, that's when my grief really got a lot worse. I always thought that grief, in my mind if you would have asked me years ago, was the kind of thing where you were laying in bed with the covers over your head. And that hasn't really been my case. I kind of charged through for the first several months. But then, I feel lately, the last couple of months has been when I've had the first lay in bed all day with the covers over my head kind of moment.

And no need to worry. I do all the things. I go to therapy. I'm talking about it. I'm working through it. And it's always hard to share this kind of stuff because I almost feel like you get all this - I don't know - feedback bag and it makes you feel worse, it makes you feel shame. And I'm also just working on the fact that it's normal for me to feel this way at this point,

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given how close my dad and I were and being his caretaker and just a lot of the other circumstances around losing him.

And so, even the last day he was here, it was just very traumatic, I would say. So, I'm working on that part. But overall, I'm just letting you know, no frets. I'm working on it. But I'm also just trying to be honest about where things are at. All right.

So, moving into the end of 2022, I'm not writing a Black Friday sale. I kind of have a REI type attitude around here, which is that I really love Thanksgiving. I don't love the historical connotations of Thanksgiving, by the way. So, I think that goes without mentioning. But I love the fact that it's a holiday surrounded around food. It's not around gifts and just around people gathering. I love this time of year. I love the fall. It's too cold. It's just a nice time of year.

So, I don't want to spend that time running a sale. It's no knock against anybody who does want to. I just don't want to. And I also have mine planned out in different times of the year where it's just like, "Oh. I don't need to do this." It's just not something I feel like doing.

Initially, we had thought about running something in December. We decided not to. We're going to work on building up more and more evergreen SEO driven content. And we've got something really big coming for you in January, so we decided not to do anything right now.

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Now, that new product that I told you about earlier that was originally for June 1st, then July 1st, then the fall, we have officially put that to the side to just take a little pressure off of me having to create something so big, so new. If and when it does come out, I think you're going to love it. But right now, it's sitting on the shelf. And that's okay with me, I got to take that pressure off.

So, to wrap up the rest of 2022, I'm closing the business the last two weeks of December. I use that time to creatively refresh and reset. I'm also anticipating, sort of, that it's going to be a tough holiday season for me. So, I'm also just trying to be practical and protect my energy where I can. I also want to give the team a break and do all of that stuff.

So, maybe it was helpful for you to kind of hear me reflect back through the year. You see that I talk about things from both the business perspective of a promo or a launch, but I also talk about what was going on energy-wise. So, I want you to get the Reflections Guide in the show notes and the Yearly Planning Guide. And I want you to look back and think what went well, what are you proud of, what didn't go well, can you use any of the data that you have in your business or anything that's available to you to look back and see why something didn't go well.

For example, I track how many emails we send every month to our email list and then we see what the open rate is over time, we see what the click through is over time. And you can see how, if you stop emailing, the open rate goes down. So, something like that, start to pair the data with what's going on. Do you see

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what you didn't get to that you wanted to get to? Maybe you had planned to launch something or create something, to start focusing on creating a podcast or reaching out to collaborator's in your space but you didn't get to it. Don't just say, "Oh, I didn't get to that this year so I'm going to get to it next year." Do you still want to get to it and why? Have your priorities changed? That's okay too.

So, all things to think about. I want to encourage you to download our Yearly Planning Guide that we've included for you below in the show notes. It's going to have your reflection section, and then it's going to have your annual planning guide, which we're going to talk through next week, all about my strategy of how I work through and plan and strategize for the entire year while having some stuff, like setting stone, that you have to that I think is really helpful, but also how do you balance staying flexible and open to things changing and the market changing and all this kind of stuff. So, I'm going to talk you through all of that next week.

I hope that you enjoyed this episode. I hope you'll send me a DM and let me know if this was helpful to you. Please do me a favor, go ahead and just text a link to this episode to your friend or post it in a group you're in. It's so helpful to us in getting to spread the word about the show. So, until next week, I hope you have a great rest of your week. Next week, let's talk yearly planning.

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 podcasts. You can also check out all of our podcast

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