

TRANSCRIPT

On Your Terms



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Episode 181:

PART 1: ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN (REFLECTING ON MY 7TH BUSINESS YEAR)

Sam Vander Wielen:

Hey there and welcome back to On Your Terms. I'm your host, Sam Vander Wielen. And today is part one of a two-part series, my annual business planning sesh with you.

This part one is going to focus all about reflecting on 2023 and then showing you how to go through that process and then how to use that feedback and like stuff that comes up for you to then influence what you plan for the next year. You're going to want to make sure because it's going to make it not only a lot easier to follow along, but also for you to be able to do this for yourself. You want to make sure that you go grab my annual free planning guide. That's down in the show notes below. That's going to be my exact template, the exact document that I use for myself in my own team. I just went through and deleted everything that I wrote, but I'm giving you the exact document that I use to reflect on my year and plan my year. So that's going to be helpful for this episode and the episode that's going to air on Thursday, part two.

So with that, I think it's really, really important to kick off any goal setting, any business planning, anything like that with a reflection first. Even if you haven't been in business the entire year, or if this year didn't go the way you thought or anything like that, it's really, really important to reflect first because the reflection is going to give us more informed data to then plan for the following year, right?

So instead of just coming up with a bunch of goals, we have to see what didn't go well about this year? What did go well? And then digging a little deeper, like what did you like about it and not like about it? I have a step-by-step process. Like I said, it's in that free annual planning guide that you can get in the show notes, but I have a step-by-step process that I go through that this is like, the third or fourth time I think that I've done this in my own business and it works really, really well.

So I'm excited to chat with you about 2023 today. 2023 is a weird year, I guess, just to give like a little bit of a zoom out 30,000-foot view for you first, before I dive into my own stuff. I think it's important to remember that this year I lost my mom. My mom died in May, the very end of May. And my dad had just passed away. So like coming into 2023, I was only like six months into grieving my dad and then everything went south with my mom and then my mom passed away. So this was a weird year for me in terms of just a lot of personal stuff.

And if you've followed me for a while also that just like having, well, my dad having had cancer and then losing my dad and then losing my mom, a lot of these things have influenced the way that I want to show up in my business. The kind of business that I want to continue to grow and what kind of things I'm focusing on in my own business. So I just think it's important to get a little bit of context because you're going to hear me reflecting today, but it's almost like there's a little bit of an asterisk on a lot that I'm saying because it was all heavily influenced by what happened this year.

I also am always conscious of the fact that I've had a multi seven figure business for like four years in a row. And before that, it was like a multi six figure business for several years. I understand also that I am in a different position, and I find it really annoying when people are just like, yeah, just pull back and don't post and don't even worry about it, and you can disappear and only work two hours a day. And it's not very realistic. It might not be as realistic for you. I think though that what I'm going to share today is still very helpful for you. And I'm going to try to make it as helpful for you as possible always. But I guess I just wanted to recognize that first and foremost.

Like I understand it's not -- what I did this year. Like the fact that my business generated multiple seven figures this year with the way that I did and did not work is nuts. I'm not still sure exactly where it all came from. But yeah, so I just recognize that, and I wouldn't have been able to do these years and years ago.

Okay. So first I'm going to do a quick personal reflection and then I'm going to hop into a multi-step business reflection that you can follow along with as well. You can follow along with all of this, but I wanted to start out by doing a bit of a personal reflection, which is not necessarily something I've done in the past. Because I -- first of all, I mean, when I started my business, I feel like the business and personal were so intertwined that like, I would have been like, why do you need a separate one? It's the same thing. I've done a lot of work around really separating myself personally from the business and treating it more like it's my job and it's my business and that that's totally fine. And then developing myself more outside of my business for things that I don't get any credit for or have any followers for or whatever, or just I don't share online. Like I think that's really, really important.

And I feel like this year was a big year for that part, despite how many hard times I had personally. And so I wanted to share this personal reflection first, the areas in which I analyzed, because then I thought maybe you could reflect on these for your own life too, because if your business is not working for you right now, then this stuff is going to be really out of balance. And so, if three, four years ago, you would have asked me about this personal reflection categories that I'm about to share, I would have been like they're all in the toilet, right? And that was because I was super enmeshed with my business, and I wasn't taking time away from it. I wasn't setting good boundaries, I wasn't working smart sometimes.

So I do think it's really important to take the personal reflection because then that might influence like I think things are going okay in my business, but maybe I'm doing really well, but at what expense, at what cost, right? So for the personal reflection, I picked five categories off of that, like wheel that. If you've ever seen it, like the IIN School Institute for Integrative Nutrition, they have like this wheel of life or something like that. I didn't go to IIN and I'm not in it or anything now, but I know a lot of people have referred to it over the years. There are way more categories on that wheel than what I'm referring to, but I picked out five. I felt like that meant a lot to me.

So the five personal reflection categories that I picked out that maybe you want to write down are number one, social life. And I combine that with relationships. So I did social life and relationships. Two is health. Three, home. Four was joy. And five was creativity and play.

So right off the bat, I can tell you for social life and relationships, I – again, remember how I said in the beginning that there’s like a big caveat this year, it was a really hard year for me personally. Right. So I think, and like any of my grief friends out there will know, like, I just think that when you’re going through so much grief, like probably your social life and relationships are one of the first areas to suffer a bit.

I know like a lot of people reached out to me and called and tried to make plans or dates with me, and I feel like this year I just couldn’t. I couldn’t show up to be that way. And prior to this year, I actually was really, I was much happier with my social life and friendships because I was like making – I was really prioritizing weekly phone calls with a lot of people. And I love doing walk and talk dates so I would like go on a walk and talk to a friend who doesn’t live here. And I really, really loved that.

But then this year I just found myself like not wanting to talk about this. It’s not that I don’t want to talk about grief. But I think when you’re just sitting in it, and it’s not really changing and there’s not anything that anybody can do, I don’t feel like sharing the same story over and over again. And with what’s going on with my mom’s situation behind the scenes since she passed that I can’t talk about yet. Especially like that is incredibly traumatic and painful still, sitting here in December 2023. And I just – like people are so kind on the one hand to be like, hey, how’s it going? What’s going on with this? And I just don’t want to keep being like, oh, it’s terrible. It’s terrible. I just – I don’t want to say it over and over.

So admittedly that has caused me to retreat a lot this year. Obviously, I spent a lot of time at home. I love my community here and I live on the North shore of Long Island. I love it. I’ve got my dear friend, Michelle, who I’m obsessed with. She’s just one of those people that she’s like home when you hang out with her, you know? And she’s my like one really good

friend that I have here that I love hanging out with and talking to. And I love like the people at the gym and all my neighbors. I could have a whole episode dedicated to how much I'm obsessed with my neighborhood and my neighbors. We live in this little like kind of island situation. And the people here are just so kind, so nice. I talk about them all the time.

So that part, I'm really happy with. Like, I'm really, really happy with like my -- that's how I'll wrap this one up. I'll say that I'm very happy with like how I did with my community, my local community this year, which is not something I've ever had a strong relationship with before, not like this. But I am like sad to see, I just have not done as good or like have not talked to people. I miss my walk and talk dates. And maybe in 2024, I'll feel more up for that, but not right now.

Okay. Health is the second one. I would say the focus of this year, a lot of this year was around health because I then broke health into four subcategories. So I broke health into food, movement, physical health, and mental health. So food wise, I feel like I cooked a lot at home. When I think about what makes food, if it went good or bad, I'm just thinking did I eat at home like I wanted to? Did I go to cool restaurants and try things I wanted to? Did I eat seasonally as much as I could? Did I get myself to the Farmer's Market and like get a CSA box and like stuff like that, that I know means a lot to me. So I feel like I did pretty good on food. My dad used to say, you never miss a meal. That is true, dad.

Okay. So the second part of health was movement. That I am really proud of in 2023 because I started going to the gym, like the last week in November, first week of December of 2022. So I continued. I was very nervous going into 2023 because previously I'd only ever stuck to like a movement routine for a few weeks, months, maybe three months, maybe six months max. And I am proud to say that that lasted all throughout 2023. So that lasted a long time.

In terms of physical health, I mean I'm proud of the fact that like -- my body suffered a ton physically this year. I feel very tired. I feel worn out. I feel stressed. Like my heart's always racing and my chest hurts, especially around the stuff with my mom. But I would say in terms of how I took care of myself physically, I am proud of that part. And also, I kept

up -- one thing I guess I always put under this category is like, did I go to all my annual appointments? Did I prioritize my physical health and my appointments, like all my annual appointments and not cancel them because I -- like back in the day I would have canceled them because I would have been like, I got to write more blog posts. And now I'm prioritizing that more.

The last part of the health category for me was mental health and that I also feel good. I mean, as good as I can. I mean, my actual mental health is probably not great, but I'm proud of the fact that I went to therapy every single week. I contacted my therapist in between sessions when things got bad. I'm never afraid to share my feelings and what's going on. All that kind of stuff. So I think that's that for health.

Okay. The last three under personal reflection were home, joy, and creativity slash play. So home was a tough one this year because I've seen -- my house was under construction from January all the way through August. So I feel like it actually hasn't been that long and there are still tiny, tiny little outstanding things with the extension that the addition that I'm sitting in right now that I have to still wrap up. But overall, I guess I saw how important it is for me to have my space and it was really hard to have people here all the time. It was really disruptive, and I couldn't settle into a routine a lot. So I've been really, really appreciative since construction wrapped up that I have my space. And I hope by the time 2024 rolls around, this space will be completely, completely done. All the little things will be done.

All right. Joy. The joy category under personal reflection was the one that stuck out the most to me as something I did not focus on at all in 2023. I think it's pretty safe to say that there's not a lot of joy around losing your mom and losing your dad, and all the things that come with that. That's very, very hard. I do feel like just the last couple of weeks have been the first time that I'm like, okay, I want to be more joyful. I want to seek joy. Where do I see joy in my day-to-day life?

So this probably sounds so stupid to everybody else, but like, the littlest things, like when I take Hudson for a walk in the afternoon, I always end my day with a walk with him. I just like, look at the sky and I'm like,

wow, that was the most in color. Like last night it was like the most incredible shade of purple and pink. And I was just like, that was incredible. Like to me, those are the little glimmers that right now are so important for me to hang on to, or yeah, I see something like out and about and just trying to pay attention to that.

And then I'm going to roll right into the last one creativity and play, because I feel like the other area I'm just starting to be like, okay, I want to bring more joy into my life. What am I doing for creativity and play because that brings me joy? And so I got a watercolor kit recently and I'm going to start doing some watercolor painting.

I asked -- like Ryan was asking me for some gift ideas and I asked for a couple of things related to hobbies. I pulled my puzzle. This puzzle that I bought during COVID that I actually never got around to. I just pulled that out of the closet because when we were in Vermont with my sister, we did a thousand-piece puzzle and it was so fun. It was just like fun for everybody to sit around and we would leave it out. And like, every time we had a few free minutes, we would just like sit down, everybody tried to put in like a piece of the puzzle. So it was fun.

So I'm just trying to do like -- I'm trying to prioritize joy more, I guess, in the form of creativity and play because I am so business obsessed and business focused and I am writing a book. So I have a lot of like very serious things. And then I have all this like grief stuff. So I have a lot of like very serious things on my mind. So it's very important that I focus on creativity and play and that brings me joy. So yeah, and then I'm just also, like I said about the joy thing, I'm just also trying to look for more of these like glimmers in my day-to-day.

All right. So that's personal reflection. Obviously, you can add lots of different categories. There's like spirituality. You could break out relationship as like maybe a different category for you. There are all kinds of - there's career. There's all kinds of things to break out. I didn't break out career because I feel like we're about to do the business reflection. So that is what that is.

Okay. So I'll go over the general categories. I'll list out the general categories that I go over, especially if you're following along in my free annual planning guide, which you can get in the show notes, you will see these categories laid out for you. I'm going to go over them really quickly and then I'll dive into each one. So the main categories that I typically use to reflect on my business for the year are things we accomplished this year, things we let go of, things we added and how it felt, things that I didn't get to and how it felt accelerators this year, constrictors this year, areas where I felt supported and areas where I could have used more support. Those are really good categories, right?

So let's kick things off with category number one, things that we accomplished this year. I was actually kind of surprised when I looked back and had to reflect for the year to list out my accomplishments for the year, because I had a lot more of them than I felt. And I think that part of that is because I didn't really take a lot of time to celebrate accomplishments this year because of how sad I was personally.

This is why it's so important to do a business reflection because I sat down and I was like, oh, I actually accomplished a lot of things. Didn't really realize that. And also it was a good realization to realize I don't celebrate my accomplishments. So that's something I need to do better on. Right. So for sitting down and like forcing yourself to write them out, and I don't care how small they are. These could be anything, right. They just so happened for me this year, I feel like the year before they were very small. This year, they were all like big things.

So, okay. One thing I accomplished this year was that I outdid the prior year's revenue, multi seven figure revenue. I still cannot believe it because I just don't know how, because I worked so much less. I mean, I know how, and that's like a whole separate episode for a different day. But I have this tendency to like downplay stuff and be very self-deprecating about things, but like this was all very intentional. It was all very also like, it came as a result of having built this business over years and years and like having things set up to run like a machine. It also came from having a really good team in place when going into this time period. Right. So I got really lucky in that respect. But yeah, having another multi seven figure year is definitely an accomplishment we're celebrating,

I think, especially in this climate and just being in a business who's been in business this long.

So I have a bunch of book related ones. So another thing I accomplished this year, which is so funny for me to say now it's like so much can change in a few months. Earlier this year, I think it was right before my mom died, maybe April, I finished my book proposal. So my book proposal took me almost two years to complete. It should not or does not take most people that long to complete. It took me that long because well, I started at like during COVID then I moved to New York. Then my dad got worse, then my dad died.

And so my book coach, Rochelle Fredson, who I've had here on the podcast, I'll link to her episode below if you want to write your own book, but she was very kind and patient with me and like it was just really interesting to write a book proposal over such a long period of time because I kept evolving, my business kept evolving. So the idea for the book kept evolving too. So I finally wrapped it up in April by finishing, I think then I only had to do like the two draft chapters that you submit with your proposal, and I finished that off.

And then the first thing you do is go and you get a book agent. So my other big accomplishment this year was, Rochelle and I sat down, we were like, okay, what book agent do you want? My number one choice, my number one draft pick, as we'll say, was Wendy Sherman of Wendy Sherman and Associates in New York. And I was like, that's who I really want to work with. We submitted my proposal to Wendy. Wendy took me on. So I am Wendy's client now. Wendy's my agent.

I also then -- Wendy then started shopping around my book proposal and I got a book deal, not only a book deal, but I got a book deal with a big five publisher, which was my big goal, which I have a lot of thoughts about like why, my mindset coach and I, Jen, we talk about this all the time, but like, why do you think you needed to have this? And like, what's so important about that and all this kind of stuff. But for just, all intents and purposes of this episode, I can tell you it was very, very important to me. It still is important to me, but I really wanted to get what they call

big five deal. So one of the top big five publishers and I did with a shot, so can't believe it.

And then as soon as I got the book deal, so which I got on the day that my mom passed away, I started writing the book. So I think another big accomplishment was just literally opening a blank Google document and being like, holy shit, I can't believe I'm writing a book. And what do I say? And like all this stuff I've had to work through and figure out to write my first book. So that's been a big accomplishment this year.

Outside of the book and the revenue stuff, I would say my other accomplishments this year were about having better personal boundaries with social media. I took most weekends off. So most of the time, you'll see me post something really quickly, like Friday afternoon or night on stories and be like, have a good weekend. And then I usually delete the app until Monday morning, and I love it. So I feel like I was better with that. In general, I was better day to day, even when I had the app on my phone. I also noticed when I was really bad with it and how I just like the days I do scroll or the days I spend so much time on Instagram, I feel terrible. So I feel like I was much more aware of all that.

I also, because of everything that happened this year, allowed a lot more delegation in areas that I never would have before. You would have had to pry them from my cold dead hands, like writing my weekly emails, for example. So when my mom died, I had already written however many emails ahead, I'm usually several ahead or whatever. And so I had already written that, but then it was like I'm not coming back to work for a while and we still need to write these emails. And I already have my podcast episodes done.

So we hopped in and we hired one of our customers actually, and my friend Carson Murray. So Carson came in, in the summer. And then she wrote emails for us through this fall when I was just like not able to do that, not only because of grief stuff, but then it was like, okay, I got to take a little time for grief stuff, but then I got to start writing this book. And if I'm writing this book, I can't be writing two weekly emails every single week. So we found a really cool balance where Carson would listen to my podcast episodes and she would basically take what I said, and then just put it

into writing, clean it up a bit. And that worked really well with still like sounding like me but not me actually physically doing the writing.

Starting like a month ago, I was back to writing emails and then now it seems like it's going to be a bit of a balance between me and Caitlin, my copywriter, where we just, like I'm writing a lot, she's writing a lot and we just kind of figure some stuff out. Because for the -- at least for the next several months because of the book. So after that, I'll kind of reevaluate.

I also -- last accomplishment I had this year was I would just say that I started the website project, rebranding project. I consider that to be an accomplishment not only because it's a big investment but also because I think it takes a lot of betting on yourself and investing in yourself because it's you saying, like, I'm ready to up level this. And it's like a real-life visual example of what I'm always talking about where I think you have to start acting like what you're becoming already. And I always try to make my like branding or my website look like that. Like I want it to be like a little ahead, like not just reflective where I am now. I want it to reflect where I'm going.

All right. Let's go to category number two, the things that we let go of this year. So I let go, like I mentioned, of having to control and write all of the weekly emails. Hopefully that inspires you to maybe let go of something that you like to do and you're good at, but it's not always the best use of your time. Or maybe just like my situation, it's just not the best use of your time right now. Like I want to continue to write my emails and I want to write all of them, but while you're writing a book, it's not the best idea.

So I let go of control of writing all my emails. I let go of control of a lot of stuff around social media. I did hire a social media team this year and they've been fantastic. So I feel like I've let go of a lot of - like even when I've hired people for social in the past, I used to be like, okay, we're going to do this, this, and this. But this year, I just feel like I was so humbled, so brought to my knees that I was like yeah, you guys got this. You're the experts. So you just let me know what you need.

Let me know if you need my face in a video sometime. Like that was really like this year. I could not control everything this year.

I let go of an employee, full-time employee this year. I let go of having to always be in growth mode, having to always be present, like in the business, having to always be hustling, having to be relevant or like important or helpful or whatever, all the time. I feel like I'd let go of a lot of team drama, but to be honest with you, I was like, I let go of a lot of team drama when I let go of the full-time employee. I let go of having as many meetings in the business, or for me having to be at all the meetings. I don't attend a lot of the meetings anymore, which I think has really helped me to be more focused on the things that I do have to do, focus more on the content creation, like only the stuff that I can do, and the big picture strategy.

So for the third category, things that we added and how it felt. I added the temporary email copywriter. Like I said, it felt scary, but then I would say in the end, it felt great that the emails were still really good. They were still in my voice. It was literally my voice being turned into words, but it felt scary at first. But I can see now how important it was to do that because I just -- like when you have to 80, 90, 100,000 words for a book and have all your best creative ideas, it's not a great idea to be sitting down writing emails all the time. So I'm just trying to balance that and preserve my creativity. So in the end, I was really happy.

I also added twice weekly podcast episodes in 2023 and I felt fine about it. I mean, for the most part, we didn't have any issues with like -- well, for one, I never run out of content ideas. But two, I would say like, I don't -- for the most part, other than some emergencies or difficult times that we had this year where things got really bad for me, it wasn't really an issue of keeping up with having two episodes.

I think the thing that I'm grappling with now, and so part of what I was reflecting on and I would love your feedback about if you'll reach out to me, respond to my email that I send or send me a DM on Instagram, I would love for you to tell me what you think about having two episodes because I think part of what I'm grappling with right now is like, do people like having two episodes? How important is that to you? Right? Are you listening

to all of them? Are you feeling like you get behind? Do you only cherry pick what episodes are interesting to you anyway? Part of my thought or strategy is thinking that maybe what I would do next year is one new episode on Monday and a re-air of an episode that you might have missed on Thursday, like a really popular episode. That helps the algorithm, but it allows me to focus on having, like, one really high-quality episode per week.

And then I think that my email list strategy would then change to being like one email per week about the podcast and one email where the email itself is just the value that I believe really strongly in your emails, having lots of value in them. I don't think that they should just like point people elsewhere. So this is why reflecting is really important because I'd be like, okay, I added two episodes. How did it feel? It felt fine. I don't know. Like anytime you add more podcast episodes, you're going to have more downloads because you're doubling the amount of times that people are downloading an episode. But I want to make sure like we're growing new subscribers. We're converting people who are already here.

So this kind of reflection had me thinking a lot about that. I just did a podcast survey. I still have a podcast survey that you can take if you like listening to On Your Terms. Obviously, you're here which you can fill out in the show notes below. I'll link to the survey. But this is why I do the reflection because it had me thinking about it a lot. And then you'll hear next or in a couple of days, you're going to hear part two where I talk about how that ended up influencing what my plan is.

I added on my social media team this year and we finally found a really good balance with that. Someone who is very good at like creating really good content. Really, what I wanted was like I'm somebody who produces a lot of content. And I have two weekly podcast episodes every week. I've got the two emails. I've got so much backlogged content that's like evergreen stuff. I really wanted a social media person who was able to spot those little glimmers within my content and be like, I can just grab that and create content out of it. And that's really what Gabby and her team have done. So I've been really happy with that this year.

Last but not least, the last thing I think I added on this year was SEO help. So I focus a lot on SEO. I needed SEO help in terms of getting all my blog posts written because again, writing conservation. So I hired on like people, copywriters to help me get these SEO blog posts done. And that's been super helpful because I, again, cannot write that much.

Okay. So that's what I've added, but what did I not get to and how did I feel about it? So I can't go into a ton of detail about this because this stuff's going to be upcoming, but what I did not get to was a new product that I had planned to release. It's kind of a twist on something I already have. I had planned to have that out this year. Obviously didn't for, I think, pretty obvious reasons. I'm really disappointed that I didn't have it.

I think like there's some grief around grief sometimes where I feel like grief causes you to miss trips or not see people or talk to people or not release new products that you plan to. And you're - like I just get a little bummed sometimes. And I'm like, oh man, I really had wanted to do that. So I am bummed about that, but I am excited for whenever it does come out. And I hope too that, like, the delay only makes it better because I think about, I learn more about marketing, I learn more about making the product better, I gather more information about the customer. So hopefully when the product does come out, it's even better.

The other thing I didn't get to yet and hopefully will soon is a new or updated webinar. So I plan to redo that. I'm also going to update a lot of the trainings inside of the Ultimate Bundle. That just has to be done. Honestly, the information doesn't change that often, but I often try to optimize it, make it more bingeable for people, faster if I can, if there's something I can cut. Obviously, if there's a change in the law, then I update my content for the Ultimate Bundle. But a lot of times it's just like the videos look a little older, but they're no different than what I would say right now. It's like the same thing. A lot of times it's the same thing. A lot of this stuff doesn't change, but I will be updating a lot of that this coming year.

The other thing I didn't get to that was more like a goal, I guess was one of the glaring things for me that went like unaccomplished this year was

that I had planned to get back on stage to give speaking, to give it like a talk, and do like a speaking gig but I did not land any of the things, the big things that I applied for this year. I admittedly probably only applied for like bigger things because it was things that were going to be really worth my while to go do, but I didn't get any of the things that I applied for. I also didn't get any of the big, big podcast speaking gigs that I applied for.

I consistently get asked to be on People's podcasts and I did get asked to be on a bunch of podcasts that were absolutely wonderful and that are big or by people who have big businesses and really impressive careers, but there are just a handful of ones that I really want to get on that I have tried applying to and just have not yet. So that was something I had really hoped to accomplish this year that I have not, but I have no doubt that I will one day when the time is right, but I'm going to keep pushing for it.

I think when you do these reflections too, it's important to think if you had some of these kinds of goals that you're writing down that you didn't hit, I always think it's a good idea to revisit like why do you want to do that? Like, what's important about getting on to Amy Porterfield's podcast? What's important about being invited to speak on ConvertKits' stage, at their conference, what's important about that? What does it mean to you? What are you making it say about you? How would it actually help your business? Is your business prepared for that kind of growth? That's something I think about a lot.

I feel pretty solid in why I want to do it, but I also see a lot, like even sometimes, like I was just talking to someone the other day, I was like, I really want to grow the podcast. Okay, why? Like, why do you want to grow the podcast? Yeah, I'm not sure, because I have so many listeners now and I have I think last time I checked, maybe 110,000 downloads or something like this. And the podcast is doing really well. I haven't sold -- I have thousands of Ultimate Bundle members, but I haven't sold 110,000 worth of it yet, right, and then 110,000 people. So I don't understand like always why I need more growth. Sometimes it feels like a bit of a distraction mechanism. Other times, I think it's my way of never accomplishing what I've done. It's my way of never being satisfied with what I've done. It's my way to just keep myself running constantly on this treadmill to nowhere,

so that I can just stay in this kind of like panicked state because that's like my homeostasis. Right.

So I do think it's important when you get to these, like what I didn't accomplish things that you're like, well, is that a good thing? Right. Am I glad that that didn't end up working out? Do I need it to work out? Why am I -- why is that a goal? That kind of stuff. That's kind of what goes through my mind when I hear those stuff.

Okay. So now we're moving on to accelerator. So some accelerators this year, for me, this wasn't really as much of an accelerator year, as much as I would say a optimized year, which is totally fine for me. But I would say that our team was accelerator this year. My Facebook ads which aren't always as like the return is not as big as it has been in the past, but they generally are still returning a profit, or they are returning a profit. It's just that the profit has not been as big always as it used to be, which is okay. Things change. But Facebook ads have held down like the lead generation, which is really important because that meant that even when I wasn't working or things were quiet for me, I still had something that was pulling in new leads. And then because I have a really good funnel, people were going through this funnel and they were converting, which meant I still had sales. So thanks, Facebook ads for holding it down.

The last accelerator this year I thought about was podcast growth and I guess I use the term growth, but I really mean like deepening, or I mean, we did grow a lot. We've grown a ton since last year, but even just like, I feel like the amount of people that I hear from day to day saying like, I listened to the podcast and I love it or this episode really spoke to me, that I felt like I got a lot more of this year. And then I also saw a lot more of people who purchased the Ultimate Bundle, for example, who then cited listening to the podcast as being one of the reasons why they purchased.

A constrictor for me this year, I really had two major ones. I would say that I had to do a lot of zigzagging, like moving side to side instead of moving forward, especially after what happened from the hiring and the firing of a marketing role, that really set me back because that just had me like you put, if you've ever hired someone, it takes a lot to hire

someone, bring them in, train them, get them used to everything. Like I was spending a lot of time up front. And then for that to fall apart was like, not only was now -- I had this plan for all of these tasks to be done by this person, but somebody then had to do them. So a lot of them like fell on me or other people, or we were like scrambling or things got cut. So it was a lot of zigzagging and a lot of just disappointment that I had over that, the whole situation.

I would say the even bigger constrictor though, for the entire year was like my personal stuff, which I'm not blaming myself or anybody for it. It is truthfully, it just is what it is. That really constricted me a lot this year because probably I would say mostly because of my energy or lack thereof, not wanting to be as forward facing, not wanting to work as much. And that's the part where it's like, I was okay with that because I was saying like, well, first of all, I know that I have all this stuff set up that's going to continue to bring people in, but I'm also okay if my resting results in less for this year. I understand though when I say that, that that's a very privileged thing to say and I wouldn't have been able to do that years ago.

So that was a decision that I made this year. It turned out that everything in the business was fine. I had to spend a little bit more on the back end on like ads or other support, hiring people. Like my costs were a little higher, so it's a little bit less profitable because I had to hire so much more support where I would have normally been doing a lot more, but that's kind of like the cost of doing business during this kind of lifetime.

Okay. Last but not least, the last category I go over is areas where I felt supported and areas where I could have used more support. So I felt really supported by my team. As I mentioned, my team's awesome and they kept things going, kept things afloat. I feel like the agencies that I work with like my podcast production team at Nova and my Facebook ads team at elevate her marketing. Like people really stepped up to make sure that things were still running on time, even with me being out. And I felt like people were really nice about it and like very understanding. So that was a big supporter for me.

My mindset coach, Jen, I just feel like she took me through a lot of stuff. She still does every single day, every week, but I just feel like my work with her this year has been so helpful because if me in the business had still been like very enmeshed, I would have had a lot of panic, a lot of fear, a lot of scarcity. And I'm just glad that I work with her because I'm working on this stuff and she's incredible. And I highly recommend working with Jen Diaz. I will link to her stuff below too, because she has a great membership. There's an affordable option for you to get into her Java method membership. She has awesome journal prompts, visualizations, mantras in there that I just, I love her membership. And then she has guest experts coming in. I actually did a marketing training inside her membership this year. So I'll link to that below because I really, I love Jen and I highly recommend working with her. I would also say I felt really supported in like my content creation and reuse cause my social media team. And that was really helpful in getting a lot of pressure off my back.

And last but not least, I feel like the only place I really could have used more support this year was around marketing because I tend to just take the lead in a lot of the marketing stuff and I really, really love the marketing side of business. And I don't know on the one hand that I really want that to change, but on the other, I could use marketing support, like implementation of a lot of my ideas or implementation of certain projects. And then also like it would be helpful to have some strategic help with big picture vision planning, somebody analyzing like my funnel, like stuff like that. And I think that's kind of hard to find. I really love marketing. I love doing this stuff, but it would also be good to have like that kind of bounce off person.

And maybe to that effect too, like I realized I don't have, it's been years and years since I've joined like a mastermind of my peers, like of people whose businesses are around the same level or people who are kind of going after the same thing. So I've been -- I use that as part of my reflection to be like, hmm, maybe I should look for something like that in 2024.

So that's really my reflection on my seventh year in business. I cannot believe it. I hope that this was helpful to you. If you go and download the free annual planning guide in the show notes, then you will be able to get this exact outline and fill in the blanks for all of your responses. I

would love for you to reach out to me on Instagram or reply to my email and let me know what was like the biggest aha moment that you had in reflecting on 2023 that you're taking into 2024. What was the thing that came up for you? Was it maybe something in your personal reflection? You realize some part of your personal life is suffering as a result of your business, or maybe it's something in your business. Like maybe you realized something you didn't accomplish and actually it's not that important or something you let go of that you just hadn't really thought about the fact that that's like going to be so helpful. Something you're ready to let go of, by the way, you can just be ready to let go of it so you don't take it into 2024.

I want you to write me an email or DM me on Instagram at @SamVanDerWielen and let me know what that one thing was and go ahead and download your planner before you go. Otherwise, I can't wait to chat with you on Thursday for part two, my annual business planning 2024. I'll see you then.

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