

TRANSCRIPT

On Your Terms



Driven by Goals.
Guided by Strategy.
Powered by Intention.

Episode #: 183

Stop Playing Small [Monday Motivation!]

Sam Vander Wielen:

Hey, and welcome back to On Your Terms. I'm your host, Sam Vander Wielen. I'm an attorney turned entrepreneur who helps people get the legal stuff done for their online businesses.

So, setting goals for the new year means thinking big. If you're doing it right, those big goals can even make you a little uncomfortable. They probably should stretch you outside of your comfort zone while not making you feel totally crazy. You may begin to doubt yourself or question the legitimacy of your online business, but I'm here to tell you that that feeling is so normal, it doesn't mean that you have to accept it though. In this Greatest Hits Episode, I share why only you can decide how legit your business is so you might as well start believing in it now.

So, there's a funny thing that can happen when you start a business as a woman. There can be this kind of attitude or assumption that what you're doing in your business, well, if they'll even recognize it as a business, is kind of cute, are secondary, or a hobby, or a little side hustle. There's a lot of belittling that goes on. At least in my experience and what I've heard from friends and colleagues as well and from so many of you, that people in your life might not always take it seriously. For some of you, this might be people who are, unfortunately, very close to you. For others, it might be Uncle Larry at Thanksgiving. It might be some schmuck on the street. Who knows? But either way, I've heard this time and time again, that people see your business as not being as legitimate or serious as if you told everybody I'm opening a bakery or I'm opening a gym, or something like this, they don't see it that way.

A lot of this comes from a lack of understanding of online business, and we'll talk about this a lot today. This is a really different episode, by the way, than I feel like I've ever done, but I'm really excited to have this conversation with you and I'm just excited to hear what you think after you listen.

And I also see the same thing, we do this to ourselves as well. I know like when I started my legal business, and definitely when I had my health coaching business, I would always call it a little business. When I was talking to people out and about, I would just be like, "I have this little business. I have this little thing." Do you ever do

that? I would put myself down. I also would put myself aside or put my business second to other things in my life because I was still seeing it through that lens of being second, or aside, or not as important, not as legitimate if I was opening my bakery, which I would love to open if I could bake. I can't bake. I can just cook. But the idea of having a bakery with a lot of bread and croissants and all of this stuff, isn't that the dream? I think so. But having a bakery, by the way, does not make our businesses any less legitimate, serious, amazing, accomplishments, anything like that.

What I find, typically speaking, from Uncle Larry to the schmuck on the street to maybe, unfortunately, your partner or your friend - I had a friend who did this to me - people don't understand what we do and they don't have a real working understanding of online business, so they belittle it. And maybe for some people, it comes from a good place of just an ignorance or lack of understanding, and so they're not trying to be rude, but their only conception and understanding of social media is Uncle Larry posting on Facebook about the chicken dish he had for dinner last night. That's their understanding.

Or they've heard these stories about influencers - not that there's anything wrong with influencers, by the way, but that's what they've seen. They've seen the - what's that family? It's like the D'Amelio family or something that became huge on TikTok and now they have a show on Bravo or E! or some big network, I don't know. I don't watch it, but I've seen that. And sometimes I think that people just lump us all into this category, because you market your business on social media, you must be like Kim Kardashian or you're like Kylie Jenner because you show up on Instagram and do stories.

Sometimes when we are in online business, and I've even had these moments myself when I talk to people who are really outside of our space, you kind of have that moment where you come back down to earth and you're like, "Oh, right. People think I'm kind of weird because I'm talking to my phone or I'm taking videos of my food. They're like, 'Oh, is that for Instagram?'" I've been out with people who aren't in the space and they make comments about things that it's very clear that they follow me on social, which is very strange. And it is different what we do. I understand it's new, it's different.

And for most people who are still operating in a 9:00 to 5:00 job or who work in corporate or have never had a job or whatever, they might look at all these things that we do and think it's strange. Some people think it's narcissistic. I mean, obviously, there are narcissistic elements to what we do, but we're building a business and a

business is like that in the space that we do. So, that's like another thing where somebody in your life might look at you and be like, "Oh, she looks a little narcissistic." But I would look at you and be like, "Dang. She's building a killer business. She's doing what she's got to do." That's the way that I think of it.

I think that this lack of understanding leads to a lot of kind of rude or hurtful questions despite the fact that they might have good intentions. Like, "How's your little blog?" when you don't have a blog, you're not a blogger. You blog as part of your marketing strategy, but you're not a blogger. And I always hate having this conversation because I'm like, yes, but there's nothing wrong with being a blogger either, right? There's nothing wrong with that.

It's just that when you are building a business, that is different. You are building something outside of yourself. You are building something serious here, and that's really what we're going to talk about today. I really want you to use this as a pep talk and come back to it whenever you need it, that you are building a legitimate business. And just because it's online, just because you use Instagram or Facebook or TikTok or whatever thing of the moment to promote it, does not make it any less serious or legitimate as my dream bakery scenario.

So, I have faced quite a bit of this in my own journey. And I remember when I was leaving the law - so for anybody who doesn't know, I was a corporate lawyer for, like, over five years. And then, I left to start a health coaching business. And so, at least when I left the law firm, that's what all the lawyers thought I was going to do because that was my plan at the time. So, I got all the little like, "Oh, you're starting a blog" or "Oh, you're going to be a yoga teacher," "Oh, you're going to do this." And if anybody's heard me tell this story before, when I told my boss that I was leaving, he acted very happy for me to my face. And then, like, five minutes later, I heard him, because it was so loud, say to one of my colleagues at the firm, "Sam's leaving to go teach fat people not to eat cheeseburgers."

Because besides the fact that there's, like, 800 things wrong with that statement - can we all just agree to that and please don't think I'm skipping over it because I'm just trying to stay on track with what we're talking about today - rooted in his comment, besides the misogyny and the fat phobia and all these kinds of things, is the fact that he didn't understand what I was doing. He's a very smart person and I explained to him what I was doing, but I still remember it, maybe you do, too, maybe before you started an online business, you still remember that moment when you found the

online space, maybe you found another coach or something, or you landed on one of the big people in our industry and that kind of sucks you into this whole world.

And maybe you found a blogger, like I started a billion years ago, I kind of entered slowly into this world a million years ago through food blogging because I'm obsessed with food, so I read a million food blogs. And so, I would read these food blogs, and then those food bloggers became coaches sometimes, or they would take IIN, and then I was like, "What's IIN? What's a health coach? What do you mean people are meeting on Zoom? What do you mean people are getting paid just to support other people?" This was all so crazy to me when I first found out.

So, I tried to have a lot of sympathy and empathy and understanding. This is something I'm working on in general, in life in general is trying to see things a bit more balanced and not so black and white, that I understand where people are coming from because I, too, remember how crazy it sounded - not crazy, but it was so foreign to me coming from a 9:00 to 5:00 - well, I didn't have a 9:00 to 5:00 job. We had, like, an 8:00 to 9:00 job, 8:00 in the morning to 9:00 at night, by the way. Not 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., that would be an amazing job. But I had a very corporate-y, buttoned up situation where everything was black and white, right and wrong, good and bad, good and evil, and it totally rocked my world.

So, when my boss said that about, "Oh, she's leaving to help fat people learn not to eat cheeseburgers," or he may have even said fat women, I don't remember, I just remember thinking like, "Oh, wow. He doesn't understand me." On top of, by the way, feeling like absolute garbage because - I mean, you know what it's like - I was so terrified to leave. I was already doubting myself. I had plenty of doubt in myself, to then be belittled like that was just a little spark I needed to light that fire. Well, the initial fire that it lit was like the, "Oh, my gosh. I'm doing the wrong thing. I'm such an idiot. What am I doing?" And then, that fire burned out and immediately lit the fire of like, "I'm going to show this guy. I am going to show him." And, boy, did I. Boy, did I.

So, you're going to face this as part of your business, you might be facing this as part of your business. You just went through the holiday season, I'm sure that you got some comments from old Aunt Betty at Christmas that like, "Hey, what's this business again? I don't get it." So, it's frustrating.

I also got the whole husband supporting me thing. So, when I went to go leave the law, I remember people being like, "That's so nice that Ryan's letting you do that." And I was like, "How is Ryan letting me do that? I'm a human. I'm an adult on my own. I am

a adult woman who has a job. And I've saved my own money. And I contribute to my household. I'm not being taken care of." Now, I will balance that comment with the fact that one thing that made it much easier for me to leave was, well, (A) I didn't have children, (B) I had health insurance through Ryan's work. So, I fully acknowledge how much easier, and I always say that when I talk about my stories.

I hate when people are like, "Everyone leave your job. It's so easy. You can too." It's not so easy for everybody. It's not the case. But I got the whole like, "Oh. It's nice for him to do that" or I got the like, "Isn't he a professor? How can he afford to let you do that?" I'm like, "He can't, that's why he's not letting me. And by the way, he doesn't need to let me. And by the way, I'm going to build this thing so I can be the breadwinner. Who cares? I don't care. I'm in a relationship. I don't care who makes the money."

I always love, by the way, when people ask me if my goal is to retire my husband. I'm like, "Absolutely not. This is my business. I'm not bringing my husband into this. This is my business. And he has his own life and he's incredible in his career and he's incredible at what he does. And we do really different things." It's just funny.

But anyhow, yeah, you're going to get, and maybe you are getting this, but here's what I want you to know at the end of the day. You are building a legitimate business. If you have a blog, if you're a yoga teacher, if you're on Instagram, if you have a TikTok account, if you're a coach, if you're an influencer, if you are creating online courses, if you are posting sponsored content, whatever it is, you are building a legitimate business. You get to decide the legitimacy of what you're doing, not everybody else.

I wrote an email to my list the other day - if you don't get my emails, by the way, there's like a really easy way to sign up. I'll make sure you have the easy email link below. You can get my emails. People love my emails. But you can get my emails below without going through all my marketing stuff. And I wrote an email the other day talking about my beloved Philadelphia Phillies. So, I'm from Philly, love the Phillies, and the Phillies were in the World Series. And I wrote this email before the World Series were over and so I didn't know if the Phillies were going to win or not. It turns out they didn't, but it's okay. It doesn't matter. It wasn't part of the story.

The story was that what I thought was so incredible about the Phillies story this year - and hang with me, even if you don't like sports, this is a helpful example - is that the

Phillies were total underdogs, like most Philadelphia teams are. Nobody believes in us, including ourselves. And the Phillies decided that they were going to go big and they were going to go to the world stage and they were going to be the best before everybody saw them as being possible to do that. They didn't wait for everybody to think that they were an incredible team who deserved to go to the World Series. They went to the World Series and they let everybody else catch up.

That's how I feel about you with this business. You don't need everybody else to believe in your business. It makes me want to cry. You don't need everybody else to believe in your business in order for it to be legitimate. You get to decide that. And here's the thing, and this is always what I see kind of intersecting with what I do, is that people will sometimes not think, especially women will not think that this is a legitimate business the kind of business that you're building. They treat it as a little side hustle and they treat it as a little side blog, secondary backseat thing. And by the way, how well do you think things grow when you treat them as secondary, side hustle, backseat things? But we treat them that way. And then, you come to me or you DM me or whatever, and you're like, "I don't know if I should legally protect my little side hustle, tiny business yet?"

Your business is legitimate and legitimate businesses get legally protected. You have to legally protect this business. If you are still thinking it's small and tiny and whatever, that's a separate conversation, which hopefully we've already covered today. And we need to work on that within ourselves. We cannot wait for other people to do this for us. We cannot wait for other people to recognize and legitimize what we are building here. And you might be starting with something seemingly small to you right now, but everything starts somewhere. Everything. So, it might be "small" today, that doesn't mean you're building a small business. Your business is going to be huge. Eventually, six months from now or six years from now, it's going to be huge. That's the attitude you have to have.

If we approach our business every single day with like, "I'm just building a little business. I'm building a little business," so you're building a little business? You're building a business that's going to make \$5 a year? That's a little business. You're not doing that. I know you. I know you're a go-getter. And I know that you're building a legitimate business.

An online business is not any less legitimate than any other kind of business. And so, as I've talked about many, many times, the rules always apply to you. The law applies. The rules apply. The law doesn't see what you're doing as a little tiny business. But

this is bigger than the rules. This is about believing in yourself and believing in what you're building. And it's about believing that you're building something serious, regardless of where it's at now, regardless of whether the world sees it that way yet, regardless of whether Uncle Larry - God love him - sees it.

We're also feeling like all of this stress and overwhelm about the legal side of business, because on top of all this nonsense that we're dealing with that I just talked with you about, you've got the fact that - you're right - legal stuff is confusing. It's overwhelming. It's a lot to take in. You've already got a lot on your plate, maybe you have a family, maybe you have another job, maybe you have life stress, maybe you lost your dad this year. You're wearing a lot of hats if you are running your business. You're your chief marketing officer, your chief financial officer, your chief everything officer. You're wearing a lot of hats. And nobody taught you this stuff, and they weren't supposed to, and you weren't supposed to learn it.

I always think it's funny that when people come to me and they feel upset about not knowing the legal stuff, I'm like, "That's okay. I don't know anything about what you do. That's what you're here for. This is what I'm here for, I'm here to help you and I'm here to be the legal voice to give you the legal tips that you need."

You don't need to be chief legal officer. You don't need to be in-house counsel for yourself. Part of growing our businesses is embracing that we don't have to be everything to everyone or to every part of our business. And I think that the smartest entrepreneurs, that I know, know how to hone in on their zone of genius and then kind of outsource the rest as efficiently as possible. So, instead of expecting to be your own lawyer, which you shouldn't be anyway, and harping on that and spinning your wheels in it and letting it hold you back and being stressed out about whether or not you're going to be copied or whether a client's not going to pay you, you get it done and you move on because we stay within our zone of genius. But that has to start with you believing that you're building something serious here and it deserves that kind of protection.

So, they don't teach this stuff in school. Honestly, that's why I created the Ultimate Bundle, my signature program, because when I created it, a million years ago now, I thought like I want this program to be the thing that you would have taken had you known you were going to end up here. It's the all in, all encompassing program that gives you, of course, the practical stuff of you get all these contracts and website policies that you can download, which are awesome. But you also get all this on tap, on demand knowledge, like what happens if somebody doesn't pay you?

What happens if someone steals your stuff? So, all of that is included for you in the Bundle, that's why I did it.

But will you do me a favor really quickly? I would love for you to send me a DM on Instagram and let me know if this episode was helpful for you. I've never talked about this in this way before and so I'm just very curious what came up for you. I just really wanted to inspire you to treat your business as seriously as it deserves and as you deserve, and I hope that we did just that. So, with that, I'll see you on Thursday for Sam's Sidebar, my little Q&A. I hope you're listening. See you then.

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 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](https://www.instagram.com/samvanderwielen), and send me a DM to say hi.

Just remember that although I am an attorney, I am not your attorney and I am not offering you legal advice in today's episode. This episode and all of my episodes are informational and educational only. It is not a substitute for seeking out your own advice from your own lawyer. And please keep in mind that I can't offer you legal advice. I don't ever offer any legal services. But I think I offer some pretty good information.