



Episode 232:

Book Series Part 1: The Happy Trap

I used to think that once I quit my job as a corporate lawyer, I'd finally feel free, but when I got there, I still wasn't happy. Then I thought, once I start my online business and I hit six figures, then I'll be happy. But six figures came and went within my first full year of business. Still not happy.

So I thought, surely once I hit seven figures, then things will just be like smooth sailing, right? I think you know what happened next. I smashed seven figures back in 2020, and there was no happiness in those numbers either. If you ever thought, once I start my business, I'll be happy, or once I achieve X, Y, or Z in my business, whether it's followers, subscribers, or a revenue goal, I'll be happy, then this episode is for you.

This is the first episode in a four part series I'm doing in March called the When I Start My Business, I'll Be Happy Myth. Over the next four weeks, we're going to talk about the happy trap, there's only one way to build a business lie, the I just need more followers myth. And the hustle equals success lie.

I'm Sam Vander Wielen and the author of the new book, *When I Start My Business, I'll Be Happy: A Practical, No BS Guide To Successful Online Entrepreneurship*. And I'm a leading legal educator for online business owners. I've helped over 350,000 online business owners get their legal ish in order. And I have seen this pattern play out over and over again.

Today, we're going to go over what we call the happy trap. There are three parts in today's episode in the different ways that we fall into the happy trap as online entrepreneurs. Myth number one, people think that when the success happens, then they will be happy. In other words, the success will make me happy trap.

So, it's easy to fall into this happy trap because there is so much BS in the online business industry. I mean, pretty much as soon as you sign on to social media, you're hit with all kinds of things. From all kinds of coaches full of baloney who actually haven't done this stuff themselves, or don't really understand the mechanism of why certain things work in businesses or not, and they're not able to replicate the results, but it doesn't hold them back from selling courses that teach you how.

Besides some of the scammy stuff, which I hope is just more of the minority of the people in the business coaching industry, I think that you're just sold a lot of information, or at least a lot of information is put in front of you about how easy or how fast it can be to grow an online business. And in reality, at least in my experience in the last eight years and running a multi seven figure business online, it takes a lot of work.

It takes a ton of strategy and it takes time and also a lot of experimentation, which takes a lot of time and a lot of money. But we're sold this idea that if we just achieve X, like achieve a certain number of followers, get a certain number of people on our email list or have a certain number of subscribers that will get us closer to our happiness goals.

So we keep putting our happiness in not only these like outside achievements, but also in external things. But here's what happens. Then you get what you thought you wanted and if you even stop to celebrate, which is a big if, because if you're anything like me, a lot of us just don't stop and ever notice how far we've come or really, really, truly take the time to celebrate wins, no matter how big or small, then what happens is that we feel it for like a second and then it's over.

So even if you do stop to celebrate it, you're just like, yay. Okay, wait, but that should probably be bigger. That should be better. Like I should keep going, right? Nothing is ever, just never feels like it's enough. All you're really doing is moving the little business carrot like a little bit further and be like, did I say six figures? I meant six figures a month, or like, did I say I wanted a podcast with 2000 downloads? Now I want 10.

When I started my podcast, for example, on your terms, I said that my big goal was to get to 5,000 downloads per month. I worked and I worked and I produced hundreds of episodes and I finally got there. I got to the 5,000 a month. And what do you know? Not only did I not celebrate it, but I felt like that wasn't anything to write home about. Maybe it's because you get more involved in something and like the more I produced podcast episodes, the more I saw, you know, other people in the podcasting world. Doing quote unquote, better or growing faster than I was.

And all that did was make me think I actually didn't achieve anything. So like buying 5,000, you know, a download goal was just immediately out the window. I didn't recognize at all how much hard work or consistency it took to even get to that 5k or how much the podcast resonated with all of the people who did listen to it.

And that I didn't need 10,000 people necessarily. Of course I want, you know, something to grow, or I wanted to get into the right hands of people who really need it and who will benefit from it. But at the same time, there were so many people who were, and I wasn't appreciating it. You'll have to DM me and let me know whether you've ever felt this way, like, you've set a goal, only to reach it, and then realize it didn't really scratch that itch. So, tell me in my DMs on

Instagram, @samvanderwielen, if you can relate. I want to hear from you.

Myth number two and part two of the happy trap is that success will fix your life. But the truth is success alone won't fix your life and it's not going to make everything go away. We have to get clear on what we really want because we think we want all these external achievements, but I think in reality, that's not the case.

We don't actually want all these followers or that thing from Amazon that you had overnighted or that Jenny Kane sweater that looks like deliciously comfortable. We want what we think those things give us, like freedom, security, confidence, a chill vibe, a chill beachy vibe, right? We want to be chill and we want to be perceived as chill, but we think that the sweater is the thing that makes us chill.

In reality, people, actual chill people just wear whatever they want and they just look chill doing it. So when we don't do the inner work first and get clear on what we really want, we build a business that looks great on paper but it's one that leaves us feeling a little bit more like a trap.

Sometimes we can feel boxed in by our own businesses. You might even be working more now than you did in your nine to five, or maybe you're more stressed or your business just isn't bringing you the fulfillment that you thought that it would. And that leads us to part three, all about what actually leads to happiness in business or as a business owner.

So, here's the shift that changes everything, or at least it did for me. Happiness will not come from your business or that overly priced sweater. It's not your business's job to make you happy. This was like the most revolutionary thought for me, maybe it's just me, but when I stopped looking to my business to be the thing to like provide me with happiness, I got a lot happier.

And in fact, I realized that when I was a corporate lawyer. That's exactly what I did. I looked to my job to make me happy looking back and I'm like, maybe I could have stuck it out. Technically speaking. I mean, I'm really glad I didn't, but maybe I could have, if I would have realized then what I know now, which is that it wasn't my job, my job's job to make me happy.

The truth is as somebody who has been through a heck of a lot, especially in the last couple of years, losing my parents, having brain surgery, I feel like happiness comes and goes like this idea that you're supposed to be happy or that happiness is available to you at all times is just not true. And that could be part of the happy trap as well.

It's keeping you in a place of feeling like. You're supposed to be happy all the time, so if you have no unhappy moments, there's something wrong with you. When in reality, you're probably just a human that's living life. Life can be tough, and what truly makes us happy probably has more to do with how much we're living in alignment with our true selves, our core values, and our desires.

It's not necessarily like the fancy hiking boots that you buy to go outside more that will make you happy. It's probably more the unplugging from social media and being present enough to notice that there are little tiny buds on the trees right before spring is about to pop. And you can see it before everybody.

'Cause you're paying attention, which was me the other day on a walk. I really think that being happy is more about being present enough to notice how your dog smiles with his entire mouth and all of his teeth showing when you come home, even though you just went to the car to get your bag. And it's been like 30 seconds.

Happiness is living with a purpose. It's being clear on what that purpose is and maintaining your boundaries so that you can actually carry that purpose out. Here are three things I would focus on instead of focusing on success or external measures of success. Number one, I want you to define what success looks like for you.

Not for me, not for your friend, not for that person on Instagram, just for you. What actually matters to you? Do you want more freedom and flexibility? Like I love having open days. Um, do you want a lot of time back in your schedule? Do you want to make a massive impact? You want to make a deep impact with a few people? There's no right or wrong here, by the way. It's like judgment free zone.

So I need to know what is important about that to you though. So when you're reflecting on this and defining what success looks like for you, why does that matter to you? Why is that important? The second thing I would focus on instead of these external measures is about building a business that supports your life, not one that is your life.

If you're dreading your business, then it's probably dreading you. Right? So I said the other day on Instagram that I bet if you're dreading making your content, that's probably being felt on the other end. So we want to make sure that your business is something that you look forward to, but you can't do that when you're like.

Choking it to death because you're expecting it to perform and provide you all this happiness, or especially when you're expecting that all a little bit too fast upfront. The third thing to focus on instead of success is to focus on appreciating and feeling proud of what you have now, not what you'll feel like once you get there, right?

Because as we've discussed, once you get there, it won't feel nearly as good as you might think it will. And it's not going to resolve what you're looking for anyway. Years ago, I heard the mindset expert, Todd Herman, explain this concept where he talked about measuring the distance between where you are now and where you've been versus the distance between where you are now and where you want to go.

And he talked about how that's such a healthier mindset to go into business with, because if

you're constantly measuring the distance between where you are now and where you want to go, you'll never really stop to appreciate how much you've done. And I think as ambitious people, we can probably always agree that that finish line is always going to keep getting kicked out.

All right. So let's review what we've learned today in this episode. Number one, success alone won't bring you happiness. Two, if you don't get clear on what makes you really happy, you'll keep chasing external things or milestones that don't fulfill you and that won't even feel great once you get there. Number three, appreciate where you are and how far you've come. Don't only focus on how much you have left to go in your journey.

If this episode resonated, please be sure to subscribe to On Your Terms so you'll be able to hear all my future episodes and share it with a friend who needs to hear this. If you haven't yet, pre order my book, *When I Start My Business, I'll Be Happy*. It comes out April 15th. It's packed with everything I've learned about building a multi seven figure business that doesn't bring me happiness, but lets me live a life that does. I share all my email list building secrets and how I've sold over 8 million in just one product alone in the last five years. Click the link in the description to order now.

Next week, I'll be back with part two of this four part series. We'll be breaking down one of the biggest lies in the online business world. The idea that there's only one right way to build a business. Spoiler alert, there is not. So I'll see you next week.

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