

Ep #4: It's Not About the Money (Until It Is)



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With Your Host

Rachel Cannon

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Welcome to *Loudmouth Introvert*, a podcast for helping creative introverted entrepreneurs thrive, despite living in a world that's designed for extroverts to succeed. If you're ready to make more money and build the creative business you've been dreaming of, you're in the right place. I'm your host Rachel Cannon.

Hey, y'all, welcome to episode four of *Loudmouth Introvert*. So, something pretty cool happened to me this week. I got an email from my high school saying that I was being inducted into the hall of fame. How cool is that? So they honor four alumni each year in four different categories. And it's abundant life, academics, athletics, and arts. And I will be receiving the Arts Hall of Fame Award.

And I just think that that is so cool. I've never won an award in my life. I mean truly, I just never have. So I might be thinking that this is a much bigger deal than it actually is, but I'm excited either way.

So the ceremony is going to be held at the Homecoming football game and the honorees will get to walk out onto the field and there will be a little ceremony and everything and I'm so excited. So my friend, who lives in Texas, has volunteered to make me one of those huge Homecoming mom things that the girls in Texas wear. And I don't know if she's being serious, but if she comes through, I will totally wear it. And I might even put a crown on and relive my Homecoming court experience that I never got to have.

No, I'm joking, but it really is an honor to be recognized for contributing to my community. And if you're like me, you are thankful for the occasional pat on the back for a job well done and it's just a small way that somebody can go beyond just transactional agreements of services for funds and it feels really, really good, so I'm really excited about that.

Now, if you've been in business for any amount of time, you know that you cannot pay bills with pats on the back. So as much as I'm excited about this award, it's not something that I can cash in to keep the lights on at the design office. It would be nice, but that's just the truth.

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And you also can't pay bills because you're passionate about whatever creative outlet you've chosen. So I'm not saying that having passion for what you do isn't a good thing. In fact, it is a great thing. But passion alone is not enough to sustain your business long-term.

And really, too many creatives start our own businesses because we are passionate about our craft and we just want to find a way to share it with the world. And I'll be honest, people tell me all the time, if they say, "What do you do for a living?" And I just say, "I'm an interior designer," more often than not, people say, "Oh, design is my passion."

And it always kind of makes me laugh because it makes me think, man, is design even my passion anymore? I'm passionate about it some days, but other days, I'm like, oh my god, running this business is going to suck the life out of me. And so a lot of us get into our businesses because we've jumped in feet-first and we believe and hope that our passion is enough to carry us.

And in the short-term, it is enough because you're working, you're paying your dues, you're gaining your footing, and you're sort of just putting in the time because we all believe and understand that there's some struggle that kind of happens right out of the gate to get a business up and running. And so we sort of feel like we're passionate enough and the passion is enough to keep us going until we land those big clients and those big jobs.

And while there is a lot of truth to the idea that starting a business is not for the faint of heart, maintaining a business is not for the faint of heart either. And in the beginning, the passion for what you do is enough. It's enough to motivate you to keep trying and working hard to get to the next level. It's enough to get you up out of bed every day. You're excited, you know, is today the day I'm going to land that big client or get that big job? But many of us find that, after a few months, or a few years of we're really patient people, we feel more frustrated than anything and we question why we decided to take the thing we enjoy more than anything and try to make a business out of it.

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And in the long run, being in business is actually not about passion. It's about money, plain and simple. And if you're not making money, you are going to lose that passion with a quickness.

And that's because passion and being passionate about something is not the same thing as having a business plan, and relying on your passion to make a living instead of relying on clear measurable goals is really risky. So an example of a clear goal might be do you have a plan for making a profit within the first year or two of your business?

And did you know that if you haven't made a profit within the first three years of being in the business, the IRS considers your job to be a hobby? It's true. And if you've been in business for a while, do you think you'd be willing to continue to feel passionate about your work if you hadn't made a profit in three years?

So if you've been in business for 10 years and there's a three-year streak where you do not make a profit, you wouldn't feel passionate about today is going to be the day I make that big sale or land that big client. Something would be very seriously wrong and you wouldn't be passionate about it.

So can you even afford not to make money after three years of being in business? Would you feel differently about things if you were the person that had been in business for 10 years and suddenly you hadn't made any money in three years? Of course you would. You would know something was wrong.

You would probably be doing whatever you could to find ways to make a profit, but for some reason, when we start out, we think we just need to work harder and longer to get to that point. And what do we do to keep us going? We turn back to that reserve of passion we have for our work to give us the boost we need to go and create more.

But let me tell you, that is a one-way ticket to nowhere and you probably already know that because passion is a feeling. And, like all other feelings, it can change, sometimes minute by minute and sometimes inexplicably.

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So in terms of a strong foundation for building a business, passion is not one of the top-ranking cornerstones in my book. It's great to be passionate about what you do, but that, in and of itself, is really not enough.

So passion can also lead you to say yes to business opportunities that don't align with your core values. For example, earlier this year, I was presented with an opportunity to do a show house at High Point, which is the furniture market that happens twice a year.

And if I had said yes, the show house would be opening within a matter of weeks, like this month actually. And it was always a goal of mine to do a show house and I had a chance to participate in a show house in Palm Springs, California a few years ago and it was a fantastic experience.

I did a laundry room; the financial commitment was minimal. It was really a fun departure from the type of interior design that I typically do for my clients. And at that moment, it was really the right thing for me. But this time, from the moment the opportunity came across my desk, I felt uneasy about it. It just – I felt anxiety. Like, every time I would think about it, I would just dread, like, I don't want to do this.

And I initially said yes and I even went so far as to start planning my room when I finally decided to listen to my gut and the anxious feeling I got every time I thought about it. And I declined.

Now, if I had said yes, we would be installing that room basically today, right now. While you're listening to this episode, I would be in High Point, North Carolina installing the room for the show house. And instead, I took a step back and asked myself why I was feeling so compelled to say yes to this thing I really didn't want to do.

And it had everything to do with thinking I might not get another opportunity to do it. And that does not align with my core values at all. I don't like to operate from a scarcity point of view. And I don't like pop-up opportunities for this very reason.

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And guess what – that pesky little feeling we call passion. It is the very thing that can cloud your judgment and make you say yes to something that isn't right for you. And I had not planned to do a show house this year. I hadn't set aside the time or the funds to work on that kind of a project. And, besides, I also knew I was going to be launching a podcast this year and I wanted to focus my energy on this instead.

And did it hurt to have to call them back and say I wasn't going to participate? Yes, yes of course it did. More so, I felt bad, like I was letting someone down. But honestly, only for a minute because once I hung up the phone, I really did not give it another thought until when I started writing this episode.

And of course, everything worked out the way it was supposed to because I hadn't given myself over to a momentary feeling and try to somehow make my whole year, world, whatever fit around that one opportunity. And I had much bigger things on the horizon and keeping myself in check meant that I got to pour myself into the restructuring and rebranding of my business. And I got to use the money that I'd have sunk into a temporary room into creating and launching my podcast.

And passion is a short-term gain, and being in business is about playing the long game. And on the flipside of things, let's think about when things aren't going great for your business, because that's just the natural cycle of business. There's ups and downs. And maybe it's just the time of year when things taper off.

Now, the design industry is notorious for having a lull between November and March because we go into the holidays, people are really not thinking about their homes. They're thinking about their families and Christmas presents and having friends and family over for parties. But once the weather gets nicer, after they've recouped from the holidays, around March, they decide it's time to start some projects.

But from November to March, if I haven't planned accordingly and I had been operating out of just passion for the work that I do for the rest of the

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year, I may have forced myself into a survival state. And you may have experienced this yourself, no matter what your creative industry is.

If you've got natural lulls in the year and you haven't really planned accordingly just because you've been passionate about some things, you may have actually limited opportunities to take some projects that are a little bit bigger, that will be a little more sustaining financially throughout the year.

And you might hear yourself thinking, "I don't really want to do this project but some money is better than no money," or, "At least I'm still doing what I love," and you say yes to some opportunities that really are not a good fit because you're in that survival mode.

And even when the money is not enough or the opportunities aren't normally what you'd choose to do, if you're in a survival state, you say yes to them, and that's because you're holding onto that feeling of passion and expecting it to pay the bills for that quarter of the year when things are slow. But honestly, it's not going to take you long before you find out that you've lost the passion for the work because all those things that you say yes to while you're in survival mode, they're not going to be enough to keep your passion fired up.

They're probably not going to be the right fit for how you run your business. They probably are not even going to be ideal clients. And so let me just be clear; that is because creativity cannot coexist with survival mode.

As introverts, we tend to be a little bit unaware of being in survival mode because it feels really normal to us. And that's because we spend so much time in our heads. We've already imagined the worst-case scenario probably 1000 times.

And as creatives, we keep going back to that well of passion believing we can drain it dry while we deal with the stress, fear, anger, energy loss, and limiting beliefs that accompany being in a survival state. And let's be honest, we've all been there. It's the worst feeling and somehow, we've

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determined that if we can just be passionate about enough about our work, we'll be able to overcome all of that.

Wrong. In fact, our creativity has to work overtime in order to overcome all of these emotions because all it wants to do is focus on creating, and it can't do both.

So, if we get right down to the heart of the matter, we are our most creative when we are operating in our zone of genius. So, what does that mean? Well, quite frankly, working in your zone of genius means you've tapped into your highest earning potential. And that's why I say running a business is not about passion, it's about money.

So your zone of genius is the work that is the most fulfilling and rewarding and it's usually a very small part of a much larger puzzle. It's the one thing you do better than almost anyone else. And your zone of genius is the work you could do all day without stopping or getting tired of it.

And you might have thought, when you started your business, that that was precisely what you were doing. But no doubt you've experienced some burnout at some point, because we all do, and because you've realized that owning the business requires you to do a lot of things you didn't expect to do.

And while you might still experience a passion or that one thing, overall, you may also experience some discontentment with the work in general. We assume we need to focus on improving our weaknesses instead of just putting our genius to work. And in order to really build a sustainable feeling of satisfaction in our work, we need to pour ourselves into our zone of genius the majority of the time.

So what we often think of as passion is probably better described and put into this framework; and I'm quoting Forbes Magazine here. "In the zone of genius, you capitalize on your natural abilities, which are innate rather than learned. And this is the state which you get into flow, find ceaseless inspiration, and seem to not only come up with work that is distinguished

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and unique, but also do it in a way that excels far and beyond what anyone else is doing.”

So how are we supposed to stop chasing the feeling of passion and start chasing our zone of genius? Well, for the next 30 days, commit one day a week, so four days, to doing only the things you enjoy about your business. And it can be anything for the first 30 days, even the stuff you know is not the best use of your time.

I'm giving you permission to just work on the fun stuff, and after those 30 days, evaluate what brought the most money into your business, what was your highest earning potential out of those things, and also what brought the least amount of money? What made you the least amount of money of the things you enjoy doing that come naturally to you?

And the things that brought you the least amount of money, although you may enjoy them, they're not really your zone of genius, even though you may be passionate about them, because that's not your highest earning potential.

And then, for the 15 days that follow the first month, be mindful of what is easiest for you to get into as you do those high earning tasks because the things that you look most forward to doing that don't require much effort for you to complete, those are probably closer to your zone of genius.

And then, for the final 15 days, so we're talking about two months here, evaluate the things that you included in the list that you surprised yourself by how much you enjoy them now that you're allowing yourself to focus on them. See if you've uncovered any natural talents for those things.

Something I uncovered during this exercise when I did it years ago is that I actually have a natural ability for marketing. It was not something I realized. And in fact, it was something I avoided and now I enjoy it so much that I actually look forward to when I get to work on marketing strategies, not only for my business, but for my consulting clients' businesses as well.

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As creative introverts, we are all gifted with unique abilities and our businesses do not need to be and should not be a mimic of someone else's. And if you're operating out of passion instead of your zone of genius, you're missing the mark because there's a lot of stuff about being an interior designer that I am not passionate about.

There's a lot of stuff about being a business owner that I'm not passionate about – hello, accounting. And when we try to build a business on passion, we often end up trying to replicate the success of other people's businesses and trying to emulate their zone of genius. And ultimately, I would love to see us all grow up a little bit, beyond the passion or infatuation stage and tap into our own creative and intellectual power.

Passion is a feeling that can fade. It's just not a strong enough foundation for long-term success and it can absolutely cloud our judgment. And all of those things can stand in the way of you experiencing not only deep fulfillment in your work, but also major profits. And owning a business is not about passion. It's about money.

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