

Ep #8: Are You Self-Employed, or Are You a Business Owner?



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rachel Cannon

[Loudmouth Introvert](#) with Rachel Cannon

Ep #8: Are You Self-Employed, or Are You a Business Owner?

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.

I got a really sweet message from a listener of the podcast recently. Katrina Porter messaged me on Instagram to let me know she appreciated my transparency in Episode 2, where I talked about the way we, as introverts, have a tendency to silence ourselves by listening to negative thoughts that create doubt. Y'all, something you should know about me - I'm 100% in favor of being real. I don't deal well with phoniness, and I can't mask it when I am turned off by it (I have no poker face), so you can always know that I am going to keep it as real as real can be with you. It doesn't do any of us any good when we want to pretend that everything is perfect! What's good is for us to be willing to say "I'm struggling and I need help!" That makes us all feel better, and it also makes it easier for someone to offer advice when we're open to receiving it. And, it just makes me really glad to know that other people also appreciate realness over phoniness!

So, in the spirit of transparency and realness, I have a question for you: Are you self-employed, or do you own a business? Before you answer, let me elaborate. For a long time, I thought these were the same thing. I remember right after I started my business, I was sitting in a football stadium during an LSU game and the guy next to me asked me what I did for a living. I hadn't had the chance to answer that question since I had gone out on my own, so I gleefully replied "I'm self employed!" And it felt great to say that! Finally, I make the rules, I get to say when my hours are, I'm responsible for my future. I get to work to fulfill my own dreams instead of someone else's! And those are all awesome things I still get to enjoy! But being self-employed often means we are doing everything - filling every role that, in a bigger company, would be filled by multiple people. We are

Ep #8: Are You Self-Employed, or Are You a Business Owner?

the boss, the bookkeeper, the assistant, the clean up crew, the courier, the secretary, the stenographer, the receptionist, the expediter...

Creative introverts, we ESPECIALLY are guilty of this. We see the freedom that comes with being self employed as a release from the day-to-day, 9-to-5 grind. We somehow think that wearing all of those hats means we have MORE freedom than if we worked for someone else. And we continue to stay self-employed, not realizing that we're limiting our potential by attempting to do every single role that it takes to run a business. All the while, thinking we own a business (and working our fingers to the bone, often to disappointing financial returns).

IF you are still wearing all the hats, and doing all the things, I have some news for you. You do not own a business. A business owns you.

Not to discourage you, but again, I told you that you can count on me to be real with you. And it's not your fault that it's like this - like most small business owners, the operations manual for your business exists in your head, and nowhere else. You've probably thought to yourself, "It would take me more time to hire someone and train them than it would to just do it myself!"

But there are several problems with that kind of thinking.

1. You'll hit the wall sooner rather than later. Remember, as introverts, when we expend energy it takes us some time to recharge and do it all

Ep #8: Are You Self-Employed, or Are You a Business Owner?

over again. When we attempt to do everything, we're creating a stop-and-start pattern that's a lot like riding in a car with someone who can't stop tapping the breaks. I don't know about you but that makes me physically ill. I remember on a family vacation, my uncle was driving us around, and he had a really bad habit of riding the brakes, which, to Miss Easy Quease over here, was absolute torture. I was in agony, wishing he'd just put the car in cruise so I could just relax! When you are self-employed, you're tapping the breaks in your business, and guess what that means? You're the driver making everyone sick AND you're the passenger who's ready to hurl out the window! As a creative introvert, you can't sustain that kind of activity. You'll get sick of the grind, while feeling like you can't stop because if you're not working all the time, you're not making money! You wanted to be the one making the rules, but eventually, the rules are dictated by the cash flow. Trust me on this one – self-employment should not be the last stop on your business journey.

2. The next problem with remaining in the self-employed state is that you'll limit your growth. It's true. I know people who've been interior designers for decades longer than I have who still spend their days running all over town and working into the late hours of the night and into the weekend to get everything done, and they haven't made any more money as a result of that. I'm only 40 and I've only been doing this professionally for 20 years, but there is nothing - NOTHING - in me that finds that appealing. And it has nothing to do with my work ethic. I'm a nose-to-the-grindstone kinda girl. But I'm also a work smarter not harder kinda girl. And as a creative introvert, I value my down time as much as I do my bursts of creative energy! I need to clock out, and if you're an introvert, you do too. We go into business for ourselves saying that we get to set our own hours, but really, we end up working all kinds of crazy hours when we're not at our most creative because we've gotten bogged down in the day-to-day tasks of making a business stay afloat. Remaining self-employed means you'll always be the one doing everything, and business owners don't do every

Ep #8: Are You Self-Employed, or Are You a Business Owner?

task every day; they hire qualified people to fill specific roles to make the business run more effectively.

3. Third, if you don't decide to become a business owner, and you remain self-employed, you'll never be able to escape work, and you signed up for MORE freedom when you started your business, right? Imagine being able to go out of town for a week and not be bothered by anyone. An actual vacation. Who has been on an actual vacation recently, where you didn't also sneak in a little work while you were gone? Many years ago, when I was still self-employed, I was boarding a cruise ship and a client called me in a panic about a project (a client, I should point out, who knew I was going on vacation), and I worried about it for the rest of my trip. The first thing I did when I got internet access on the ship was to check in on the progress, and the first thing I did when I got home was do a site visit to see if it had gotten rectified while I was gone. (Sidenote: I've since learned that I was acting as a project manager and had not been paid for that role, so I no longer offer project management to clients. That's a topic for another day.) People who are self-employed feel beholden to their clients and work - at the expense of well-deserved time off! Yet, they still claim that being self-employed is where it's at! They have so much flexibility! As my mom would say, "hogwash."

Remember those amazing feelings that I told you I felt when I first announced I was self-employed? "I make the rules, I get to say when my hours are, I'm responsible for my future. I get to work to fulfill my own dreams instead of someone else's!" Yeah, well. It wasn't long before I realized that my clients made the rules, they dictated when my hours were, I felt like there was no future (or end in sight), and everyone's dreams were being realized but my own. When was I supposed to have time to plan for how I wanted my business to REALLY be, when all I did was work?!?

Ep #8: Are You Self-Employed, or Are You a Business Owner?

I knew I had to escape the fatigue of working all the time (and I really do mean all the time) and gaining no traction. I was sick of being self-employed. I felt exactly like I did when I worked for someone else – frustrated and resentful, but with way more on the line because I never got a break from it! I wanted to be a business owner. I wanted something that could function according to MY framework. Something that would not implode if I went away for the weekend. Something that created a LIFE for me...not something that WAS my life. Something that helped me reach my fullest potential.

...I know what you're thinking. YES, Rachel, I want all of that too, but like you said, "how am I supposed to build a business when I don't have any time to do it because I'm so busy working?!"

Well, like anything that has to be fixed, there were challenges. I had to figure out how to get the "operations manual" for my business out of my head and onto paper. So I wrote it down. I literally started at the end of what a perfect interior design project would have looked like from a timeline point of view, and then I backed up one step. I asked myself, "What would need to happen at this step to ensure that the one after it could go perfectly?"

Once I did that, I could start to see where I needed help, and where I'd gotten bogged down in the tasks that were technically below my pay grade. And listen, there is nothing wrong with you, as the owner of the business, deciding that something is not the best use of your time. Can I do everything that it takes to keep my business running? Yes. Should I? No. I

Ep #8: Are You Self-Employed, or Are You a Business Owner?

started with taking the things off my plate that I hated to do. I actually hate logistics. And the more your business grows, the more you'll hate it too. Coordinating schedules, being the go between to make sure things are where they're supposed to be, aligning time frames, etc. I'm fully capable of doing those things, but they're not the best way for me, as the CEO of my company to spend my time. In fact, we make more money now that I don't do those things. So start to shift yourself into the business owner mindset by listing the things that – if given the choice, you'd really rather not do.

After I identified where I was wasting precious energy, I knew what I needed out of employees. And contrary to popular belief, I do not have a huge team of employees that work in-house. I have a bookkeeper (luckily for me, this is my Mom), and I have a project manager. Between the three of us, we've successfully divvied up the work that has to get done, and we stay on task by having two meetings a week to discuss the goals for the week and the tasks for the week. And please understand that when you hire someone, you need to know exactly what their role is. There is a difference between delegating responsibility and abdicating responsibility, and dropping things in people's laps and then disappearing is abdicating and it's not the way to run a business! While I'm not in the details every day, I'm still aware of them and making sure we're making progress. You can only delegate a responsibility to someone once you know which ones you, as the CEO, need to be working on.

And beyond that, you can always hire virtual team members to fill in the gaps while you grow. Shamefully, I resisted this idea for years. I kept saying "how can someone work for me if they're not in the day-to-day with me??" Again, limiting beliefs that held me back! A few months ago, when we began the launch process for the podcast and my consulting business, I had to bite the bullet and assemble a virtual team. So while there are only 3 people in my office, I have an additional eight virtual team members who

[Loudmouth Introvert](#) with Rachel Cannon

Ep #8: Are You Self-Employed, or Are You a Business Owner?

are so incredible at their jobs, it's life-changing and mind-blowing. I'll admit, I made the decision to hire them because the work that had to get done was so far out of the realm of my abilities, there was no way I could have done it myself. But now that they're part of my business, I can't imagine functioning without them! In fact, if I had it to do over again, I would probably start building a virtual team before I began building an in-person team. I could have outsourced AutoCAD, ordering, expediting, social media, etc., while keeping my business's overhead lower, due to the fact that virtual team members are not put on an hourly rate. They work by the project, and if there's no work for them to be doing, they're not sitting in a chair, waiting to be given a task.

I know it seems like an impossible task to break free of the self-employment hamster wheel. I know because I have been there. I've done it! At first, it feels like you're doing really well because you're SO BUSY all the time! It feels like what success should feel like. Especially when your business is new. There are those first few months where it's like crickets chirping, and then as the client list starts to grow, we get excited because our schedules get full and we have real work to get done! In the long run, however, as creative introverts, we reach the point of fatigue, overwhelm, and frustration because all of the long hours of work we've put in aren't yielding the financial gain we were hoping for. I mean think about it: as a self-employed person, you're really doing the jobs of about 12 different people, and you're only getting paid for one of them! That's if you're even paying yourself at all, which most creative entrepreneurs are not doing. So you're functioning as 12 employees, and not even getting the paycheck for even the lowest person on the totem pole. Y'all! That is insanity!! Your creativity, introvertedness, and entrepreneurial spirit can't endure that. You don't want to try to find out.

So like I said in episode 5, we can't just think about things and call it planning. We actually have to form a plan and then decide to take action.

Ep #8: Are You Self-Employed, or Are You a Business Owner?

It's not enough to just think about the day you'll go from being self-employed to being a business owner. You'll have to actually make a plan and follow through on it. And to help you with that, I have some tips for you.

1. Start by creating a project/client flow chart. Since most of my listeners are in creative service industries, it is crucial that we know the steps necessary to deliver our service to our clients. What are the steps needed to get your project or client to the final phase of work or project close out? It's helpful to start at the end of what a perfectly executed project would look like, then take one step back and write out how that step would go so that the one after it would be executed flawlessly. Even if you are the only person in your business right now, you should write down all of the things you're doing to get the client through your process. This is probably even going to help you see where you're losing time, money, and energy, and ultimately tighten up how you run things.
2. Once you have that flow chart, make a list of all the tasks you wrote down that you hate to do. And it's fine to be honest with yourself because, contrary to popular belief, we don't have to be good at everything to be successful. I hate logistics, I hate being the middle man, I hate bookkeeping, I hate reminding clients of appointments. I honestly hate to talk on the phone! Before I hired anyone, I knew that these were tasks I wanted to delegate. I took a piece of paper and divided it into 3 columns: "Love, Hate, and Okay." Anything in the "Love" or "Okay" columns were things I could do, but the first things to go were the things in the "Hate" column.
3. Consider if any of those "Hate" tasks can be outsourced to a virtual team member, or even automated. One of the very first things I did before I ever hired an employee was get an office phone with an answering service so I could stop being interrupted all day long with phone calls and texts. (If you've listened to past episodes, you know my feelings about texting with clients.) I set up a buffer and it was glorious! More recently we implemented

[Loudmouth Introvert](#) with Rachel Cannon

Ep #8: Are You Self-Employed, or Are You a Business Owner?

an automated appointment reminder system that we all love. Now, nobody in the office has to get on the phone to remind clients of appointments and get sucked into a 15 or 20 minute conversation about their project.

Because that's what the appointment is for. So maybe some of the "Okay" tasks are the automated ones. You just have to be willing to be honest with yourself about what you want to continue to do.

4. Once you've outsourced as much as you can, then consider the possibility of hiring an employee who works in-house with you. Now, as an interior designer who is in people's homes, I think it's smart to have even a part-time employee to go on appointments with you. First, because it's just safer not to go to a potential client's home by yourself, and second, because it helps to have two people on your team listening to the conversation. In my office, my project manager takes notes of the meetings, which get emailed to the clients so that there's a record of the discussion. This doesn't even have to be someone who has a specialized skill set for your creative industry – in fact, you could have an intern do this for you, and you'd add a layer of professionalism to your work and also start to build your client records, and in turn, your credibility.

5. Keep in mind that you don't have to have a huge team. In fact, a smaller ship can course-correct a lot faster than a huge ship. I prefer to operate out of the lean-and-mean mindset, no matter what others think about how it looks to have a giant pool of employees. But I don't mean lean-and-mean as a one-woman show. That's a dead end, y'all! In fact, you'll probably find that a small team of really skilled members – even made up of mostly virtual ones – is so much more effective than a big team of in-house employees. It just requires you determining which tasks you, as the business owner, need to be spending your time doing, and what can be delegated to someone who will (more than likely) do a better job than you will.

6. And don't let your ego be bruised by the idea that someone might do a better job than you. That's only going to limit you in your trajectory and it

Ep #8: Are You Self-Employed, or Are You a Business Owner?

will inhibit your ability to reach your goals. A really great team member is going to take ownership of those responsibilities and tie them directly to their own goals. And remember the benefits of owning a business? “I make the rules, I get to say when my hours are, I’m responsible for my future, I get to work to fulfill my own dreams instead of someone else’s” – you’ll be able to take full advantage of them when you find the right team players who enhance, not inhibit, your business.

When we realize that we’re limiting our potential and driving ourselves straight into burn-out by attempting to do every single job and task that it takes to run a business, we have the incredible opportunity to do something about it. It doesn’t matter if you’ve been in business 10 minutes, 10 months, or 10 years, you have the ability to free yourself from that state of being overworked and underpaid by following these steps and taking the necessary action to elevate your position from self-employed to business owner. In the end, you’ll not only be making a heck of a lot more money, but you’ll get your life back too!

Hey, y’all, if you love the show and you find it useful, I would really appreciate it if you would leave me a rating and a review on Apple Podcasts, or iTunes if you’re an Android or Windows user. Your feedback helps other creative introverted entrepreneurs find the show and it helps me create an awesome show that provides tons of value.

So, visit rachelcannonlimited.com/podcastlaunch for directions on how to subscribe, rate, and review.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *Loudmouth Introvert*. Want more? Come visit us at loudmouth-introvert.com. We’ll see you back here next week.