

Ep #13: Goal Setting, Introvert Style



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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.

Hello again, friends! We are one week away from Christmas, and let me just tell you: I am READY for a break. We close our design office for almost two weeks at Christmas, and it is incredible. I usually start by allowing myself to sleep in a day or two, but by the third day, I'm feeling unproductive and like I need to accomplish something, so I finish up any Christmas shopping or gift wrapping. Usually throw a few last-minute gifts in there because I'm just like my mom in that I always worry that I don't have enough for everyone. It's almost like it isn't really Christmas unless I'm running around town and getting stuck in traffic, so I have to make sure I orchestrate a scenario where that will happen, and THEN, it feels like the holidays. I've been getting Christmas cards, which is definitely my favorite part of Christmas. And in the spirit of greetings, let's reach into the mailbag and read the latest Loudmouth Letter:

"Hi Rachel!

I absolutely adore your podcast. Understanding my introvertedness is making me more confident as a person, and more importantly, helping me to see what has been holding me back. ME! I'm guilty of throwing up "I can't" roadblocks, fearing my inability to measure up to others louder than me.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and teaching us fellow introverts how to thrive.

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Hugs,

Elisa.”

Elisa, thank you for your letter! I have to tell you, I love that you used the phrase “roadblock” to describe what happens when we start to tell ourselves we can’t do something. It is so accurate. How many times have I done this in my own life? Oh gosh. Too many to count. And it took someone else bringing it to my attention for me to get it under control. That’s not to say it doesn’t happen from time to time, but it’s easier to identify it now than when I was younger. Actually, a perfect example is what I was telling you about at the top of the show - about how we close for almost two weeks at Christmas. I used to think “I can’t do that!” And every year, I’d come back to work the day after Christmas, and I’d sit in a quiet office with no clients emailing or calling and no furniture manufacturers available (because they call close between Christmas and New Year’s too) and I’d think “I have to be here because what if I miss a client’s email or call?” I was putting up a roadblock to my own success because I was a slave to the idea that I couldn’t take any time off! I was literally dragging myself to go sit in an office that should have just been quiet while my clients were enjoying THEIR time off with their families!

These days, I try not to allow any guilt to creep in for taking that time off of work because we go hard pretty much the entire rest of the year. Now I see it as well-deserved time to breathe. This year especially: After starting this podcast and rolling out my business consulting services, on top of running my interior design firm, I need some time to get my head above water. So I’ll be spending time at the close of this year thinking about my goals for

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next year. With all of the new ventures I'm working on, I need to organize myself. I need to make sense of where I'm taking this train. And I'm going to be totally transparent with you and tell you that goal-setting gives me anxiety.

I'm sure this is just one podcast you've listened to on goal setting here at the end of the year. However, unlike the anxiety-inducing advice that seems to be so prevalent, I'm going to talk to you more about creative introverts can set goals without feeling overwhelmed and like we're destined to fail the minute we decide to write them down. Until recently, I've always preferred - like many introverts - to let things kind of work themselves out. Like, I might have the vague idea that I want to do something, but I have not been one of those goal-setters who feels like the bigger the goal, the better. In fact, the bigger the goal, the more anxious I feel about it. I'll be honest and tell you that starting a podcast was NOT on my list of goals for 2019. I'd love to tell you it was, but no. I had the idea that I wanted to do it, but it wasn't on a list. It just kind of happened and I'm thrilled it did because I think it was exactly the right time for me, but I did not create a vision board and set out to crush this goal. That's a bridge too far for me, honestly. Sometimes I need everyone to just calm down with all the hustle, rise and grind, kill it talk. It's exhausting and it makes me feel like I'm not doing enough! Starting a podcast was something I'd thought about for a long time, but I hadn't really thought of it as a concrete thing until almost the minute I recorded the first episode. Obviously because when we introverts put something out into the world, we want a guarantee that we can achieve it. We want to know we've done all we can to make something a reality. And making a list of goals is difficult for us because when we don't achieve them, we feel disappointed in ourselves. We spent all that time thinking about it, so why didn't it work?? This is the biggest difference I see between extroverts and introverts...extroverts will try anything without fear of failing, while introverts will hold everything close to the vest until we've perfected it and THEN we'll reveal our plans.

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So how are we, as introverted, creative, entrepreneurs supposed to go about setting goals and “crushing them.” (Did you all just stop listening and unfollow me? I know. That phrase is the worst.) Well, first, I want you to consider that the dreams you have for your business are important. They’re as important as all the other things in your life that you value. A lot of times, introverts and creatives put our goals on hold in order to help others. Since we can’t commit 100% to OUR thing, we decide to just wait on it or not do it at all. I’ve been guilty of that, FOR SURE. I’ve been wanting to offer business consulting services for years, and only this year did I decide to bite the bullet. And even after all that time, I’m still working on how that business will function! So all that time was wasted when I could have been gaining some experience and working out the kinks, when I was just thinking wistfully about the “someday when I do that”... Instead, I want you to spend this last part of 2019 thinking about next year and not getting anxiety over it. So here’s how I plan to set my goals for 2020, rather than just letting things work themselves out this year. First, I’m making sure my goals are relevant in a personal way. They need to be more than just goals for the sake of setting a goal. Next, I’m breaking them up into smaller “to-do” lists with timelines attached to them. And finally I’m actually going to schedule the work that has to get done for me to reach the goal.

But before we dive into that, let’s start by agreeing that dreams, goals, all of that stuff - they’re important. As business owners, we have to have a vision for where we want our businesses to go. And while we have other obligations that we are expected to fill - being a mom, a wife, a daughter, a friend, a volunteer - we don’t have to do those things at the expense of what we want to accomplish in our careers. But we do have to start by elevating our goals to the same place of importance in our minds as all of those other roles we play. The worst thing that can happen is that we - due to our introverted nature - want things to be perfect before we take action, and when the time never arrives because we’re busy letting everyone

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else's stuff take precedence over our own, we look back and realize we're no closer to our goals than we were when we first thought of them.

Okay, so since we can all agree on that point, let's get down to some practical goal-setting that we can handle. Don't worry. I'm not going to tell you that you have to create a vision board.

So, like I said earlier, I prefer goals that are meaningful. I'm just not a fan of setting goals that aren't personal. What I mean by that is - if the goal is just there to be a benchmark to show myself that I can do something, it isn't worth it to me to work towards it. As my dad would say, "It doesn't amount to a hill of beans." Last year, I was flirting with the idea of a trip to Switzerland. I follow #switzerland on Instagram, and I just thought it was so beautiful. So, someone's advice to me was to make it a goal that I would go to Switzerland before the spring of this year. Like basically make that my one and only objective. But here's the thing. It really wasn't that big of a deal to me. It would be nice, sure. But would it be the end of the world if I didn't go? No. Not really. What was more personal to me was remodeling my kitchen. That felt like the most valuable goal. It was the most meaningful to me. So, that's what I did instead. And I haven't regretted it one bit. Switzerland was a secondhand goal. Prioritizing my kitchen, which I am in and use every single day, really wasn't that difficult because it was much more personal to me.

Make sure the goals you're setting mean something to you – even if they're related to your business. If you set a goal to make a certain profit, is it because you have plans to give yourself a bonus? What will you do with the bonus? I think that for introverts and creatives, working towards something has merit when we know the cause is worth it. Otherwise, we're just machines, working because we don't know when or how to stop. And

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you know that that comes at a cost to us! (Say it with me: energy out is energy lost.)

Next, I am of the belief that there is only one way to eat an elephant: one bite at a time and this is why I like to break up the work that needs to happen in order for me to get to the big goal. I think this is where we can get into trouble. We have this vague idea of what we want to do (like starting a podcast) but we stop there. We stop with just naming the big picture goal. And we do this because, frankly, we don't know what happens next. This is where our introvertedness works against us. We need to know what every step is, and that it will go according to plan. That it will be perfect. We need to see it all before we'll even attempt to begin the process. Here is where it's helpful to separate goals into levels of importance, and then understand as we move forward, chipping away at them, that plans may not always go as we imagined. I'll give you an example:

When I got serious about starting the podcast, I assumed it would go according to plan. I had the overview and I felt good about it. But guess what. I pushed back the launch not once, but twice. And the day BEFORE the first episodes dropped, we had not been approved by Apple Podcasts. And I'd spent a whole week drumming up excitement for the launch and telling everyone where to find it and here I was not knowing if it would even be available on the platform I'd spent all that time telling everyone to look for it on. You better believe I texted every friend I had and started a prayer chain and told them they needed to pray in Jesus name that the podcast would go forward as planned because if it didn't I. WOULD. DIE.

The podcast was approved by Apple within 20 minutes and things went forward as planned, but I shared that with you to let you know - STUFF IS

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GOING TO HAPPEN. Get okay with it. Working towards our goals means we have to take lots of small steps towards them in order to get there, and not all of them will go as planned. We cannot do everything at once, but we do need to start making moves - even a little at a time - and being proactive in our pursuit of our goals. That's why it's helpful to prioritize things. I like to do 30-, 60-, and 90-day goals, where I take the bigger picture goal and break it up in to doable chunks. I like to get things sorted out in my head and on paper so I can see what I need to be working on. And - here's the kicker - if I don't get there, I just move things to the next phase of goals. It's really that easy. One of my friends, when the podcast drama happened, was like, "listen if it doesn't get approved, then you just go on and be like 'whoops, hiccup! we're working on it!' And keep moving!" Like, truly just the voice of reason in my moment of panic and you know what, she was right. The launch date was the date I'd picked and I could move it back as many times as I needed to. Why was I so worried?? The thing is - it's not going to be perfect, no matter how long we wait to get started, so just pick a day and start by breaking down the steps into 30-, 60, and 90-day chunks. This is useful because it takes those big ideas and gives us realistic, bite-size pieces we can work on, rather than just sitting, inactive, with the big idea rolling around in our minds.

Finally, I'm going to be blocking time on my calendar to work on those tasks. One thing I know I want to do next year is host a virtual workshop for creative introverts. This is my big goal for next year, so I need to actually commit the time on my schedule to work on creating this event. So if I know the 30, 60, and 90-day goals, I can then break those into smaller tasks and create my own work chart with deadlines for myself. More than anything, this is what makes those goals feel concrete to me. When I see on my calendar that I have set aside time to work on the tasks needed to get there, I feel the cloud starting to lift. I can see the roadmap a little clearer. I don't feel like I'm about to try to swallow an elephant whole. It's not like those goals are just some vague wish that I think would be nice to someday get to do. I run my design business by scheduling every task that has to get

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done, so why would I not also work towards my goals this way? The reason I've decided that I'm going to go into 2020 with this approach is that I'm kind of tired of waiting for things to just sort of work themselves out when it comes to the bigger picture of my life and career! That's been how I've done things for a long time, and I had this epiphany the other day that my goals are the only place in my life where I don't really take control. Probably, like I said earlier, because I've always felt like if I didn't reach them, I'd be disappointed.

Finally, I think it's crucial to share your goals with people who are important to you. We talked in episode 11 about how we introverts and creatives need to build a community, even though we're really good at going off and doing our work alone. A community of like-minded people will be there to support you and help you reach your goals. And they can hold you accountable when you decide to pull back from pursuing them. So I've just shared with all of you that I want to teach a virtual workshop for creative, introverted entrepreneurs next year. I'm telling my people, because just like when I started doing keto this year, y'all all kept me accountable by asking me and encouraging me. It's important for you to know you're not pursuing things all by yourself!

I'm not letting another decade go by where I just let my goals be vague, or letting things work themselves out. That doesn't mean I need to go about this in some way that feels inauthentic to me - creating vision boards and doing breathing techniques to manifest things while rising and grinding every day. (I'm both annoyed and exhausted by even saying that!) No, I'm going to do what I do best. I'm going to create a linear path to get me there, and I'm going to enjoy it because the goals themselves are meaningful to me, and I'm going to share the milestones with people who will encourage me. I hope you'll take some time to work on your goals for 2020, too, and if that involves a vision board, so be it. I'm not here to knock anyone's process. Just keep in mind how quickly this year has gone and don't let

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another year go by with you thinking about the “someday” when you’ll get around to those dreams. As Elisa said in her Loudmouth Letter - those are roadblocks we put up ourselves that keep us from achieving what we really want most.

On that note, I want to wish you all a very Merry Christmas. I’ll be off next week for the holiday, and I’ll be back in January with all-new episodes of Loudmouth Introvert, and I can’t wait to bring those to you!

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.

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