

Welcome to. So here's the thing, the podcast for small business owners, entrepreneurs, and creative educators who are ready to take their business to the next level through candid conversations, tactical approaches, and a few unpopular opinions. We're lifting the veil on what it takes to build both a life and a business that you love.

I'm your host, Laila Imadi, a coach for creatives and founder of the Creative Educator Academy, where I help entrepreneurs step into the role of industry leaders and educators. I'm so glad that you're here. Now let's jump into today's episode. Hey friends, welcome to this week's Snack sized episode. I'm going to be talking about something I haven't spoken about in a long time and that I think has quite a stigma attached to it, especially if you are an experienced entrepreneur and the more experienced you become in your entrepreneurial journey, and that is working for free.

Um, you can of course substitute this with working at a discounted price, a lower rate than you would normally charge. And I think that. The more years we get under our belts, the more people obviously discouraged doing this. And so, um, I understand that we are limited in time. We have finite resources, time being the number one of those.

And I really wanted to talk about this because recently I have found myself working for free more and more and in very specific instances and reasons behind them. So I want to share those few reasons with you today, just three of them specifically. And I do want to talk about this. With you in particular, because I think as I mentioned along the journey, the concept of working for free changes a lot.

So I remember like your one year to a lot of people will encourage you to work for free. They'll tell you, you know, it's a great way to build your portfolio, your resume, your experience, get your name out there, get word of mouth going. And I love that concept. That totally makes sense. But then years like maybe three to five, three to six, people really discourage this.

They say, That offering free work, um, really undervalues your, you know, quote, unquote, charging your worth, which by the way, I could talk about for ages. Cause I really hate that phrase, but you know, just conceptually people really like to say you're undercutting your value or the industry as a whole. And they really attach the stigma of working for free.

And I understand that. So. I want to make it clear that this has to be something that sits well with you, that makes sense for you. And I'm going to share three of

the reasons that it's made sense for me recently, and that I've actually found a lot of value in it. Although I may be working for a lower monetary rate or for free, and I have found immense value in the times that I've actually done it.

So I'm going to share with you a little bit about my foray into this in the past few months in particular and how I've noticed It really just has just been so worth it for me So hopefully this will give you some food for thought The first thing I want to share with you guys the first reason that i've been working Um for free recently is I'm going to give you a little bit of context around this.

And if you've been around here for a while, you already know this about me, but I've always freelanced as a paid choreographer. Um, in fact, I was a full time dance teacher for a very long time, among all the other career paths that I have had in the past before my career as an entrepreneur and in that journey, in that timeframe, I was I developed a lot of relationships with a lot of, um, a lot of the dancers that I worked with, students that I've worked with and, uh, the age group that I worked with at the time was like young teenagers.

So, um, obviously now it's been like 10 years, 10 plus years of entrepreneurship. A lot of those young teens have now grown up. They are, they're straight up adults now. A lot of them are married, having kids, starting families, pivoting in their careers. They're out of college or they're graduating college.

And so because of that, Several of them, a lot of them, obviously in the, uh, in the world that we're in, they are exploring entrepreneurship as a potential journey for them. And so a lot of them have started reaching out more recently saying, you know, I'm dipping my toe into the entrepreneurship world, into the small business ownership world.

Uh, do you have any advice for me? Would you be willing to grab a coffee? And I know all the people out there who say all the time, you know, like coffee dates, we don't have time. Like they need to pay for that, whatever. But for me in this particular instance, and the reason that I say yes, of course I say yes, is these kids, they're no longer kids, they're adults now, but these, these, they're my kids, right?

They've all, they're always going to be like my little babies. Like I will always have that big sister kind of mama bear relationship with these people who are reaching out to me. And so of course I'm going to say yes to them. And I thought in my mind, the first few times this happened, like, yeah, I'll just go on a quick coffee date.

We'll catch up. I'll answer a few questions and then I'll go home. No big deal. What I didn't think would happen would be that it would completely reignite my passion for talking about entrepreneurship with people who are just as excited to get started as I was, you know, 10, 11, 12 years ago when I was like just starting to explore this industry because at this point, and maybe you can relate the more and more established you get.

The less we lose those butterflies. I mean, it happens when I create a new offer where I get really amped, really excited that like, you know, ADHD dopamine kick happens. But generally speaking on a day to day basis, you know, I'm not building my entire business from scratch again, obviously. And that's the hope is that we have stability.

We have all the things that we've built are doing their jobs. But, um, I love the feeling of excitement and of like the whirlwind of getting started in a passionate journey for entrepreneurship. And so So I started saying yes to more of these things and, and as I talk to these entrepreneurs and they're setting the groundwork for a successful launch, or just even starting about their first business plans and strategizing and just envisioning what could be a possibility.

Like I would leave those coffee dates just so invigorated. Fired up and passionate about my own business and how I can get that excitement and fire back into the existing offerings that I have, not just the new ones that I'm developing. So that's been hands down the best reason for me to work for free.

So if you feel like you're maybe starting to lose a little bit of passion for your work or a little bit of fire for your work, and you feel like it's just. Um, becoming a little bit more mundane for you, I would encourage you to see if you can find a way to incorporate that fire work and, and light that fire again.

The second reason that I've been going into giving away a little bit more here and there, um, was that for a long time, I became really just very, very particular about any kind of speaking engagements or any kind of coaching clients that I would take on. And I think, again, if, if you're looking at. You know, the entrepreneurial journey as a whole, it's like, at the beginning, you say yes to everything.

Right. And then you start to obviously get limited in your time. And so then you learn, you have to say no to say yes to other things and saying no is a wonderful and beautiful skill to have. And one that a lot of us struggled with. I'm talking about myself in particular. I struggled to say no in the beginning, but now I've

found that, um, through this process of uncovering this free work, I found that I was saying no to so many things.

that I was missing the fun of saying yes to things and the fun of saying yes, just to try something out. So for example, one specific example I can give you to kind of frame this is if I have a new topic, I want to, I want to test out a speaking engagement around, or if I have a new audience, maybe I'm exploring tapping into, or like exploring bringing into my community.

These are reasons that I would say yes. To us, to a pitch, to come and speak either for free or for a lower rate than I would normally charge. And in that way, I'm not only being able to test the effectiveness of whatever it is that I'm offering, but I'm also testing, you know, seeing how the material lands with people and also testing the feeling that I get afterward.

So, um, I'm testing things in a multitude of ways, but, um. I am able to do that because and feel the freedom around that because I'm not paying my full rate. I'm not saying no or excluding the audience that I'm trying to work with because I've, I have that added pressure that I've put on myself. So it's just really fun.

Freedom giving like, and, and really nice to have a little bit more leeway between that. So that's the second reason. And the third reason I'd share with you is of course, and I love this more than anything is just giving back to your industry when you feel it's appropriate to give back when you feel that you have.

something that you're able to give, um, and in doing so cultivating more relationships. I talk about relationship building a lot in the show. Obviously, community building is the number one thing in my business, and it's so important to me to build communities, not only in my professional life, in my personal life, but of course, not everybody's going to have the same resources to be able to give back in the same way.

So being able to weigh, you know, like it's. It's not going to be something you're going to be able to do every single time. You're not going to be able to discount or donate every time and all the time. But I do think it's so important and something I don't think we're taught enough and that's talked about enough.

I think a lot of people, um, we hear a lot of people talk about having a profitable business and growing your profits, growing your revenue because they say that the more money you bring in, the more you're able to give. And I love that concept. However, I I do think a conversation that I've been having more and

more lately is how are you giving back when you don't have a lot to give, especially monetarily?

I think that that sets the groundwork for the concept of when you become really profitable and you become really successful, has that already become a practice that's second nature to you when you're growing in revenue? Are you then able to grow in generosity or are you growing in greed? And of course, like, I feel like as I'm saying that, as it does, that just came out of my mouth, it sounds kind of dramatic growing in greed, but I do think that it's something to consider that if we are striving to make more, to give more, are we already in the practice of giving when we can and giving what's appropriate to give, because what may be appropriate to give at your stage in business might not be monetary, but maybe it's, Part of a service that you offer, or maybe it's just your time.

And then as you grow, and as you bring in more profit, then maybe you have more of a monetary give to be able to put forward. And so I hope that that kind of gets your wheels turning about the concept of making more to give more, is Why don't we practice giving what we can, when we can, and then that way, when you make more, it's an easy option.

It's an easy, um, like a no brainer that you, of course you would give more. So I hope that these three quick snippets of reasons you might want to consider giving away some of your time working for free or for a discount or for trade, even with. Just open your mind to the return that you'll leave with, you know, there is a ROI there, even if it's not, um, as clear and as black and white of writing down numbers on a piece of paper.

But the return may be that you feel really reinvigorated and really passionate and really fired up to go out there and pour back into your own business in the way that you would have in the beginning. So I think it's worth everything and more, and I hope that it was helpful to you. I'd love to hear from you.

So let me know if this is something that sparked something inside your brain, inside your heart. And I will see you guys in the next episode for show notes and resources mentioned on today's episode, head to. So here's the thing, podcast. com. This show is brought to you by the creative educator Academy, where we teach creative entrepreneurs how to teach, because I believe that industries thrive when experts can share their knowledge.

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