

Small But Mighty Agency Podcast

Episode 64: Chaos is holding you back from growing your business - here's why

Speakers: Audrey Joy Kwan

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Are you scaling chaos in your service-based business? If you started your business as a marketer, consultant or creative, and have grown from a solopreneur to having a team, you may have some solopreneur habits holding you back. If you've followed me for a while, you know that having structure, roles, and processes is essential to avoiding chaos, but that's only one side of the coin. If you're transitioning from a solopreneur to a CEO of a team of any size, it requires honing leadership skills, being an effective communicator, visionary thinking, and delegating responsibility, not just tasks. Stay tuned as I share insights gained from coaching and consulting with clients to free up their time by levelling up their leadership and getting client delivery off their plates.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Welcome to the Small But Mighty Agency Podcast. If you're a marketer or consultant, or a creative on a journey of growth from solopreneur to agency owner, follow along because I pull back the curtains on the realities of growing and running a scalable, service-based business and building lean team. I'm your host, Audrey Joy Kwan, I know what it takes to build an agency, whether it's from solo to three, five or twenty. I've done it, including supporting an agency owner to sell and exit. I've coached and consulted over 120 marketers, creatives, and consultants. And I've been behind the scenes of seven figure businesses. I also have a master's degree in communications specializing in organizational development. All this to say, I know what it takes to grow lead and operate a multiple six, and seven figure small but mighty agency. And here on this podcast is where we'll dive right in.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Hey friends, welcome back to the small but mighty agency podcast. I've got something on my mind that's been popping up as I've been coaching and consulting with clients, and I feel like this topic has been on repeat. When you don't have the structure in your business and **you** are growing with a team, you are scaling chaos, which keeps business owners stuck, frustrated and ready to give up.

You need a team to grow your business, and your team needs structure. These things go hand-in-hand.

Chaos happens when we build a team with solopreneur habits. It's like trying to navigate a new city with an outdated map. Just like how an old map may not accurately reflect the current layout of a city, old habits are not the most effective way to navigate new challenges and opportunities in your business. And building a team is a new challenge and new opportunities when you are scaling your service business.

Now, if you don't want to scale chaos, there are two sides of the same coin you need to look at. Yes, adding structure, getting clear on roles and having efficient processes are one side of the coin, and the other side of the same coin are the skills that help you go from solopreneur to CEO.

I want to talk about those skills today. My clients hire me to help get client delivery off their plate, and one of the things that happen during our time together is that we level up their leadership while putting in the structure, roles and processes to build a business where they no longer have to be the bottleneck and can get out many of day-to-day activities that no longer light them up.

It isn't just a side effect that my clients become better leaders; it's intentional in how I structure our time together. Why is that? You can't escape soft skills if you want a lean team. Soft skills are just as valuable as the concrete processes and workflows that go into building your business.

If you're transitioning from being a solopreneur to now having a team and truly want a business that is less "self-employment" for more "business ownership," getting client delivery off your plate is required. For more on self-employment versus business ownership, check out Episode 60, where I break it down in more detail and explain what it means for you as a business owner, but today I'm here to drive home the point that getting client delivery off your plate isn't just the tactical things you need to do, and no matter what type of business you grow (service-based or not), these so-called soft skills are what helps you sustain a thriving and joyful business.

Unless you want to stay as the bottleneck in your business, you need to lean into the skillsets of strategic planning, leadership and delegation.

As we do the work to cut back your hours on client delivery, getting things off your plate, handing things off to the right person, and systematizing areas of your business. Strategic planning, leadership and delegation become skills you will also grow.

One skill you will shift into is less improvisation and being more strategic, including using more strategic planning. I often get resistance from clients about less improvisation leading to less creativity. This is not the case; your team needs structure to be creative in a way that meets the right goals.

I get it – running a business as a solopreneur, you had to get past the start-up phase, and in the start-up phase, you had to test ideas, messaging and audience. It was a lot of testing, which meant improvisation and fast pivots. But once you've validated your service, you're in the ramp-up phase, this is where you need to get some or all client delivery off your plate so that you can get more time back to focus on scaling, and that means you shift from ad-hoc ways of doing things to productizing your service, which is a fancy way of saying getting the structure, processes and workflows in place to get you out of the day to day client delivery. (If you want more info on productizing your service, I'll share the link to the episode in the show notes). Being strategic also means that as you lead a team, you must set clear and achievable goals and identify what to measure to align the team.

Leadership is a combination of visionary thinking with effective communication. When you have no idea where your business is going, you can bet your team doesn't either. As a leader, you need to be able to communicate your vision and goals to others effectively. This includes delegating responsibility, providing effective feedback, and inspiring your team to achieve a common goal. Notice that I did not say delegate "tasks"; I said delegate "responsibility." All too often, my clients know the concept of delegating a task, in other words telling someone what they need to do but delegating responsibility is about delegating ownership of outcomes. It is far more powerful to delegate responsibility than to delegate tasks.

Delegation of responsibility is a function of strategic communications. While we can introduce tools like workplans with Key Performance Indicators to help set clear expectations, communicating expectations involves providing good, better and best KPIs and necessary resources. Team members also need autonomy and opportunities to make decisions to feel empowered.

In summary – A sustainable business that gets you off the hamster wheel of the hustle and grind is a combination of getting the proper structure and processes in place and the leadership know-how to move the team forward. While most small business owners learn to market and sell the service they create, fewer can streamline and systemize their client delivery processes and lead their teams without being the bottleneck. This stage can be the ceiling for many businesses.

Not every business owner sets out to scale their business with a lean team. Hitting the ceiling at this stage in business can be fine if that's what you want. But I'm here for it; if you want to grow with a lean team and break that ceiling without wasting time, I'm here. And remember, just because you've proven that you can learn how to bootstrap and do things yourself does not mean that should be your go-to habit for figuring out your structure, processes and workflow. You know where to find me; click the link in the show notes.

Thanks again for joining me today, I'll see you on the next one.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Hey, there. Thanks for hanging out with me at the small but mighty agency podcast. If you enjoyed this episode, it would mean the world to me if you hit the follow or subscribe button in your podcast app and share it with a friend and I'll see you in the next one.