

Small But Mighty Agency Podcast

Episode 81: 12 Steps to Make Better Decisions in Your Business This Year

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Facing a big decision and not sure which way to turn? You're not alone.

The nature of being an entrepreneur and business owner is to make decisions; some decisions are quick, and others carry more risk and uncertainty.

That's why it's an investment in yourself to check your intuitive decision-making process with a recipe for making better decisions.

This 12-step process has helped me support an agency owner in selling and exiting his business and serve as a strategic thought partner to multiple six- and seven-figure agency owners.

In this episode, I'm sharing my go-to 12-step process for when intuition doesn't cut it for major decisions and your quick thinking needs a strategic boost.

Tune in to get actionable steps for making better decisions to grow your business this year.

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, Happy New Year! I'm excited to dive into 2024.

This year, our podcast will be showing up with new episodes weekly. Yes! We're going from bi-weekly to weekly to do more series-based content and dive deeper into topics. Plus, we'll continue to bring you interviews along the way from agency owners with insights we want you to experience.

Speaking of series, this January, we're going into a series on Making Better Decisions in your business. As a business owner, the one thing you never stop doing is making decisions and investing time into making better ones has an impact now and forever.

So, instead of telling you WHAT to think, I'd like to step back into my Master's degree in Communications and connect you to one of the most advantageous leadership development skills for your business: How to Make Better Decisions.

January is filled with hope, aspirations, and a sense of new beginnings. It's a month of making new goals, evaluating opportunities and risks and having renewed plans.

All of these require good decision-making to grow a highly profitable and sustainable business.

Most people I work with feel like they go through the decision-making process intuitively, and if you've been making decisions for your business for years, that's natural.

It's hard to look inside your brain and break down how you make every decision. That's not the point. You make small decisions daily and then big ones that require more processing and feel more risky and uncertain. I want to address the bigger decisions.

When your business relies on you to make consistent strategic decisions, it's an investment to check your intuitive decision-making process with an actual recipe for making better decisions.

Why?

We're often biased by factors that lead to poor decisions without even knowing it. Especially when a decision has emotional influences, we're all susceptible to cognitive and confirmation biases.

It sounds like jargon, but these communication theory concepts impact your decision-making.

When I see these things pop up for my clients, I call them out.

But before I explore the things that lead to less-than-optimal outcomes in decision-making for your business, I want to share the process for making better decisions.

This check-in will help you gain insights and perspectives you might overlook when making big decisions.

Here is the process. It's 12 steps broken down into bite-size doable actions. I did consider sharing this as 10 instead of 12 steps by combining #2 and #3 and then combining #5 and #6, But I really think 12 bite-size steps will be more actionable and easier for you to cross-check any decisions you are making right now.

1. Define the Problem Clearly: In other words, don't solve for the symptom; solve for the root. When you solve the root of the problem, you naturally solve the symptoms. When the problem is clear, so is the why behind the decision.
- 2. Gather Information: Collect relevant data, research, and insights from various sources to inform your decision. The key is using multiple sources, including research you might disagree with, to give you more depth.
- 3. Consider Multiple Perspectives: Involve stakeholders from different backgrounds and experiences to get a well-rounded view. If you only speak to people who think like you, look and act like you – you see only what you want to see.
- 4. Evaluate the Evidence: Once you have information and perspectives, it's time to evaluate. Critical thinking is *looking for biases and gaps* in the evidence.
- 5. Identify Alternatives: Don't limit yourself to the first idea that comes to mind. The brain's tendency to stick with familiar ideas can blind you to better solutions. Brainstorm different options and solutions.
- 6. Weigh THE Risks and Rewards: Once you have different options and solutions, get clear on the potential impacts of each option by weighing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. I love SWOT because it's an internal and external analysis. What are the internal strengths and weaknesses, and what are the external opportunities and threats to the potential option or solution?
- 7. Check Emotional Influences: Be aware of how your feelings might affect your judgment. What is the dominant emotion you are feeling? Is it fear? Anxiety? Or excitement at the opportunity ahead? Naming your feelings can help create a little space between your emotions and actions. The distance allows us to examine the emotion and to acknowledge feeling it without letting the emotion drive the decision.
- 8. Make a Decision: Now that you've worked through the analysis, ideation and strategic evaluation process, make the decision. Choose the option that best aligns with your objectives. And once the decision has been made, the decision-making process doesn't end there. Steps 9 to 12 are post-decision actions that are critical to future actions.
- 9. Implement and Monitor: Put your decision into action and monitor its outcomes. Determine your key performance indicators; don't shy away from numbers as metrics because numbers cut through subjective communications.
- 10. Reflect and Learn: As the results are observed, reflect on what worked well and what could be improved.
- 11. Seek Feedback: Get input from others on how the decision was made and its effectiveness. Feedback can be with your team members, coaches or consultants. One of the most powerful actions I support my clients with is to pull things apart so that we can connect new dots and reveal opportunities to move forward quickly.

- 12. Adjust as Necessary: Be prepared to adjust based on new information or changing circumstances.

There's your 12-step process. I know that the decision-making process isn't always straightforward. It's especially true when you are making a decision under both risk and uncertainty.

All decisions involve some risk, but when you have certainty, making a decision is easier.

Risk is when you are unsure what can happen, but you know the likelihood of the outcome because you have enough information to know the possible results of the decision.

In that scenario, making a decision when you have certainty is easier.

When the environment is uncertain, you can't predict the outcomes because no information or data is available.

So, what happens when there is lots of uncertainty?

I see this happen – you cycle through steps two to seven repeatedly and in no particular order. You choose to revisit completed steps in search of some certainty.

If you've found yourself stuck in the loop of revisiting the steps over and over again, it's a form of procrastination. The only way to gain more certainty about the decision is to take action and lean into steps nine to twelve to inform your next steps.

Ok, there we have it, the 12 steps. Now that we have the foundation for better decision-making join me on the next podcast episode, where I'll dive into all the things that affect making better decisions for your business, some of which you don't know is happening – I'll share it with you so that you can grow your business faster.

Thanks for being here, friend; 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.