

Small But Mighty Agency Podcast

Episode 96: Is the Pursuit of Quick Success Obscuring Your Strategic Vision? Here's How to Tell

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Audrey Joy Kwan

How does the desire for quick success cloud long-term strategic thinking?

It can appear as shiny distractions or band-aide approaches instead of dealing with the root cause.

Why does this happen? It's a case of not seeing the forest from the trees because you're standing among the trees.

And ultimately, it makes your to-do list longer and your life harder as you go one step forward, two steps back.

How can you tell if your pursuit of quick success obscures your strategic vision?

Sometimes, it's hard to see until it's too late.

In this episode, I help you see the signs so you can course-correct.

- Let's uncover the hard-to-see ways that shiny distractions appear in your business and go unnoticed.
- And four tangible markers you can identify so you can get in front of the challenge

Tune in to ensure sustainable growth isn't sidelined by short-term gains.

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 our series on preventing shiny distractions from derailing business growth.

In part one, we looked at the power of a great sounding board in your business and three overlooked but must-have characteristics of an effective sounding board. The link to that episode is in the show notes.

In this episode, I want to share a few things to look for in a business where too many shiny ideas will lead to decline instead of growth.

A shiny distraction is often a desire for quick success that can cloud long-term strategic thinking.

It can also lead to the sunken cost fallacy, which means you make decisions based on the time, money, and effort invested instead of the best choice, which might be to cut your losses and move on.

Of course, when you're trapped in sunken cost fallacy, it's hard to see.

Now, Shiny distractions come in all forms, big and small, but they share one thing in common: it typically sabotage growth

Let me share a not-so-obvious example of how the underlying desire for quick success can distract you from strategic thinking.

I've been working with a client to grow their team in a skill my client, the agency owner, can't let go of and feels the need to constantly step back into.

The first reason she can't step back – and is the most common one, is the belief that nobody can do it better than she can. I can't tell you how often I have heard this in all its different forms.

I understand the pain is real when you don't know how to get to the other side. And I'll cover how to get to the other side in our next episode.

The second reason she can't step back is the reality of a skills gap in her team and also in her leadership—you can't delegate away a skills gap; you have to address it.

Some skills are not about taking a course or training to solve a problem; it requires developing a non-cookie-cutter solution that works for your business.

For this agency owner, we customized a solution that works for the owner and the team.

We created an opportunity for the business owner to increase their own belief that transferring these skills is possible while creating the support the team actually needed.

And the support the team actually needed versus what the business owner thought they needed was a lot less work.

Sometimes, when you believe that you are the only one who can do things, you get stuck and create complicated solutions or no solution at all.

Flash forward two months, and the business owner can fully step out of the role they thought nobody could play in the business.

We established a way for her to level up her team in a way that works for the nature of her business. A big win all around.

So, how does shiny distraction come into play?

Along comes another challenge and similar reasons why this business owner feels like she can't step back.

Instead of applying the practices that worked the first time, which resulted in transferring ownership of the “only I can do it” items to her team, she suggests returning to a solution that creates a bottleneck for her manager.

The mind can be tricky this way; it burns the wins when challenges crop up. When the best solution is to look for the track record of win, stay consistent with what worked, and apply it again.

Why does this happen?

It's the desire for quick success that can cloud long-term strategic thinking.

Sure, the quicker win might be to make someone else the bottleneck in your business, but that doesn't solve the problem; it only makes it somebody else's problem. That is not strategic and not sustainable.

The desire for quick success often appears as shiny distractions, draining energy, focus, and attention from what is working.

So rather than practising consistency with a sustained effort in one direction and focus, you start to pursue distractions or band-aided solutions at the cost of what is actually working.

As a sounding board, in other words, as a coach and consultant to agency owners, I see it happen; it's not uncommon, and I have called out instances and gotten in front of distractions to help agency owners see it with more clarity.

So, to safeguard your business growth against those potential pitfalls, what are the inward signs of potential stagnation and decline that you can catch proactively today before it slows your growth?

#1 Lack of Clarity shows up

When the vision becomes muddled, decision-making becomes reactive rather than strategic.

Reactive might look like superficial exploration or half-baked solutions rather than fully developed, high-quality products or services.

As a result, the team lacks focus and has difficulty prioritizing tasks and allocating resources effectively.

The lack of focus also leads to missed opportunities for growth or improvement within existing operations and offerings.

2 You See Resource Drain

Chasing after a new idea without the right planning leads to stagnation or decline because resources get spread thin.

When time, money, and energy are stretched thin, no single initiative receives the necessary attention to thrive.

Instead, the initiatives compete for resources.

As a result, you fail to follow through on promises, which damages credibility and reputation in the eyes of clients and stakeholders.

#3 Fragmentation Appears

When team members are confused or uncertain about the objectives and priorities, the synergy and coherence needed to execute the core strategies are lost.

It leads to disengagement and decreased productivity.

Fragmentation also leads to your team's reluctance to accept feedback because it is more likely to be received as criticism.

When your team feels overwhelmed, and the environment is chaotic, your team is on the defensive.

And when there are scattered efforts, resistance to feedback, and inconsistent outcomes, actions look like one step forward and three steps back.

#4 Burnout is Real

When shiny objects are not properly evaluated, they waste resources and strain the business finances.

Over time, the financial strain increases the stress levels of leaders and business owners.

In this heightened state, important decisions can be made impulsively or without thorough evaluation and consultation.

Actions aren't strategic but rather reactive. Leaders become firefighters, putting out fires as they pop up. Constant fires create chronic stress, which leads to burnout.

To recap, here are the four things to watch for in your business and keep a pulse on to ensure that the Pursuit of Quick Success doesn't derail growth.

#1. Lack of Clarity Across Your Team

2 There is evidence of Resource Drain

#3 You see Fragmentation

#4 Burnout is bubbling up in your team

In summary, I've looked at how the appeal of quick wins can cloud long-term strategic vision and steer you away from your core goals.

In this episode, we uncovered the hidden traps of shiny object syndrome, including the urge to revert to familiar tasks because you might have the underlying belief that nobody can do it like you, which sabotages the way forward.

To safeguard a shiny distraction from turning into a sunken cost fallacy, I identified the visible problems like resource drain and team fragmentation that show up. These distractions lead to stagnation or a significant drop in both team morale and operational effectiveness.

You can safeguard your business by recognizing signs of potential stagnation early and creating a culture of strategic clarity and resource efficiency. This will boost your team's confidence, simplify your processes, and keep you focused on growth practices that support your long-term visions.

Remember, the goal isn't to avoid distractions but to create an environment where focus, strategic thinking, and team cohesion drive your decisions.

I hope this episode serves as your guardrail, keeping your eye on the real prize and not the shiny distractions.

Stay tuned for more insights and strategies to keep your business thriving.

Thanks for joining me on this episode! If you want to connect with me on what is and isn't working for your agency, I'm here for it. Let's help you grow a business that doesn't have you stuck in the day-to-day.

Click on the link in the show notes to connect.

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.