

Small But Mighty Agency Podcast

Episode 111: Why Collaborative Ecosystems Are The Future of Small Agency Growth

Speakers: Audrey Joy Kwan

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Are you a small agency owner wondering how to really stand out?

If you've been feeling the pressure of competition and questioning how to unlock new growth opportunities, you're in the right place.

In today's episode, I'm unpacking a strategy to transform how you approach growth.

The future of small agencies is in building networks, not silos.

See, specialization and collaborative ecosystems are already opening doors to new opportunities that many small agencies might have thought were out of reach.

That's why in this episode, I'm sharing the answers to these three key questions:

- why are small agencies better together
- how choosing collaboration over competition is not just a trend—it's the future.
- And how to shift the old “competition” mindset and keep it from holding you back

If you think that other agencies offering the same services are your competition, it could be limiting your potential.

So, stick around because if you want smarter ways to grow and shape the success of your agency, this episode will point you in the right direction.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Welcome to the Small But Mighty Agency Podcast. If you want to grow an agency to seven figures and beyond without working more hours in your business, you're in the right place. I'm your host, Audrey Joy Kwan. I know what it takes to build an agency, including supporting an agency owner in selling and exiting. I also have a master's degree in communications, specializing in organizational development. My team and I have worked behind the scenes of multiple seven figure agencies and have coached and consulted with over 150 agency owners. All this to say, when you join us on the small but mighty agency podcast, you get real world experience and practical tips that help you work less, earn more, and lead with integrity. So let's go.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Hey friends, welcome back to another episode of *Small But Mighty Agency!* We're diving into a topic that's been on my mind a lot recently—especially as I've watched so many small agencies navigate the ups and downs of the industry. The big question we're going to tackle today is: why are small agencies better together?

You've heard the phrase *collaboration over competition*, but what does it really mean, and why is it becoming essential for small agencies like yours?

Part 1: The Landscape for Small Agencies

So let's set the stage. The small agency world has always been a competitive one. You're looking to land more clients, or that next big deal. AND You probably find yourself asking, "How can I stand out in a crowded market when there are agencies out there with bigger teams and bigger budgets?"

But here's the thing: small agencies have a superpower that bigger ones often overlook—your agility. You're nimble. You can pivot fast, adapt to trends quickly, and provide personalized, high-touch services that larger agencies struggle to match. But even with these advantages, growth can feel slow when you're a team of 3, 5, or 10 people, right?

This is where collaboration comes in. I've seen firsthand through *Agency Together*—our network for small agency owners to get more consistent referrals, connections and collaborations – that when small agencies combine their strengths, they achieve more than they ever could alone.

Part 2: Collaboration Brings Fresh Ideas and Expanded Expertise

So, why collaborate? For one, fresh ideas. When you're collaborating with other small agencies, you're not just bringing in a new set of hands—you're bringing in new perspectives. Let's be honest, when you're leading a small agency, you're wearing multiple hats—sales, strategy, execution, client management, the list goes on. This can be both empowering and exhausting.

When you team up with others, you start to see opportunities you might have missed. Maybe you're amazing at design but not as strong in SEO or analytics. Instead of saying no to certain projects, what if you partnered with an agency that excels in those areas? Suddenly, you're delivering a full-service experience without needing to grow your team overnight.

Part 3: Shared Networks Lead to More Opportunities

Now, let's talk about something we all love: more clients. Referrals, introductions, partnerships—these are the lifeblood of many small agencies. You know how hard it can

be to find warm leads that fit your ideal client profile. Here's where collaborating with other agencies really shines.

When you work together, you're not just leveraging each other's expertise—you're tapping into each other's networks. I can't tell you how many opportunities are being created that otherwise would not have existed because agency owners in *Agency Together* are thinking about connecting people. It's a win-win situation.

You're not only solving problems for people you know and connecting people with synergy, but you're also building relationships that could bring you your next big project.

Part 4: Competition is Limiting, Collaboration is Expansive

I know what you're thinking: "But what about competition? Aren't we all going after the same clients?" In some cases, it might feel that way. But here's the reality: not if you focus on finding areas where niches don't overlap. There are countless spaces where agencies serve different markets, industries, or specialties, and by working together, you can complement each other rather than compete.

This is something we emphasize in *Agency Together*—we bring agencies into a collaborative space where they can tap into each other's unique strengths and client bases without stepping on toes. It's about playing to your niche and finding those opportunities where you can fill gaps for each other. The more specialized and defined you become in your offerings, the less you'll find yourself in competition with others and the more you'll discover ways to expand through partnerships.

Part 5: The Future of Small Agencies is in Networks

Here's the big takeaway for today: the future of small agencies is in networks, not silos. As we look at how business is evolving—especially with how technology and AI are transforming the landscape—the agencies that are going to thrive are the ones that create ecosystems of collaboration.

Your competition is no longer the agency down the street or across the country. Your competition is the market inefficiency that happens when you try to do everything yourself.

We're already seeing larger companies move toward specialization and networks of contractors and partners. Small agencies are perfectly positioned to build powerful networks, and we can be nimble in ways larger agencies simply cannot. So why not lean into that advantage?

Part 6: How to Start Collaborating

Before we wrap up, I want to give you some actionable steps to start collaborating:

1. **Identify your strengths and weaknesses.** Take a hard look at what your agency excels at and where you could use support. Collaboration works best when you bring complementary skills to the table.
2. **Find the right partners.** Seek out people that align with your values and have a similar approach to client service. Remember, this is about collaboration, not just a transactional relationship.
3. **Start small.** You don't have to jump into a huge joint venture. Start with exchanging connections or project-based partnership and referrals and see how it works. Over time, you'll build momentum.
4. **Join a community.** If you're looking for a place to start, *Agency Together* is the network that I hosts, its a referral network designed to help busy agency owners get more consistent referrals and connections with likeminded agency owners. It's great example of how small agencies can work together, share resources, and grow as a collective. You can check it out here:
audreyjoykwan.com/agencytogether

So, there you have it, friends—small agencies truly are better together. Collaboration over competition isn't just a nice idea; it's the future of how small businesses can thrive in our rapidly changing world. By working together, we can punch above our weight class, expand our capabilities, and unlock opportunities we wouldn't have access to otherwise.

If this resonates with you and you're ready to start getting more consistent right fit referrals and connections with other agency owners, let me know! Whether you're looking to join *Agency Together* or just need some advice on finding the right network, I'm here to help.

Thanks so much for tuning in today, and if you enjoyed this episode, don't forget to subscribe, rate, and review. I'll see you next time—remember, we're all better together!

Audrey Joy Kwan

Hey, 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. I'll see you on the next one.