

Tiny Course Empire Podcast Episode 14

You're listening to the Tiny Course Empire Podcast with Cindy Bidar. This is episode number 14. And today, I'm going to share with you how my husband and I recently sat down and planned out our next year of business, including how we set our goals and what's changing for us over the next few months. Stick around to get the inside scoop.

Welcome to the Tiny Course Empire Podcast, a weekly show dedicated to helping you launch and grow your digital horse business, even if you don't have a big team or a six-figure ads budget, we'll help you design smart systems, take consistent action and achieve massive success on your own terms. Now, here's your host, Cindy Bidar.

Welcome back to the Tiny Course Empire Podcast and happy Thursday or whatever day you're listening to this episode.

A friend asked me recently about the process that I follow for business planning, and honestly, I'm not all that systemized about it, I know that seems strange coming from somebody who is typically so organized and who enjoys creating systems around just about everything, but because of the husband and I had literally just had this conversation a week or so before she asked me that, I thought it would be a good time to recap the process we followed, because even though it wasn't anything formal, it was a process, and that's what I'll share with you today, as always, if you enjoy the Podcast, I'd appreciate you leaving a rating and review on Apple Podcasts or wherever it is, you listen... It helps others find the show. If you're looking for the show notes and recommended resources for this episode, you'll find them at TinyCourseEmpire.com/14.

And now, let's dig in. First, and you probably know this, but I am always in planning an improvement mode, continual improvement is a strategy that will help your business grow, and I highly recommend just kinda always keeping your eyes open for ways that you can improve your business.

How I do that on a day-to-day basis is I just keep notes. I keep notes in Evernote or in a physical notebook on my desk, I swipe interesting copy and ideas that I'd like to use or that I'd like to think about more, it seems like just about every single conversation I have with, even my neighbor, for example, gives me ideas for how I can improve the business. And I keep track of those things, and then I go back through them and I read through them. And 90% of them are garbage and I throw them away, but every once in a while, there's that real winner in there that just takes off, but none of that would happen if I wasn't keeping track, so keep your eyes open for those golden nuggets of ideas I have pages and pages

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and pages of half thought out plans, and rarely is it anything super formal, like I said, it's just random notes that I keep, but then a couple of weeks ago, we did sit down for a more formal planning session, as I said, we started with our goals and not just business goals, but lifestyle goals as well, and I have to tell you, the theme of this particular planning session really seems to be lifestyle freedom, as you're going to see in a minute.

We started by deciding on what our goals are, like I said no in the past, that's always been about money, I set monetary goals every single year, how much do we want or need to earn this year, we looked at that too, but it was actually secondary to how we want our life to look. And what we want our life to look is that we want to be able to travel more, we've spent just like you have the last couple of years, pretty much locked in the house, and we really want to get out more, we don't want to have calendar obligations, that's really important for me, in particular, now that I no longer have any virtual assistant clients, and I haven't for a year now, now that those clients are all gone, I really don't like to have appointments on my calendar, I like to get up every single day and know that the entire day is my own, I can spend it anyway I want, I don't have to do my hair or put make up on or show up on camera for anybody... Except my coaching clients, and I really enjoy that, I really enjoy that freedom.

And we also want to get lots and lots of outdoor time, it seems like the older I get, the more I crave the Sunshine, which is... I think I'm finally understanding the whole Snowbird philosophy, I grew up in Michigan, and a lot of retired people here travel down to Florida in the winter time, and I finally... I'm getting that. That's something I would like to be able to do to... I would like to be able to spend more time outdoors, more time in the sun, and just really enjoy my life, so those are our lifestyle goals, and we want to build a business that's going to help us to achieve those goals. Then secondary to that, of course, is monetary. Because we need money to be able to do all of those things. We need money to be able to travel. We need money to be able to hang out in Florida maybe or Arizona every winter. And we need money to continue to fund our retirement account, because at some point in the future, I would like to... I'm saying retire with air quotes around it, because I don't think I'll ever completely retire, but we would like to have that freedom to not be working, to maybe work a couple of hours a week and do whatever it is we want, that brings in a little bit of money, but not have to work to support our life, so we want to continue to fund that retirement account, we need money to do that, obviously.

Then the third thing that we looked at is our business assets, what are our goals for our business assets, and what I mean by that is our... For example, is looking a little out of date, so we created a project to get the website updated, we're looking at rebranding and

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upgrading the membership site, we are looking at increasing our organic traffic, which means we want to have a nice place for that traffic to come to and our website, our current website or current assets have served us very, very well, and we're very happy with them, but it's time for a little change, it's time for a little upgrade, so we're going to do that as well, and we included that in with our goals. So after we considered all of our goals, then we had to take a look at what we're going to do to actually get there, and we knew that we had to make some changes, so we used a few tools and strategies to help us come up with a plan the first one I used is from Michael Hyatt, and it is his zone of desire, and you will find this in his book, *Free to Focus*, and he also has a course called *Free to Focus*, both are really, really good.

And in it, he talks about this zone of desire, and I have a drawing that I made in my notebook, I'm going to put that on the show notes for this episode, so you can see exactly what mine looks like, but the way the zone a-desire works is it's a simple... It's like a 2 x 2 matrix, so you can picture it with the horizontal axis going from left to right, and as you move to the right, it increases in your skills, so on the far left, you have things that you are not skilled at doing, and on the far right, you have things that you are skilled at doing, and then the Y axis, which is the vertical one, at the bottom is things that you don't like doing, and at the top are things that you do like doing. So the lower left quadrant, that's going to be the things that you don't like doing and the things that you are not good at, and then the lower right is things that you are good at but you don't like doing, and then the upper left are things that you are not good at, but you do enjoy, and the upper right, that's the sweet spot, that's the zone of desire, the upper right are the things that you are good at and the things that you enjoy doing.

So for me, what that looks like is in the lower left quadrant, these are the things that I am not good at and that I don't enjoy doing, are things like audio editing, PDF conversion, making those billable forms that I use in my courses and for content upgrades I don't like doing that. It's very... Finally, social media content is something else I do not enjoy doing, I don't enjoy hanging out on social media, you don't enjoy creating content for social media, I don't enjoy using it for business, I find it very taxing, it's very stressful to me. So it's not something I enjoy anymore. I don't enjoy doing the technical website details anymore, and this was kind of shocking for me when I went through and figured this all out, I used to really enjoy that I used to really enjoy troubleshooting website problems, why links weren't the right color or how to code something or how to make my website do something really amazing. I used to really enjoy that and I don't anymore, I find it frustrating to do probably because I've been away from it for so long, it's just not something I enjoy anymore, so I'm landing that right in the quadrant of don't like doing...

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And I'm not good at it anymore, brand visibility is something that I also don't like doing and that I am not good at, and this includes things like search engine optimization, keyword research... Absolutely hate keyword research, don't like it, not good at it, finding and landing interviews don't like it, not good at it. So these are all things that are in my zone of, I think Michael Hyatt would call it the drudgery zone, these are things that I'm not good at, things that I don't enjoy doing and things that I should not be doing, then next we have The things that I'm good at, but I don't enjoy... So this again is the lower right quadrant, so things that I'm good at, but that I don't enjoy doing include content scheduling, and this is things like webinars and emails and podcasts and blog posts, I had to put together some webinars that are coming up here in the next couple of weeks for me as I'm recording this and I can do it, and I'm really good at it, but I really dislike all of the moving pieces that I have to pull together, I have to create the landing pages and create the thank you pages, and create the automation and active campaign and schedule the emails, and schedule the Zoom calling, all of those pieces, and I find it just very frustrating to deal with, so that's something that I'm good at, but I don't enjoy doing and I shouldn't be doing it.

The other thing that I am good at, but I don't enjoy doing is personal outreach, and this has been true for me since I started my business. I don't like to do, I guess what you would call cold calling, I don't like to outreach to people, even though I know that they're happy to hear from me, and even though most of them are my friends, I just don't enjoy that personal kind of outreach. Now, it's not necessarily something I can hand off. And we're going to talk more about that in a minute. But it's just not something I enjoy. So that's in my... I don't know what Michael yet calls that zone right there, but it's in my... I'm good at it, but I don't like doing its own... Then in the upper half of the matrix, we have the things that I do enjoy doing. On the left, we've got things that I enjoy, but I'm not really good at, and that includes things like document design, graphic design, and page and post design and formatting. I enjoy doing document design, I love to get into Canva or even into Photoshop. Lately, I've discovered how flexible key note is for graphic design, it's amazing, you can do amazing things, and I can spend hours and hours and hours doing it.

I love to do it, I'm not good at it. It's not one of my top skills, could it be... Maybe if I wanted to dedicate the time to it, but it's not where I should be spending my time. And then finally, in the upper right quadrant, we have the things that I am highly skilled at and that I enjoy doing, and this is where I need to be spending my time, this is where we all need to be spending the majority of our time on the things that you're really good at and the things that you really enjoy doing. Would that be an amazing life if all you had to do was the things that you loved and the things that you were great at, that's where we all want to be. Right, so for me, that includes things like big picture planning, like this planning meeting

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that we have, I'm really good at this kind of stuff, it includes things like calendar planning, like planning out my marketing calendar for the year. Really, really good at that. I'm really good at content creation and I really, really enjoy all three of those things, I love, love, love creating content like this podcast, like courses, blog post, articles, all of that, all of the writing and the creating really lights me up.

And it's what I want to spend the majority of my time doing. But the question is, am I doing it? So another tool that we looked at is time tracking, and this is something that I have done from time to time, and honestly... It's probably one of the first questions I ask my coaching clients. When they say they're not getting things done, I ask them, are they tracking their time, because you might actually be shocked how much time you waste... I'm shocked how much time I waste doing things that I should not be doing, doing things that fall into the drug zone or that fall into those other three zones of the zones of not desire, I guess I'll call them, where I should not be spending my time, but the only way to know that is to track your time. I kinda look at it like tracking your budget, if you've ever done one of those, one of those challenges where you track every penny you spend for 30 days or 60 days or whatever, quite often, you find out that you spend a lot of money on things, you didn't realize you were spending money on it, like you didn't know that you were spending 300 a month on coffee, or you didn't know that you were spending 100 a month on new clothes, because it's just so easy for you to just pop into the store and grab that coffee or pop into the store and grab a new pair of jeans or whatever, and you don't think about it and it adds up...

It adds up quicker than you think, and the same is true with time tracking, I actually spent a couple of weeks, not too long ago, tracking my time in 15-minute increments. So every 15 minutes, I would write down what I was doing. I had a chart on my notebook and I mapped it out from the time I woke up in the morning until the time I went to bed at night, and I was flabbergasted at how much time I was wasting throughout the day. Now, that's not to say that you have to be working every minute of the day, I certainly don't expect myself to work every minute of the day, but I did not realize that, for example, I was spending three hours in Canva creating a blog post, featured image, that's a ridiculous amount of time that I should not be spending time... Tracking is really one of the best tools you can use. I highly, highly recommend it. And that's what I go to every... Probably at least once a quarter, I track my time for a couple of weeks just to see where I'm spending it, and that allows me to see, what's the best use of my time? Where am I wasting time? And what can I improve on? You can use a couple of different tools.

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I just told you I use a paper notebook for two weeks, I found that absolutely. Absolutely, very helpful. But you can also use electronic tools, I've used to clarify in the past, which I really liked, I've used Toggle, I've used timers on my phone, whatever, it doesn't matter what tool you use, but doing for at least a week, I highly recommend you do it for at least a week. See where you're spending your time. Then the other tool that we use is something that I learned from a site called Asian efficiency, and I'll link to that in the show notes, it's a very useful site if you are into productivity or want to be more productive, and the tool that they use is... They ask, they have three questions that they ask, I don't even know if they have a formal name for it, but the three questions are, What should we keep doing? What should we start doing? And what should we stop doing? And I found this really, really helpful for just reviewing the year, so in our case, what should we keep doing, we ask that question and we said, Okay, well, we should keep doing this podcast because it's going really well.

I enjoy it. I think I'm good at it. I hope I'm good at it. I hope you guys are listening and you're not thinking, Oh man, this is terrible, so we're going to keep doing the podcast, we're going to keep doing the promotional calendar, that works really well for us, we've mapped out a whole new promotional calendar for the year. We're going to keep doing our October sale event that we just got done with at the time of this recording, that's always been really popular for us, it's really popular among our people, and it brings in really good results, and we're going to keep doing product bundles. We've recently started doing more of those where we bundle together three or four small courses together in kind of a cohesive bundle that teaches one good concept. We're going to keep doing those, those are really popular among our subscribers as well, so those are the things that we're going to keep doing. Then the next question is, what should we start doing? Well, the number one thing we should start doing is more affiliate outreach, in the past, like I said, have not been particularly good at this, but if we want the business to grow, that is our primary tool to use.

Another thing we're going to start doing is upgraded images and the website design, we talked about that at the beginning when we set goals, we are in the process of rebuilding the website and the membership site just to give it a more updated vibe... A more updated look. We're going to start doing more podcast interviews and guest blog spots, and I'm not talking about interviews on this podcast, I'm talking about me getting interviewed on other people's podcasts and me writing guest blog posts for other blogs, just as a way to get in front of a larger audience, and finally, we may... And I have not fully decided on this yet, but it's always on the table, we may start doing some paid advertising. I've not done that in the past. It's something that has been on my radar for a while. I know we could grow a lot faster

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if we put some time and energy and money into paid advertising, I just have not fully convinced myself to free up the time to learn how to do that. It's a big learning curve for me to be able to do it well. And it is a skill that I would like to have, but I need to dedicate the time to do that.

So maybe at some point in the next year, I will find that time. And we'll go down that path as well. And then finally, the question, What should we stop doing? There's not a lot going on in the business that I feel that we should stop doing, there's no products that we should stop creating, then we're not going to stop the membership, we're not going to do any of that stuff, but one thing that we do need to stop doing is so much manual work. And we're going to talk more about this in a minute. And we need to stop doing anything that's a poor use of our time, so we go back to that zone of desire that we talked about a few minutes ago, we need to stop doing anything that's a poor use of my time, anything that's a poor use of... My husband's time, he works with me in the business, if you don't know that, and certainly, we want that more lifestyle freedom, we want the more ability to travel, more ability to go out and do fun things during the week or head to Florida for the winter ahead. To Arizona for the winter, or whatever that is, and in order to do that, we need to free up our time, so anything that's a poor use of my time or a poor use of Rik's time needs to go.

So after having worked through all of those tools and after asking some really tough questions, we were a lot more clear on what needs to happen in our business if we're going to achieve those goals for the year, now it was time to kinda work out the plan of action, how are we going to make that all happen? So our plan starts with organized, so we've got four steps here, we're going to talk about organized system, Zed, automate and outsource. Those are the four steps. So what that looks like for us, we need to be better organized, we need to figure out what assets do we have and where are they now? I'm a pretty organized person to start with, and my husband makes me look like a slab because he is a master organizer, but we still have things, you're building things you're creating pages, you're creating these business assets, and they're just kind of all over, and that's just... I don't think there's any way to avoid that, in fact, as we're rebuilding the website, I went through and cleaned up all of the pages in our website I had... And I'm not talking about blog posts, I'm talking about pages...

I think I had like 185 pages on CindyBidar.com, and these include things like webinar, opt-in pages, webinar, thank you pages, Survey thank you pages, just all kinds of things that I've used in the past that are just there. They're just hanging out there, even though I haven't used them in years, some of them date back to 2017, and I haven't used them since, so I went through and cleaned all of that up, I dropped it down from 180 pages to 52

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live pages on the site. So that's the kind of thing that I'm talking about when I'm saying we need to be better organized. We just need to go back and clean up all of those messes I've left for later. We want to think about what needs to be eliminated and what can be consolidated in our business, like do we need two different websites, or can we get rid of one of them, can we merge them? 'cause we do still have two different websites, we still have CindyBidar.com, and we still have DigitalBusinessManagers.com, that's my old services site. Do we need that? No, we don't need it anymore.

We're not doing services anymore, I'm not advertising services anymore, I have no intention of doing service work anymore, so I don't need that site, it needs to be either blended into cinder dot com or eliminated all together. Then the next step is to system ice, once we get all organized, the next step is to better systemic things, better optimize things, and for us, that means better project workflows. Now, you guys know that I'm always working on project workflows, it's what I teach you, it's what I help you to do in your business, but there's always room for improvement always. That means doing fewer one-off projects, anything that's done two or more times can and should be a system, anything that's only done once... I want to ask myself, should I be doing it at all? Now, obviously, things like website redesign, that's a one-time thing and it can't be avoided, but there are some things that I might do... Only ones that I really shouldn't be doing, so I have to ask myself, should I be doing this at all? Or is it something that I'm going to do repeatedly? And if that's the case, I want to make sure that I'm systematic it and optimizing it and documenting it right from the start.

Consistency, I talk about this all the time, consistency is still the key in all things, and that is what being system Zed is all about, you want to have a system for anything that you repeatedly do so that you can do it consistently, so that your blog posts are consistent, so that your podcast episodes are consistent, so that your courses are consistent, because that's really what makes all of the difference in your business, the more consistent you are, I firmly believe the more consistent you are, the more successful you will be. Then the next piece is automate. I traditionally have not automated a whole lot, I know there are people who really, really do this well, and this is just not been me, but I am exploring these options now as I have more time to kind of think about them and get them all set up so automating things is things like transcripts for this podcast, this can be completely automated. I haven't done that in the past. I have done the transcripts for all of the podcast episodes, and it's just not a good use of my time, it's not something I should be doing, and it can be automated, so that needs to happen.

Email marketing funnels are another place where I can better automate. And this goes back

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to the organization. I've got a ton of email marketing funnels that were created as needed, and I don't typically go back and update them as well as I should, should be something that is systemic, right? I should have a system for going back and updating my email marketing funnels, but I don't, so I need to put that into place so that I can better automate those funnels so that they're working for me without me having to send so many emails. I need to automate my list hygiene as well, this is something that I'm doing manually right now, and it doesn't have to be that way, it can be fully automated, so that's something that I'm going to look at as well, and traffic sources, that's something else that can be automated, if I dig in and I do a better job with things like SEO and maybe social automation and reaching out to my affiliates better, then that traffic source piece is going to fall into place and it's just going to happen all by itself, and I'm not going to have to think about it.

And finally, outsourcing. So what I can't automate, then I can outsource. So for me, that means things like podcast editing, which I've recently outsourced... Thank you, ego. Who does my podcast editing? I appreciate you. I can outsource graphics, those graphics that I spend hours and hours and hours on that I should not be doing. I can outsource document, formatting and design again, something else that I can do, but I'm not good at it, and I shouldn't be spending my time on it and content scheduling, something else that I'm good at and I can do, but I should not be doing. So that's our plan for the coming year, we want to have a lot more time freedom, and we want to make sure that our retirement is well funded in order to get there, we're making some changes in the business, starting with... Eliminating the things that we know we shouldn't be doing and optimizing the things that are getting us the best results, we're going to put a focus on being better organized and system-ISE, so that we can automate and outsource more, which is what's really going to give us the impact and the time freedom that we want...

Now, I would love to hear from you, pop over to the show notes at [tiny course empire dot com](http://tinycourseempire.com), 14, and tell me how you're planning your 2022 business growth. You'll also find the show notes and resources on that page, as well as my business planning mind map that I promised you last week, you might find that helpful as you create your own plan for the coming year. Have a terrific day, everyone, and I will talk to you again next week.

If you like what you hear on the Tiny Course Empire Podcast, you're going to love all of the courses you'll find inside my six-figure systems membership, that's my monthly membership, where we dig into online marketing for regular people like you and me. We don't do big launches or have the big headaches and the big expenses that come with them, instead we focus on creating repeatable, sustainable systems that continue to grow over time, and they don't suck up all of our energy or require a 10-person team to manage.

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You can come see what we're all about at SixFigureSystems.com, and I'll see you on the inside.