

Tiny Course Empire Podcast Episode 25: Overcoming Shiny Object Syndrome

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You're listening to the Tiny Course Empire Podcast with Cindy Bidar. This is episode number 25, and today we're going to take a deep dive into Shiny Object Syndrome, what it is, how it hurts your business and what you can do to avoid it. Stick around.

Welcome to the Tiny Course Empire Podcast, a weekly show dedicated to helping you launch and grow your digital course 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. I'm your host Cindy Bidar. You'll find show notes and recommended resources for this episode at TinyCourseEmpire.com/25. If you're new to the show or if you're an old friend, welcome. I'm thrilled to have you here and thank you for spending a part of your day with me today. Make sure you click the subscribe or the follow button so you never miss an episode because next week, we're going to talk about overcoming perfectionism. It's something that a lot of creative entrepreneurs struggle with, including me, and I have some ideas you can use to get past it, but that's for next week.

This week, we're taking a hard look at something else that can derail a great business. And that's shiny object syndrome. This one's sneaky because it can look like a good idea, even when it's not. Here's an example from my own business recently, a couple of weeks ago, I sat down and in about two hours, I mapped out an entire new business, and you guys, I'm talking an entire business model. I had white boards filled with project plans, I had notebooks with ideas scribbled all over them. I have marketing ideas. I was literally even researching potential team members to hire to pull it all off, I was deep into shiny object land, and don't get me wrong, I was enjoying the heck out of it, it's a fun exercise to explore new ideas and to make big plans, but it was distracting me from what I should have been working on, which is part of the reason it's so fun. I'll talk more about that in a minute. But luckily, when I shared my big new plan with my husband, he was pretty quick to throw a wet blanket over the whole thing, and he saved me from that shiny object so I could get back to work on what really matters in my business. You've probably experienced a similar situation, you're working on your business, and then out of the blue, you're down a rabbit trail that you didn't intend to explore, but it's just so interesting, you almost can't seem to help yourself. That's what Shiny Object Syndrome looks like, and if you're not careful, it can cause your business to stall out or maybe even cause it to never get off the ground in the first

place. According to Wikipedia, Shiny Object Syndrome is the situation where people focus all attention on something that's new, current or trendy yet drop this just as soon as something new takes its place. So it's a cycle. We do it over and over and over again. Something new gets our attention, we go all in on it until the next new exciting thing comes along.

Entrepreneur Magazine calls this a disease of distraction, and they say that it plagues small business owners specifically because of the unique qualities we have. We tend to be highly motivated and we're not afraid to start new projects and create new things, which makes all of those shiny objects even more appealing to us, they're new, they're exciting, we get to try something different, and that just looks super exciting, especially when we're faced with the day-to-day running of a business. If you've experienced Shiny Object Syndrome, then you're not alone. Ink Magazine claims that nine out of 10 business owners they polled said that they have struggled with Shiny Object Syndrome, at least once. I know I have, I probably struggle with it every single week if I'm honest, and in business, shiny objects look really important. That's what makes them kind so sneaky, they look like things that we really need, or they look like really good ideas, they tend to show up as new software that promises to make all of your problems go away, it's a better email platform, it's a better social media scheduler, it's a tool to make writing easier, it's new graphic design software. All of those things that you see advertised, that just looks so amazing and you think, Oh, I could use that. Those a lot of times are shiny objects, sometimes a shiny object is new strategies for marketing, maybe YouTube. You think you're going to start a YouTube channel or you're going to start a podcast, or you're going to launch a blog, or you're going to go after a new social media platform, remember Club House, that was all the rage, it was a shiny object for a lot of people, maybe it's, Oh, going to start a Facebook group, or I'm going to build a forum, or I'm going to start a new website, all of those things can be shiny objects, if we're not careful.

And my particular brand of Shiny Object Syndrome is new business ventures. This plagues a lot of small business owners I know as well, I have at least one new idea every single day that I would love to pursue. Maybe you do as well. Those are all shiny objects. Another form of shiny object is new courses to take. We are all bombarded all the time with potential courses that we could take, potential things that could help our business grow or help our life in some way, and not all of them are applicable all of the time, and we're going to talk more about that in just a minute, but watch out for those new courses that you think, Oh, this is fabulous, this is going to solve all of my problems. It might just be a shiny object, new courses to create. Can it even be a shiny object, I run into this in particular in my business, because I create so many courses, and sometimes these new ideas come to me and they distract me from what I'm supposed to be working on or what I

intended to work on in the moment. And that makes that new course, no matter how good it is or how appealing it might be, or how important it is for my subscribers, my customers, to get that course out there, it doesn't matter if it's distracting me from my current goals from what I had intended to be working on, it's nothing more than a shiny object, now, you might be asking yourself, but if all of these things are amazing and good and beneficial, new courses can be beneficial, new business ventures can make us money, new strategies for marketing can help grow our business, how does Shiny Object Syndrome or hurt your business? What harm does it do?

Well, let's imagine for a minute that you're headed out to the grocery store, let's say you've got to pick up a few things for dinner, it's maybe a few miles down the road, and you pull out of your driveway and a block or so down the road, you see your neighbor and your neighbor waves at you and you stop to say hello, and she tells you that there's a big sale on lawn furniture just a couple of blocks away, now you don't have any plans to buy lawn furniture, but you know it might be nice to brighten up your patio, and it can't hurt to look, right? So away you go to the lawn furniture sale, you buy a new table and a new umbrella, it was a great deal and you couldn't just pass it up because you might not find it again on sale. Right, so you get back in the car because you do still need those groceries for dinner, and along the way, you see that the library is having a sale on their used books, so you stop to browse, now you've been meaning to read more anyway, so this is a really good opportunity to stock up on some books, so you always have something to read, and while you're there, you bump into another neighbor who tells you about a big sale on running shoes down the street. You don't really exercise at all, maybe you're like me, you don't really run for sure, but you've always wanted to get fit and it might be a good way to get started, so off you go to the shoe store and you pick up a brand new pair of running shoes for half off because it was a sweet deal. And you can already feel yourself getting healthier. Now you still don't have your groceries, but now it's late, so you go home, you'll have to get those groceries tomorrow instead, all of those things that you encountered on the way to the grocery store.

And I realize this is a silly example, but follow me here, all of those things that you encountered on the way to the grocery store were shiny objects that distracted you from your goal of getting groceries for dinner, you didn't need any of those things. Sure, some of them were nice to have, some of them were fun, some of them you might use later, but maybe not, but they were all just shiny objects, they were all just distractions from the goal that you had to go to the grocery store to get dinner. That's the same thing that happens in your business, all of those shiny objects distract you from your goal, and they do to or you, and cause you to not to go after your goal like you thought you were going to do, or like you intended to

do, and only delay the ultimate realization of that goal. That's the harm the shiny objects do in your business. So the question is, how do you avoid Shiny Object Syndrome?

Well, the first step is to get super clear on the goals that you do have, and I'm not talking about just your business goals either, you need to get super clear on your life goals. What do you want your life to look like? What do you want your business to look like? What do you want your business model to be, how do you want to work? How do you want to spend your days when you're really clear on those goals. Then you know where you're going, and every opportunity doesn't look like it might be the next right one, because that's the problem with shiny objects, they all look like they might be the path to that goal, but the reason they look like they might be the path to that goal is because you don't really know what the goal is to start with. So the first thing is to get super clear on the goal, what is it you really truly want. What is it you really, truly want for your business, what do you really want for your life when you know those things, those shiny objects will not be so shiny after all.

Now, once you know where you're going, the trick is to stay focused and not get distracted because they are still a little shiny and a little bright and a little distracting, so the way that you stay focused and not get distracted is to keep a Later File. This is for things that you might want to do later, but not right now, so these are the things that look appealing and you think, Oh, I could maybe use that or I should maybe do that, but it's not in service to my goal right now. Right now, I'm focused on this direction and I can look at this other thing later, so keep a Later File, maybe that is a bookmark that you keep in your browser for a course that you want to take, or maybe it's a note in your Evernote for a project that you want to do down the road, maybe it's a note about a new business idea, or it's a note about a new course that you want to create, or a new blog that you want to write, whatever it is, keep notes about that. I have a folder or a notebook in my Evernote called Later Projects, and that's where I stuff all of those things, all of those ideas that come to me that I know can potentially distract me if I allow myself to go down that road right now. But I'm trying to stay focused, so I stuff those ideas into that Later Projects folder and I can revisit them when I have more time.

The other thing that you need to do is you need to accept that you might pay more later, and that's okay, because you're going to be in a much better place to and better able to afford it at a higher cost later, and I'm talking about things like courses, an example is a couple of months ago, I'm recording this in January, so this was back in November. I saw an offer for a YouTube course that looked really good, it's by a YouTuber that I followed for a while, he is a professional film maker, so he knows what he's talking about, he knows his stuff, he's got about three

million followers on YouTube, so he's kind of knowledgeable about YouTube and about film making, and I thought this would be a really good way to learn about starting a YouTube channel to learn all of the ins and outs of that, and that's something that I do want to do. At some point in the future, I am going to add YouTube to my marketing ideas, to my marketing workflow, but not right now. But here's the thing, I almost bought that course because it was on sale for \$397, and I know that next time I go to look at it again, when he releases it again or when he opens it again next year, maybe it's probably going to be more expensive, and I had to be okay with that. It was a better decision for me to say, I'm okay with paying more down the road than I am with paying less today and using it as a distraction and allowing myself to get distracted going down that rabbit trail, getting focused on that shiny object instead of what I know I need to be doing right now. And that's honestly not YouTube because I don't have time to deal with that right now. I will in the future, and when I'm ready, I will buy that course at a higher price or I'll buy a different course or whatever, but it was not a good move at that moment, even though it was on sale, and even though I thought, oh, I'll use it later, that's never a good decision to make. So you have to accept that you may pay more later, especially in the case of a course or maybe new software that's launching, you're probably going to pay more later if you don't take it on right now, but that's okay. You can be okay with that.

You also need to be okay with a hard no, as in no, I'm not ever going to start a podcast, so I'm not going to buy this course, I'm not going to read this book, I'm not going to follow this person because I know I'm never going to start a podcast, or I'm never going to blog seriously, or I'm never going to start a YouTube channel, or I'm never going to write a book, and then that allows you to just turn that off, turn that attention completely off for that particular product, that particular software that particular course, even that particular content creator, maybe you just unsubscribe from emails because you realize I'm never going to have a use for this, and that's okay. It's very, very freeing to be able to tell yourself, I know myself well enough to know I am never going to do this. It doesn't matter how many people tell you You should, it doesn't matter how many people find success with that method. When you can say to yourself, honestly, I am never going to do this. It's very, very freeing and it relieves you of all the shiny objects that surround that particular idea, so be okay with that hard no.

You also can find people that you trust, who you can bounce ideas off of. I told you earlier in this episode about my husband throwing the wet blanket on my business idea. That's exactly what I want him to do, I want him to be the voice of reason for me, because it allows me that space to step back and say, Oh, you know what? That's really not a good use of my time right now. Maybe it's a good idea for later, I'll throw it in the Later Project file, but right now I'm focused on something

else, I have a goal and I need to stay focused on that goal if I'm going to reach it and allowing myself to get distracted is not in service of that goal. So my husband is the one who kind of pulled me back and said, Let's think about this a minute before you go all in. I have another friend who does the same thing for me when I tell her that I'm going to launch a blog or I'm going to open up my coaching program again, she is the voice of reason who says, Do you really want to do that? What about this goal you told me that you have. You just talked about it the other day, and is this new project that you want to start in service of that goal or is it a distraction from that goal? So find that person that you can trust, that you can bounce ideas off of. And who will be honest with you and ask you those hard questions and say, Are you really sure that's what you want to do right now, is this really the best you see your time or is it just another distraction?

You also want to recognize that a lot of times, it's overwhelm and insecurity about your existing plan that's leaving you more susceptible to Shiny Object Syndrome. If you're feeling overwhelmed, it's much easier to make those big plans for that shiny object, it's much easier to dig into something new, than it is to tackle something that is challenging you or overwhelming you right now, so ask yourself if that shiny object is particularly appealing just because your current project or your current business goal is feeling hard or overwhelming, and if that's the case, then add it to the Later file, maybe later, I'll look at this, but right now, I need to be focused on this goal that I have, even though it's difficult, even though it's challenging, even though I'm feeling a little bit overwhelmed. And if you are feeling overwhelmed, I want to invite you to revisit episode number seven of this podcast at TinyCourseEmpire.com/7, where I walk you through a 20-minute exercise you can use to overcome the overwhelm and get back on track.

And finally, ask yourself if you're feeling more attracted to that shiny object because you're bored with what you're currently doing, or because of the task or project that you're working on is feeling difficult. A lot of times when I get stuck on a project, particularly a writing project, if I'm writing something and I'm feeling stuck, that's when I'm most susceptible to getting distracted, and by recognizing that it makes it that much easier for you to set it aside and say, I will think about this particular shiny object later, but right now, I need to get back to the task at hand.

So to recap, shiny objects are those things that distract you from the important tasks and projects in your business. Chances are, if you are working on something you've got a goal to achieve and you find yourself going down a rabbit trail or investigating something new, and it's distracting you from that goal or from that project, chances are really good, that's a shiny object, you can avoid shiny objects by setting clear goals for your business and for your life, and by stacking those

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shiny objects up against that goal and seeing where it fits, or if it doesn't at all, you can share your ideas with people you trust to keep you from getting distracted, people who will help you keep moving in the right direction. And you want to get really good at recognizing when you might be particularly vulnerable to shiny objects, such as when you're feeling overwhelmed or overly challenged by a project, or you feel stuck because that's going to make shiny objects much easier to manage.

I'd like to invite you to head over to TinyCourseEmpire.com/25 to find the show notes for this episode, all the resources we mentioned, and I have a worksheet for you to help you recognize and avoid shiny objects in your business, and while you're there, be sure to leave me a comment. I would love to know if you've encountered Shiny Object Syndrome in your business and what you've done to overcome it, and what advice you might have for other people facing the same thing. And finally, if you're enjoying the show, would you do me a favor and leave a rating and review over at Apple podcasts or wherever you're listening. That helps the podcast directories know that you find this content valuable, and it helps other people find us as well, and of course, if you have a friend or a colleague who would love to hear this episode or who could use the advice that I provided regarding Shiny Object Syndrome, please go ahead and send them the link, it's TinyCourseEmpire.com/25. Have a terrific day, everyone, and I will talk to you all 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, you can come see what we're all about at SixFigureSystems.com, and I'll see you on the inside.