PLEASE NOTE: This is a machine transcription. Some punctuation and spelling weirdness are to be expected.

I consume a lot of productivity-related content. I watch some YouTube channels about it, read quite a few blogs, and listen to even more podcasts all about how to get more out of your day.

Some people—like Cal Newport and David Allen—refer to this kind of content as Productivity Porn. The reason being that it's easy to become addicted to it, and fall into the trap of thinking that the latest app being demonstrated is the secret to greater success. That once we start using ToDoIst or Things3 or Obsidian, that all of our productivity troubles will end and suddenly life will be all sunshine and roses again.

Of course, that's not true. What often happens is the exact opposite. People who consume a lot of productivity advice instead begin what's known as "app switching" where they fail to stick to any one thing long enough for it to have a real impact.

I'm 100% guilty of app switching myself. In an effort to get more organized and to feel more in control of my schedule, I chase the next best thing.

I've tried Things3, OmniFocus, ToDoIst, Evernote, Obsidian, Craft, Notion… I mean, there are dozens of them, and not one of them was revolutionary for me. Not one of them made me the productivity wizard they promised.

In fact, this app switching habit actually made me less organized, because I had to try to remember where I put something. I didn't have a trusted system that just worked for me.

I see the same kind of platform switching among online business owners, too. Some shiny new thing comes along that promises to solve all their problems and make them a million dollars, and they're quick to jump in—only to find out that it's not quite as rosy as they thought it would be.

Then the next big thing comes along, and again they jump in, because THIS is the one.

It's a cycle I see a lot of people get caught up in, and it has a high cost. It keeps you from growing your business, costs you in lost trust with your customers, and might even keep you stuck "almost ready" mode forever.

This is episode 85 of the Tiny Course Empire podcast, and today I want to talk about why switching platforms might be hurting you more than helping, and how to know when it IS time to upgrade the tools you use to run your business.

Hey, it's Cindy, and thank you for spending a few minutes of your day with me. I appreciate you!

You'll find the show notes and recommended resources for this episode at TinyCourseEmpire.com/85.

While you're there, be sure to grab my guide to starting an online business. It's a free download right on the page, and it details the six steps you need to take to go from no business to making income. It's easier than you might think.

Let's start with a phrase you may not have heard before: shiny object syndrome.

Shiny object syndrome is what we call it when something new and shiny captures our attention—kind of like crows will collect shiny things to decorate their nests with, online business owners collect new software and other tools.

The problem is, those shiny objects can cause problems in your business, and distract you from actually doing the work it takes to become successful.

But that's not to say that you should never chase shiny objects, or that you should never change email systems or course platforms or page builders. There are lots of reasons why it might be smart to make a move like that.

The key is to know the difference between being attracted to a new and shiny thing, and making a smart move that will improve your business.

Let's start with some legit reasons you might be thinking about changing platforms.

Reasons to change platforms

One I'm seeing a lot of this year is software that changes their terms. Maybe they change their pricing, which is what Active Campaign did a while back. They announced that they were raising their price even for long-time customers, which meant a lot of people—myself included—went in search of alternative platforms.

 A significant price increase—in my case, it was more than double what I've been paying—is a legitimate reason to consider changing platforms. But there are also some costs to consider before you make that decision. I'll go over those in a minute.

Another reason to consider moving platforms is if the terms of use change. Teachable recently changed their pricing tiers to restrict the number of courses you could have. They changed it from unlimited to only five courses on the basic tier, which means if you had more than five already, you either had to upgrade your account or move to a different platform.

If a tool you use and rely on to run your business makes a change like this that has a negative impact on your ability to do business, or on your profit margins, it's a good reason to start looking at alternatives.

Another valid reason to look for alternative software is if you keep bumping up against an issue that you just can't work around.

Let's say you're at a point in your business where it just makes sense to turn all of your courses into an integrated membership, but you're hosting your courses on a platform that doesn't offer memberships. Obviously, you'll need to move if you really want that membership.

Or what if your customers are asking you to make credit card payments available, but your shopping cart only works with PayPal. Upgrading your cart would help you capture more sales, so this is a good move as well.

Or maybe you've simply outgrown your current platform.

You might want to send more emails each month than you can with your current email provider. Or you have more students than are allowed on your course platform. Or you want to launch a new course, but you've already used all the sales pages allowed on your current page builder.

When your current platform becomes too small for your business, it's probably time to look for other solutions. It's like outgrowing a house. You might be able to continue to get by with one bathroom for a family of five, but if it's possible to upgrade, to a two or even three bathroom model, that's definitely worth looking into.

With that said though, there are also plenty of reasons you should not change apps, and these fall squarely into shiny object syndrome territory.

Reasons NOT to change platforms

The number one reason I see people jumping from platform to platform is because of price. Now I know we just talked about moving because of a price increase, but what I'm talking about here is the lure of a never-to-be-seen-again low-cost launch price. You'll see this kind of thing a lot on sites like AppSumo, and they always come with big promises and very little in the way of a track record. But they're still appealing.

I mean, why would you want to pay $39 per month for Teachable when you can get something new for a one-time payment?

Now, I'm not going to say you should never make that leap. It might be a really good move for you. There are definitely a few platforms out there that I wish I'd bought when I could still get them at a crazy low price.

But if that launch price is the only reason you're thinking of moving, then it might not be the best choice. Ideally, you'd want to take advantage of a low launch price when you're already facing one of the issues we talked about earlier—for example you're in danger of outgrowing your current solution. In that case, that low-priced new platform might be just what you need.

You also have to use caution here—especially if you're purchasing an unproven platform that might become a critical part of your business. Just be aware that while you can snag some great deals this way, you can also end up tied to a real loser that you end up abandoning a few weeks or months later because it just doesn't work as promised.

This happened to us last year with a streaming video platform that ended up not having the quality it promised. We thought we could replace Zoom, but in the end we lost a lot of time and money, and wound up right back where we started.

If a platform or a price seems too good to be true, or if the developers are making big promises without a solid track record to back them up, proceed with caution. Sometimes you'll find a real gem, but sometimes you'll lose money and time on a solution that just doesn't work out.

Which brings me to another red flag, and that's massive affiliate promotions for a new platform.

When there's a lot of buzz happening about a new software, it's easy to get caught up in the excitement. It's easy to think that if all of these people are talking about it, it must be good. It must be the right move.

Unfortunately, what's often happening is that there is a big affiliate contest going on, and all of those people are talking it up in the hopes of winning a four or even five figure affiliate prize.

I'm not saying all affiliate promotions are bad. I make a good chunk of my living as an affiliate, and most affiliate marketers are ethical in their promotions. But unless the software that everyone is talking about also meets your real needs, it's probably not worth buying.

Will it help you get past some hurdle you've been facing with your current solution? Will it save you money in the long run—including both the tangible and intangible

costs of moving? Will it help your business grow in some real way you can easily define?

If you can answer yes to those questions, then it's worth looking into. But if all you have is a bunch of emails in your inbox that all tell you how amazing this new tool is, it's probably best to give it a pass.

My last reason not to change platforms is one that I recognize in myself—or at least I used to when I was still trying to find my business flow—and that's because switching platforms makes you feel like you're working and making progress, even though you're not.

Here's what that looked like for me. I don't know if you'll recognize yourself or not—hopefully not, but what I discovered for myself is that it would feel more important to do all the work of moving my list of 300 subscribers from one platform to another, than to actually send them an email.

I justified the move by telling myself that once I was on a good platform, that once I had all the automation power I needed, that THEN I could email with confidence.

The truth is, I didn't need that automation power, and the platform I was on was absolutely fine for where I was in my business at that moment. What I really needed to be doing was emailing my list and working to add subscribers, but changing platforms let me feel like I was making forward progress.

If you are not making use of your current platform, and you think moving platforms will change that, I want to encourage you to go back to basics and do the work instead of starting over with something new.

Because I have to tell you, changing software comes with a pretty high price tag - even if you're thinking of moving because it will save you money in the end.

Here's what I mean by that.

The high price of platform switching

I told you a few minutes ago that we're leaving Active Campaign because of a price hike. This is not a decision we made lightly. It's a massive undertaking that's going to cost us in a lot of ways that can't really be measured.

It's going to cost me a massive amount of time to make the change. I know that there are platforms that will make the change over for us, but I still have to update all my landing pages, update my shopping cart, change out all my products and how the tagging works, and before I can do any of that, I'll spend a couple of weeks just getting it all organized so it's ready to move.

I've done this for clients back when I was a virtual assistant, and it is a lot of work.

Will it be worth it in the end? Yes. But I'm not under any delusions that it will be easy or that it will save me money right away. It will take us months to recoup the cost of this move. And honestly, if it was just the price issue, I wouldn't be thinking about it at all. There are other reasons I'm leaving Active Campaign, and together, it make this a good move, but I did have to think long and hard about it, because I know what it's going to cost in time and money to do it.

Thinking about your own business, what will a move do to your existing systems? Few platforms stand alone. Your shopping cart integrates with your email platform, and your sales page builder, and maybe your membership or course platform. All of those connections will have to be updated and tested.

And what about your team? If you have virtual assistants who help you with some of your projects, they'll need to be trained on the new systems. It will take them time to get back to the level of efficiency they were at with the current platform.

What about your customers? Will they trust the new platform? Will you lose customers in the move? This is especially true if you're considering changing membership platforms. Asking your current members to re-subscribe in a new platform is a good way to lose a large portion of your membership, so it's not something to enter into lightly.

Even if you consider all of that thought, you might still be thinking that changing platforms is a good move. If that's the case, then I have three things to recommend before you make that leap.

Before you make the jump...

Number one, make sure you've made full use of your current platform. If you don't know all the ins and outs, then you don't know what it's capable of. Maybe it can work for you, if you know how to set it up properly.

Spend some time studying the help files, working with their support staff, or even hiring someone to teach you how to use it before you decide it's not the right choice for you.

The second thing you should do—especially if you're already heavily invested in your existing platform—is to see if it can be customized or otherwise improved to make it work better for you.

A while back Rik and I had the idea that we wanted better looking checkout pages. Ideally, we wanted something that would not take buyers off the sales page to enter their information. We'd seen other carts that had nice looking popup forms that we liked, and we talked about moving platforms so we could have something similar.

Before we committed to making a big move like that though, we reached out to the support team at aMember, the shopping cart we use, and told them what we were looking for.

They were able to create a custom solution for us that didn't require us to change carts, and it only cost us around $200.

Here's the kicker though - we didn't actually end up using those forms. After we got them all set up and looking gorgeous, we tested them. To our surprise, they actually converted worse than the original checkout forms. Turns out, our customers didn't like to check out on the sales page. They preferred a separate form.

The lesson here for me was twofold:

First, that it's always worth looking for easier/cheaper solutions to a perceived problem before deciding to blow up the entire system and make a huge change.

The second lesson was probably more important: The functionality you think is an improvement, might not be after all.

Ok, last point I want to make if you are considering making a big platform switch, and that is to fully test the new software before you go public with it. In other words, test that new shopping cart for a few weeks before you take the time to move all your products. Test your new email application before you move your entire list. Test your new course platform before you move every single course over.

You might just find there's a deal-breaker hiding in there that you weren't aware of, and that makes moving not as appealing as you thought. You'll save yourself a lot of time and money by testing everything first.

Let's recap.

The big takeaway I hope you'll get from this episode is to recognize when changing platforms is the right move to make, and when it's just a distraction. You can know that by asking yourself three questions:

Question 1: Has your current platform changed terms or pricing in such a way that it's no longer a good choice for you. Or put another way, would you choose it again given the new pricing and/or terms?

Question 2: Does your existing software lack some functionality you need to grow your business? If there's something about your current platform that is definitely holding you back, then it might be time for a change. The trick is to be honest with yourself about whether it's really holding you back or not.

Question 3: Have you outgrown your existing solution? This one is easy to know. If you don't have room for more students or subscribers or courses, then it's worth looking into a new platform.

But that's not the end of the story. Those three questions give you a good starting point, but you also want to make sure you're not overlooking something about your existing platform before you go to all the trouble of changing. Remember, there is a high cost to make a change of this kind, and it's not just the monetary cost either. There's time and training and potentially lost sales involved, so if you can possibly find a workaround in your existing system, that's almost always the better option.

Make sure you fully understand the system you're using and all its capabilities. You want to know for sure that you didn't overlook something.

Talk with their support team to see if there's a workaround or maybe a customization option you can use to make your existing platform do what you need, instead of changing to a new one.

If those two options fail, and you're sure you need to make a change, always fully test any new platform before you commit to it.

No system is perfect, but the last thing you want to do is move from one that doesn't work for a small reason, into one that doesn't work for a big reason. When that happens you just end up paying that switching cost twice, and no one wants to do that!

As for me, I've finally settled on a to-do list app and system that works for me, and I'm feeling much more organized and less scattered than I have in the past, plus I'm no longer wasting time and mental energy switching things up and pretending like I'm getting work done.

That's it from me this week. If you have a friend or a colleague who needs to hear this episode, please send them to TinyCourseEmpire.com/85, and if you're enjoying the podcast, the best way to help us grow and get in front of more people is to leave a rating and review at Apple Podcasts or wherever you're listening.

Have a terrific day everyone, and I'll talk to you all again next week!

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