



WELCOME TO *THRIVE BY DESIGN* WITH TRACY MATTHEWS

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You are listening to Thrive by Design business marketing and lifestyle strategies for your jewelry brand to flourish and thrive. Let's get started.

Tracy: Hello, hello it's Tracy Matthews and I am so excited to be here today to talk a little bit more, introduce you a little bit more to our podcast. I'm here today with my cohort and co-founder of Flourish & Thrive Academy Robin Kramer and I'm so excited to have you here today Robin.

Robin: Tracy I'm so excited to be here woo-hoo.

Tracy: So Robin and I as I mentioned are the co-founders of Flourish & Thrive Academy and we're really excited to be here today and we know that our podcast is brand spanking new so we wanted to introduce ourselves first before we get started sort of into the nuts and bolts of teaching you everything you need to know about jewelry business and jewelry business education and giving you the tools to have the best jewelry business ever. The jewelry business of your dreams of course. So Robin do you think we should start by introducing ourselves first?

Robin: Tracy I think it would be great and why don't we start with you.

Tracy: Okay why not? So my name is Tracy Matthews. I've been designing jewelry for about twenty years. I started my first jewelry business shortly after I graduated from college. I fell into jewelry making really because I took a class in college and it was an elective so it was not something that I really had on my radar and it was interesting because I ended up taking this class, I was good at it, my teacher was like oh you're really good at this. You should think about starting a business or doing this for a living and I hadn't really thought about it until people started wanting to buy the pieces that I was wearing. That I had made in this jewelry class.

So I started to build some confidence. I started selling my jewelry on the side for many years while I was in retail sales and then





eventually in 1998 I launched my first jewelry brand called Tracy Matthews Designs and that was awesome. I sold in some of the best stores in the world. I was in about 350 stores internationally, and it was so exciting because I had always had this big dream when I started my business to get into stores like Sundance Catalog, Anthropology, Bloomingdale's, and ABC Home and I actually made that dream a reality which was very exciting. Another cool thing about it is that my pieces were worn by some of the most amazing celebrities like Charlize Theron, Halle Berry, and Orlando Bloom and a lot more. A lot of the American Idols were wearing it when they, the male American Idols were wearing it when they actually won the show which was pretty cool and the fact of the matter was is I started a business because I had a passion for design and I didn't really think through the business side of it before I just started.

You know I'm really determined. I'm really driven. So I was just like I [3:00] can figure this out as I go along which is great and like kudos to all of you who have a personality like mine who are just going to jump in and go for it, but unfortunately because I didn't set my business up the right way from the beginning that when my business started to scale and grow I started feeling the pressure internally and it caused a lot of problems for me down the road. So about year eight or nine in business I was feeling the struggle. I remember sitting in a meeting with my accountant and he told me to read a book called "The E-Myth Revisited" and I was looking at him like he was a crazy person. Robin's heard this story a few times. I was looking at him like he was a crazy person. I'm like I don't need a business book I've already grown this business blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. But even though I was close to a million dollars in sales I was really struggling and I was having a hard time paying my bills. I was having a hard time keeping up with growth and I couldn't really figure out why.

So my accountant, I'm sitting there with my accountant and my Chief Operations Officer who happened to be my sister at the time, and she's like I think you should read this book Tracy you really need to read this book. So we had a, my sister and I had a conversation after the accountant laughed and she's like I'm going to read it with you. The business is struggling. We need to kind of get to the root of the problem. So I read this book called "The E-Myth Revisited" and that book changed my life. I figured out why I





was having so many problems and the reason was that I started a job for myself basically. I didn't really start a business. I just had created a job because I wasn't approaching my business like a visionary.

So that was great that was a huge aha moment for me where I was like ding-a-ling, a-ling, a-ling. Light bulbs went off and I started to change the way my business was structured on the inside which made some really amazing short-term impact. But the economy crashed in 2008 and we know what happened then and unfortunately I was forced to close my business after a bunch of companies filed for bankruptcy on me and the debt that I had to incur was just too much. I had a choice to either keep it going or to close it and at this point I was in another meeting with a consultant and looking at them and we're just talking about the business and the future of the business and what I wanted to do. So my options were to work on it and save it or to shut it down and start over.

So I remember having a conversation with this consultant and I was sitting in a boring office in mid-town like a conference room in mid-town New York looking out on Penn Station and my consultant who's an amazing guy looks at me and says what is it that you love? And no one had ever asked me that before and I was just like what do you mean what is it that I love? What is it that you love? And I said well I love a lot of things. He's like no what is it that you love to do in business and I said I love designing and I love connecting with the clients. Those were my two things. **[6:00]** He's like what are you doing right now? I said managing people. He said well there seems to be a disconnect there Tracy and I said yes there is a huge disconnect.

So I was faced at this point, I was in business about ten years at this time. I was faced with a really tough decision to decide to keep my business open or close it and deal with the aftermath of closing a business which is not easy. It's funny because both choices were very challenging and I chose challenging choice number two which was to close the business and start over. This was in a really amazing time for me because I had this opportunity to really take a look inside myself and step back for a moment and re-evaluate what it is that I really loved and what I wanted to do. So I decided to start a new business with a different business





model. So I decided to get out of wholesale completely and what I ended up doing was going into the custom jewelry business. So now I design private custom commissions for clients who primarily are looking for engagement rings, wedding bands, and heirloom redesign.

There's a whole story behind that about why I got into the heirloom redesign as well but I'll save it for another day maybe. Anyway I felt a huge connection and passion for what I was doing and I knew I was in the right place plus I had the opportunity to take everything that I had learned from having a business that failed from spending the last three or four years of my business putting in structures, systems, and acting like a visionary and doing things the right way. To know how to build a business quickly. So something really awesome happened. I started over I remember my first sell that I had was two thousand dollars and I live in New York City so that was my only sell for the month. I was starting to get a little panicked. I was like how am I gonna survive in the city and be able to stay here with this jewelry business but I am motivated so I was like I'm going to hustle. So within eighteen months I had had my first thirty thousand dollar month in profits and sells. Just by implementing what I'd learned by staying motivated, staying on top of the sells, and keeping the business going and also delivering my clients the best possible service that I could.

So I had this idea. I had gotten involved in a group of entrepreneurs to start an online community for jewelry designers to teach them business skills. Now this was a totally new concept. There wasn't really anyone doing this. There were a lot of online websites who were out there to help EDC Crafters or people who just wanted to wholesale or very general products but there was nothing really specifically for jewelry designers and I always remember when I was just starting out asking my fellow, my peers or my fellow designers asking them questions about business. So we could chat about anything but when it came to asking for your hang tag manufacturer or where you got that specific chain no one would give you information which I thought was really [9:00] silly because and Robin I don't know if you agree to this because everyone uses the same suppliers anyway and where originality really comes in is in the design piece. It has nothing to do with the





materials that you're making it up with. It's really more about your talent as a designer. Would you agree?

Robin: I totally agree so.

Tracy: Sorry go ahead.

Robin: I was just going to say something that I like to say is a circle is a circle is a circle but a circle can be interpreted and designed in many different ways.

Tracy: That's so true. That is so true and we've seen that if you look at the expanse of jewelry range out there many people use circles in their designs so. Well with that being said I was really baffled why people were so tight lipped and no one was willing... I could talk to my friend who was a sweater designer. She would give me leads and contacts and names of store owners for just about everything. Anything I asked and you ask a fellow designer or a maker and they were like I can't give up my resources or anything because I'm going to lose my competitive edge and I never really understood that because if you're an original you're so going to be an original and people are going to want to buy your work and that's, that to me was the key to success as a designer.

So I had this idea to sort of break down those barriers and change the way the jewelry industry worked as far as business goes and we're gonna... I was talking with Robin and Robin's going to tell you a little bit more about her story momentarily. I was talking with Robin. We actually met at a jewelry trade show called "The Accessorie Circuit." We'll tell you a little bit more about that momentarily as well in 2006. We were having... she was in New York visiting and we were having a conversation about this idea for this community and she's like I love the idea so we're sitting in the middle of this Jazz club chatting about it and she's like we need to meet for coffee tomorrow. So we ended up meeting for coffee and Robin I'm just going to let you take over from here and tell a little bit more about your story.

Robin: Oh my gosh well should I finish telling everybody how we met?

Tracy: Yes.





Robin: So we met for coffee and as Tracy said we met at the ENK Accessorie Circuit show in 2006. It was January. It was my first trade show with Dogeared. I was the Director of Sales for Dogeared Jewels and Gifts and I was the first Director of Sales that they actually had hired which was really exciting because it was kind of like a clean slate. It was a company that had been in business for fourteen years. So I wasn't coming into a company that was brand spanking new but they were at status quo and so what was super exciting is that it allowed me to really grow the department. So the department of one quickly became a department I think there was eight of us or ten of us before I left but it was an exciting time because Dogeared was ready and I was able to help them grow their company over 800% in the gosh five years I was there. So it was kind of a wild ride.

To back up a little bit and give you a little history about me is that I studied retail management marketing and fashion merchandising in college and who knew I was going to actually continue in the fashion industry my whole career. But I did I've worked for Anne Taylor, Crate and Barrel. When I moved out to San Francisco I worked for Gap and then I ventured into working for Williams-Sonoma and then actually was hired, recruited back by Gap for their Old Navy Division and then left Gap or left the Old Navy Division and went and studied Yoga which Tracy and I both have in common.

Tracy: Mm-hmm (affirmative). This is true.

Robin: Yeah we're both Certified Yoga Instructors. Then I decided to get back into product because I love product and I worked for more handmade goods. I worked for Molly West Handbound Books and it brought me into the trade show world. [12:00] With doing trade shows I met amazing jewelry designers and leather good designers and I mean just you name it. It was incredible and I fell in love with jewelry and I loved, I just I met some of the most incredible people and I started doing consulting on the side while at Molly West Handbound Books and I was doing consulting for a few jewelry designers and low and behold I...Dogeared was looking for a Director of Sales. It was just all kind of devine timing and I was a big fan of their product. So when I left Dogeared because of my father had some health issues and it was a very hard decision for me but I was ready and I was ready to spend some more time





with my family but I was not ready to leave the industry by any means and as Tracy and I both said we met at the ENK Accessorie show in 2006.

I immediately loved Tracy. I thought what she was doing was amazing. I loved her product and I got to watch her business grow. It was just the coolest thing. So I got to see her success but I also got to see the pain of her having to close her business and I was so excited when she told me about her idea for Flourish & Thrive because I just thought it was such an amazing way to reach designers all over the world but designers who normally can't afford to hire consultants because as Tracy said we're both consulting and it's very financially challenging to hire consultants and they sometimes cost thousands of dollars a month and this was a way that we could provide amazing information and support and knowledge to designers of all levels. So when I heard her idea I was all over it. I was like where? How do we start? Where do we begin? And that's how [15:00] it kind of started gosh over three and a half years ago.

Tracy: So awesome and such an amazing ride. Okay I always love recapping our stories. It's super fun but now Robin should we talk about why we're so excited about business and teaching business and also about the jewelry industry?

Robin: We absolutely should.

Tracy: Okay so I want to hear from you what excites you about business and the jewelry industry right now.

Robin: You know Tracy I love helping people and I love helping designers. I am obsessed by product. If I can help a designer have a better business and as you know I'm kind of obsessed with business strategy.

Tracy: You are.

Robin: If I can do that that's my joy. Is helping designers really reach not only what they desire but really exceed what they even possibly could have imagined. Making it happen.

Tracy: I love it.





Robin: And Tracy what about you? What really excites you about business?

Tracy: I get really excited about seeing people get results. To me that is the most exciting thing. I think probably because I am an action oriented person and I am really results focused in the sense that it's so fun for me. One of my favorite things to do in any of my businesses I have two right now one is a jewelry design business and one is Flourish & Thrive Academy. Is to come up with creative ways to solve problems and figure out work-arounds to create a positive result. So I do this every day in my jewelry business whether it's thinking about how I need to design something so that it works with the stones that I have, whether it's thinking about maybe how to make a customer happy, or how we can provide a new product. Robin knows I, I mean almost to a fault I'm always coming up with ideas and creative solutions to offer.

So that's what really excites me about business is coming up with ideas but also coming up with ideas that help people get results and to see, to see designers really thriving. When I started my business as I mentioned earlier I was a total go-getter and that wasn't a problem to go out there and promote myself. I still did have that in the beginning a little bit of fear about rejection and people saying no to my work but at the same time I wanted it bad enough that I was willing to go after it. So when I see people who are willing to do the same and break through those fear barriers and get out of their heads and get out of that constant hamster wheel that the mind provides for us gets us going in a random direction telling us that we're not good enough or no one's going to want to buy our work.

It's really the most amazing thing for me because that's when growth and transformation happens and as Robin mentioned earlier we are both **[18:00]** Certified Yoga Instructors. So I've been on a path of personal growth not only in business but in my personal life for about twenty-five years and for me everything is connected so it doesn't matter if it's in your business, in your personal life, or in your spiritual life all aspects of your life are intertwined and if you can grow in business you're growing as a person and that to me is exciting.





Robin: Love it so true.

Tracy: So true and then I think also I didn't talk about this but why I'm so passionate about helping jewelry designers is obviously I am one but also something that I touched on earlier I think that there is... I like breaking down barriers and creating new standards and I'm really passionate about building this platform to sort of create a new way that the business of jewelry is approached because if Robin, if the two of us can help based on our experience I mean we have very different experience and come from very different sides of the business. Yours from a very positive angle like you growing a company and me from a different kind of angle like really being in it and having a business that failed. If people can learn from our wins and our challenges and our mistakes to me that is the best thing ever.

Robin: I totally agree and the other thing that I feel so passionate about Tracy is that jewelry is not, it's not your ordinary gift. It's not your ordinary product. There is so much more to jewelry than any other, other form of product out there in my opinion that it's, it can be passed down. It is an emotional, even much more of an emotional purchase than most other purchases. There's such a connection with design, with the person receiving it, with the person wearing it. It's such an a, it speaks to me so much and I love being able to help jewelry designers think outside the box of how they can sell it, how they can do what they want to do and sell their jewelry and get it out there on their raving fans and dream clients and sometimes as you and I both know when you're in it it's hard to see outside of it. Does that make sense?

Tracy: Absolutely. When you're in it it's really hard to see outside of it and it's so important. I know in my personal experience I was really resistant to this for way to long and in hindsight it was the biggest mistake I ever made. I was working in a vacuum for many many years. I didn't ask for help. I secretly was like, I feel like I was secretly hiding all these demons because I didn't know what to ask or who to turn to when I was questioning something. [21:00] So instead of dealing with it I did something that I would never recommend anyone to do but I kind of brushed it under the rug until the problem got so big that I was forced to deal with it. So if you learn anything even just listening to this first podcast do never operate in the vacuum. Get some outside feedback whether it's





from listening to this podcast or joining us over at Flourish & Thrive Academy or finding a community of peers or an accountability partner where you can bounce things off of or even maybe a one on one consultant one day if that's in your budget or something that you want to go after because having outside eyes can change everything for your business.

Robin: It couldn't be more true and I think that's, we should probably talk about what we believe.

Tracy: I agree. I was going to just transition into that because this is sort of such a great segway because Robin and I were chatting the other day and we're kind of working on like alright redefining our core values and what is it about this business? What are our core values and what do we want to bring out there and what are we really trying to create? And the main concept that kept surfacing was that community and collaboration over competition wins. So community and collaboration over competition wins and what we mean by that is that there's often this perception that being a designer or a maker you're in competition with your fellow designers and makers and Robin and I really don't believe that. We feel like if you collaborate with them, share ideas, get support, work with them for accountability that everyone wins and you are able to not end up competing with each other that there is enough to go around and everyone really starts to rise up. It's like all the people are supporting each other like the cream when you're skimming the cream off the milk and they rise to the top and everyone succeeds.

Robin: I think when you said that it brought to mind abundance and coming from a place of abundance rather than a place of scarcity is just so key too. The other thing that came to mind is that every successful person does not become successful by themselves so what you said about not working in a vacuum is really important and having community and collaboration and definitely over competition. I feel that everybody at their core wants to help and by really helping one another a community can take you leaps and bounds beyond your wildest dreams.

Tracy: So, so true. So true. So yeah this idea that there is enough to go around is just really the foundation and the basis of Flourish & Thrive Academy and why we're here on this podcast [\[24:00\]](#) to





support you so community and collaboration over competition. That is our mantra. Alright so we're going to wrap up in just a moment but we want to kind of talk about why we're here and why we decided to launch the podcast because we have tons of free content over on our website and we're teaching designers on a daily basis but we really wanted to be able to get our message out in a bigger way in a different kind of format. You know blog posts or video blogs and training series tend to be a little shorter but we wanted to be able... you know Robin and I love getting on our interactive webinars and teaching and be able to have the energy kind of flowing between us and while it may be just me at times on the podcast or it may just be Robin at times or we might be interviewing other people we wanted to really get our message out there in a bigger way. First and foremost to provide great information that you can use in your jewelry business every single day in fact today so Robin do you want to talk a little bit more about that?

Robin: Well one of the things that is super important even if it's just one take away that you can use it's going to, it can make a difference. I always think of the tortoise and the hare race.

Tracy: Yes.

Robin: And that the tortoise was slow and steady and slow and steady does win the race. I think there's definitely some times to be a little more fast but by doing one thing every day towards your business that is going to propel you forward is really important and we feel really strongly about that so we definitely want to be bringing you important content, important information that you can have take aways and it's about keeping you inspired and keeping you motivated too.

Tracy: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Well that... I want to talk a little bit about that because I think one of the things that's really important especially for creatives you know there's this idea that there's not enough to go around which we kind of addressed on earlier or maybe I had specific fears or feelings of I'm not good enough or not talented enough. Who would want to buy my work and I did a lot of work to overcome those. So I think our next objective here is to really be able to be here to aspire you to believe that you can achieve the business of your dreams and we also we want to also





mention that the business of my dreams is not the business of your dreams. So it's a business on your terms that you want to build. So every single designer or maker that we work with has different objectives. There are some that want to be multi-million dollar companies, grow a big brand, have a manufacturing team behind them. I guarantee that most of the people that we work with do not want that but there are some people who do but there's also people who want to be able to make a side income so that they can work part time and take care of their children and pick them up from school.

I personally [27:00] want to make a really good living so that I can travel the world. I don't have to work full time in my jewelry business. That I take on the clients that I want to. Only the ones that I want to work with and not the ones that I have to work with and to be able to do the things that I want to do or work remotely and visit my family in California for a month if I want to. Those are the reasons I am in the business of jewelry but also to provide an amazing beautiful piece of jewelry to my clients that inspires them every day. That develops a personal connection maybe a loved one or someone that was lost with the heirloom redesign specifically or to really capture a special moment in their life like an engagement or a wedding. I mean that's really my why and why I'm doing this so for all of you it's going to be very different. So our goal here is to inspire you to believe that you can have the business of your dreams which is going to be different for everyone so and then Robin you touched on this idea to motivate you to focus on areas of your business that are going to get you more sales and build traction in your business. Do you want to talk a little bit more about that because you are the sales guru.

Robin: Well for me when it comes down to it having your business there's so many aspects of your business and some of them are going to be not as fun as others and you want to stay motivated and excited about your business and how to do that? If it's taking a moment to say an affirmation or if it's taking a moment for getting some exercise or if it's being part of a group as we say community is such an incredible motivator. If it's taking a course. But to keep you motivated and focused on your areas because as a solopreneur, a designer and as Tracy said there's many different ways you can do and design and be in this industry. So there's not one set right way but doing what you love to do and a way to





keep you inspired and motivated and it's different for a lot of people but having a place where you can get those nuggets of hey I never thought of doing something this way or I never thought well maybe taking a break and listening to some great music and dancing around will refocus me or whatever it is.

What's wonderful about our community is that we get to share with you what's worked not only for us but for others in our community. So it's really important to keep that excitement and that focus going forward. That being said motivation also comes from taking care of oneself so it's not just about what you're doing in your business but it's also how are you taking care of you and I'm just going to share really quickly one of the things that I actually do because I get caught up in [30:00] work so much that I have a reminder on my calendar that goes off starting at 8:40 every morning that tells me to, the word faith comes up and for me that is a reminder to stand up, stretch, take a drink of water, take a big deep breath, and to have faith and it might sound a little silly but I do have to be reminded because I can get so ingrained and engrossed in my work that before I know it it's noon and I haven't stood up or taken a deep breath.

So whatever you do but those are little tricks that we're going to share with you and that they really make a difference in your day and it really makes a difference in your life because a lot of people say I need to find balance in my life with my work/life balance and I'm here to tell you that personally I don't think, I don't think there is a word such as balance where everything's always perfectly balanced. It's about learning how to ride the waves of life and some days are going to be really awesome and some days are going to be more challenging but the important thing is to keep moving forward. Keep that motivation to keep your inspiration and when you are feeling a little on the lower side that you have a place to go and get that boost of energy that is out there for you to help you move forward.

Tracy: Absolutely so true and I think the final thing Robin tell me if you agree is that we want people to have fun.

Robin: Oh my gosh absolutely. Fun.





Tracy: I remember when I had my wholesale business the last couple years were not fun and if what you're doing isn't fun get out fast because it should be fun no matter what. It doesn't mean that you're not going to face challenges but there should be a lot more fun than there is not fun. So we want to be here to help you have the most fun business that you've ever had. Jewelry business that is.

Robin: Yes agreed.

Tracy: Alrighty well thank you so much for listening to our introductory episode. For a new podcast we're super excited. So if you liked this podcast and you want to hear more make sure that you subscribe. We also would love to hear what you think about it so much sure that you rate the podcast and also review it. Thanks so much for joining us today and have a wonderful week everyone.

Robin: Bye everyone. Thank you.

