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## USING YOUR INNATE TALENTS TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL JEWELRY BUSINESS WITH DIANA HOUSE

### THRIVE BY DESIGN WITH TRACY MATTHEWS

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**You're listening to Thrive-By-Design business marketing and lifestyle strategies for your jewelry brand to flourish and thrive. Let's get started.**

Tracy:

Welcome to episode number 45 of the Thrive-By-Design podcast. I'm Tracy Matthews your host today and I'm so excited to be here as usual and today I'm really excited for this interview because I love networking and I love meeting people through solid connections. So a couple months ago, earlier this year I was at my Mastermind and working with my mentor, Ryan Levesque and I ended up meeting this guy named Dan Martell; super awesome guy, total connector. One of those guys where you're like oh wow he's just so genuine and super cool. So we ended up chatting a bunch at this survey final intensive that we were both attending and he was like you really need to meet my wife. She's great. I think you guys would really hit it off. He's totally setting up wife and his new friend date which I love people like that.

So I'm like sure yeah I'd love to connect with your wife and just chat and see how we can help each other. So we ended up having a Skype date about a month or two after I originally met Dan and I've since met him a few times at different networking events and his wife Renee was saying you really need to meet my friend Diana. I think you would have a lot to talk about. She started this jewelry company named Tiny Devotions and you've started two jewelry companies and you're mentoring designers I think that there is a lot of connection there and you should definitely talk. So I was like of course I'm up for it and I totally know who Tiny Devotions is as an avid yogini, avid reader of the Yoga Journal for many, many years. I used to see the Tiny Devotions ads all over the place.

So I was really curious so I got this connection and I had another Skype date with Diana a little bit later and it was really great to just listen to her story and I think you're really going to love it today. When I originally asked her to do this interview it was interesting because I was thinking we were going to talk all about business stuff because she's really business minded which I think is awesome for jewelry designers and what came out of that interview was a few things that were really unexpected and I'm really excited to share them with you and the key thing was really that I got out of this is really how to use or using your innate talents to run a successful jewelry company and she highlights that especially at the end of the





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interview so you want to listen to the entire show today because it's really, really a good one.

But I think [3:00] more than anything it's really about embracing who you actually are and what your skillset is and I think that that was such a great lesson that she was talking about how she was able to really regroup and grow her business even through hardship and some difficulties that she had by really embracing who she is as a business person and what her best talents are and you'd be surprised about what she's going to say because it's not actually making jewelry which is interesting because people who are in the jewelry business usually have a really strong passion for design but I don't want to spoil the interview so let's dive right into it. We're going to talk today about using your innate talents to run a successful jewelry business with Diana House.

Hello everyone. It's Tracy Matthews with the Thrive-By-Design podcast and I'm so excited for my guest today. Today I have Diana House and she is the CEO and Founder of Tiny Devotions and I'm super excited to have her because a lot of you who have been following me for a while know that I'm really into yoga and that I taught yoga for many, many years and I've watched Tiny Devotions actually grow over the years. I remember seeing them for the first time in the Yoga Journal probably back in the early 2000s and it's been fun to watch the company grow and I was recently introduced to Diana through a mutual friend which it's been super fun to connect. We ended up connecting just on a personal level and then we started talking about business and it just seemed like a total no brainer to have her on the show today. So Diana welcome. Thanks so much for being here.

Diana: Thank you so much Tracy and I really appreciate that

awesome introduction. I have kind of one caveat to add which is I'm actually not the CEO.

Tracy: Oh okay.

Diana: I'm definitely the Founder but we have a management team in place and I don't know if we'll kind of get into that in this interview.

Tracy: Sure.

Diana: But yeah I definitely don't consider myself the CEO of the company.

Tracy: Alright so I was wrong but thanks for clarifying that. That's perfect. I always just assume the Founder is the CEO but that doesn't always happen right.

Diana: That's a whole other podcast debate I think.





- Tracy: I know right. Totally. Alright so I want to start just with a formal introduction of you. Diana House is a lawyer turned entrepreneur who has started multiple companies including Tiny Devotions, Mala Beads and yoga inspired accessories, and Cole and Parker a men's' sock company which you have recently sold. Congratulations on that.
- Diana: Thanks so much.
- Tracy: Along with Ecommerce she is heavily involved in real estate and private financing. Okay so Diana I'm so excited to have you here as I mentioned. So before we dive into some of the question I have for you why don't you tell me a little bit more about your journey into the jewelry industry?
- Diana: Absolutely. So as you mentioned I'm a lawyer by trade and actually after finishing law school I went and lived in Bali for two months to recover kind of from the stress and hecticness of law school and in Bali I was actually participating in my second back to back yoga teacher training [6:00] and I was very lost and I had kind of no idea what I wanted to do with my life but I knew I didn't want to be a lawyer and I had received a set of Mala beads in Australia and the moment my hands hit them I did feel like there was something very special about them and on my list in Bali was to come back with a set of Mala Beads. As I could not have predicted at this yoga teacher training I decided to start making Mala beads with a friend of mine who was very much a creative director, creative artist type who happened to be there at the same time.
- Tracy: Super fun. That's such a cool story and I was in Bali a couple years ago; kind of like four or five years ago now and I did pick up some sandalwood beads to make into a Mala. So what a perfect place to start with the Mala beads right?
- Diana: Oh yeah Bali is so magical and mystical and I remember me and her name is Claire we had this amazing house that was surrounded by rice patties and we were just sitting on the floor with all these sacred materials and all these semi-precious gemstones and really that was the kind of foundation of Tiny Devotions and it just still is such a vivid memory in my head. I really think Bali was infused in the roots of this business.
- Tracy: That's so cool. I remember having lunch at some place called Café Organic or something in the middle of; literally it's all rice patties around it. There was nothing there. You have to either walk or take a motor bike. You can't drive. I can totally envision where you guys were hanging out.
- Diana: Oh it's so beautiful.
- Tracy: In general it's so awesome. So I'm curious because since I'm a yogi too and I love talking about yoga stuff and the yoga business and all that sort of jazz. Tell me a little bit more about





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your passion with yoga and sort of; I mean told me a little bit about how the jewelry part started but how did your yoga passion start?

Diana: So again it very much started in Australia. I had done yoga a few times.

Tracy: Yeah.

Diana: I'm from Canada originally. I had done yoga a little bit in the winter. Going to hot yoga to kind of warm up and stretch out but it was in Australia I actually had a basketball injury. I tore my ACL and the aftermath of the surgery actually affected my whole body and specifically my back and I started to have very chronic pain, very debilitating pain and that actually led me to really start going to do yoga for the physical and I was really into very intense yoga at the time I think it was Bikram Yoga. Which I don't really do that anymore and it helped so much with my knee and my back that within a few months of doing yoga I ended up running a team 50 kilometer race so it was 25 kilometers each and ended up doing a mini triathlon. So the yoga helped me so much [9:00] physically and then as this happens to many people I started to really kind of dive into the spiritual and the energetic and that's when I kind of decided to do my first yoga teacher training and to kind of really understand more about what was happening inside me and energetically been doing these poses.

Tracy: Right.

Diana: And these meditation practices.

Tracy: Oh it's so cool. I love hearing people's yoga journey just because yoga totally changed my life and influenced me in so many ways throughout my life so it's cool to hear yours. So thanks for sharing that so now on to the jewelry design piece. So you described yourself when we were talking in the pre-interview and in our couple of conversations that we've had over the past few weeks that you think of yourself as an accidental jewelry designer. Tell me more about what you mean here?

Diana: Yeah that's a great question and to be honest I don't even really consider myself a jewelry designer. So maybe I more meant like an accidental jewelry entrepreneur.

Tracy: Right.

Diana: Because as I mentioned when I started making Mala Beads I had actually never created anything with my hands before. I was in law school. I'm a very analytical person. I'm a very critical thinker and problem solver and when my friend Claire turned to me and said let's start making Mala Beads I really had no idea what she was talking about. I was like what do you





mean? I've never ever made anything before. So Claire had been importing things from Bali for years and years and years and again she's one of the most amazing artists ever. So she had kind of sourced different gemstones and things before so I remember we went around Bali one day and we were sourcing all these beautiful stones and whatnot and she was really the creative catalyst for me to actually sit down, use my hands, slow down my mind, and make something and it was a very meditative process and I think very healing after being so stuck in textbooks for so long.

So when I first started Tiny Devotions the first few months obviously it was just me, myself, and I and I was doing kind of all the creation and all the making and production and for the first few months this was just a really magical experience for me just because again it was so outside of what I had normally done and it was literally a meditation practice. As the company progressed though I realized making jewelry and making Mala beads wasn't my unique ability or my passion and it was actually the first thing I let go of as I hired other people into the company.

Tracy:

So that's so cool to hear because one of the things I mean obviously I'm a designer so I love designing and that's really what fuels my creativity but I also consider myself a designer and not a maker and even though I was trained in metalsmithing and I know how to make jewelry and I can make it if I [12:00] have too physically make it but that was one of the first things that I pulled myself out of as my business started to grow too. So for someone who's a one woman show can you tell me a little bit or who was a one woman show excuse me you're definitely not anymore but who was a one woman show how did you; so you pulled yourself out of the actual making of the pieces first then what were sort of the next steps in your evolution to start growing your business from a business perspective and where did you start focusing your attention at that point?

Diana:

For sure so I remember when we first chatted I kind of told you about my first December in Ecommerce.

Tracy:

Yeah.

Diana:

So I functioned without a website. Well we had a website but without a shopping cart website for several months and again this is kind of dating the business a bit. This is about five years ago when you could really do a lot with Facebook and at that point sorry we have our dog trying to come in here.

Tracy:

Oh we love dogs.

Diana:

Busting through the interview.

Tracy:

Oh good.





Diana: Hello Coconut. We're just at; I'm at my office here and our dog comes to work every day.

Tracy: Perfect.

Diana: And we call him the boss. So by the time I got the website with cart up I think it was probably six to eight months and that first month happened to be December which I would say most jewelry companies December and holiday as it is often referred to is its busiest time and that month, that December of I believe it was 2010 was the best and worst month of my life because on the one hand we had so many orders coming through. Again we literally went from having no cart to a cart. But it was also just me. So that really triggered when I woke up in January made me really evaluate how on earth was I going to be able to continue this in a sustainable way and the natural thing was and you brought up a good point. There is the design component and then there's the making production. And so at that point I wasn't even really considering the design portion but I was considering the making which again if you're listening and you're a creative designer; jewelry designer like really the jewelry is probably in the first one.

Tracy: Yeah.

Diana: Creating the design and so if you have the option for someone to do the making so that you can focus on doing again more of what you love which might be making more creative I think that's a really easy place to let go of without feeling that they won't be able to continue on because really you're hiring someone to replicate something that you've already created.

So again that was the easiest thing for me. Shortly after I think it was a few months later I realized that at the time marketing was really my passion and really the thing that I was best at within the business. So customer service and shipping logistics was taking up a lot of my time so that was kind of the natural place [15:00] that I went next and it was very easy to hire someone. I didn't hire employees at the beginning. I really hired contractors so for the Mala making it was a per piece arrangement. As well for the customer service I hired contractors on an hourly basis as needed which gave me a lot of flexibility because obviously like many entrepreneurs I was very scared of how on earth I was going to take on staff and be able to be able to pay for them and still have a profitable business.

So it was a very kind of gradual and kind of fluid next step and as I found that that worked I realized okay first I was taking up a lot of time training these people one on one and I was almost doing the shipping for them. And then I realized there must be a different way and there's a book that I recommend every business person read called "The E-Myth."





Tracy: Oh my gosh I'm so excited that you said that. It's my favorite book.

Diana: Yeah so E-Myth is the book that people told me to read for years that I avoided reading.

Tracy: Exactly me too.

Diana: And after I read it I was like oh this is so obvious. Why didn't I read this years before? So after reading E-Myth which the quick premise is is that most small businesses fail, most franchises are successful. What's the difference? And the difference as this book outlines is really systems and processes and one of the things it sounds really boring but when these kind of systems and processes empower you so much to be able to do the things that you love you really learn to love systems very quickly.

Tracy: Exactly.

Diana: So again if you're someone who loves design and does not want to be any shipping and logistics if you can create a system so for instance we have manuals for every role within our organization so our shipping person; our shipping administrator has a shipping and administrative manual so if they're sick, if they're away, if they don't end up working out very quickly someone else has a manual that outlines everything that needs to be done for that role. So that's kind of what my approach was after I realized that I was training multiple people over and over on the same functions.

Tracy: Okay I love that you said that. That you brought up the E-Myth when you said oh I read this book. I was like I hope she says the E-Myth. I was totally in the background getting so excited for this because that is the one thing that literally changed my life. I was probably about seven years in business at this point. I can't even believe I made it that long without. We had systems but they weren't very well documented and I think that was the problem. It's like we had a system for everything but it just wasn't written down so we still had to train people on how to do the system because it wasn't an effective system.

So when my accountant told me [18:00] you should read this book. I was totally resistant and then I read it and I was like duh. Why haven't I done this ages ago you know what I mean and I think a lot of small businesses that I know that I fell into this because I was really bootstrapping to grow my company that I didn't feel like I had the time or that I wanted someone else to create them for me but there's no one else who could create them because you have a special way that you want things done and I'm sure you do too Diana that you wanted things done and the only person who can really create it is the people who are running the company like you and your





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administrative staff or whoever was doing the actual job. You can't hire someone from the outside to come do it and that was my first solution trying to find someone to do that and it's not going to work if you do it that way so.

Diana: Well I know some people who have done that approach.

Tracy: Uh-huh.

Diana: Where they have found someone who is a systems and processes person. I'm just assuming that they would cost kind of quite a bit of money.

Tracy: Yeah.

Diana: The other option is yeah I don't personally create the systems. I have each person in their role.

Tracy: Yeah.

Diana: Document their systems, create their systems, and then we have certain people on the team who are really good at systems in general who kind of come and audit different role systems. So I mean again if someone is in a place where they have no staff right now, they're considering bringing on a part-time contractor it doesn't take that long to sit down and write out what the process is. Another way to do it as well which some people don't like the writing process. Is you can do quick iPhone videos.

Tracy: Yeah or screen shares too.

Diana: Totally. There's multiple ways of doing it. I don't think it matters about the how. More importantly that it's documented and it's updatable because this is not like a concrete this is the way it's going to be done forever. I find like with our manuals they're constantly being updated and each one of our staff part of their responsibility is making sure that each role has an updated manual.

Tracy: Awesome. I love it and I love that the conversation went that direction. I wasn't expecting that.

Diana: Manuals are so sexy. That's all I have to say.

Tracy: They are so hot. Totally. So I'm curious did you have any hardships or difficulties or challenges or setbacks during the growth phase of your business or the growth phases I should say because you've been kind of growing like gangbusters over the years and can you describe how that sort of made you step back and re-evaluate what you were doing to make change?





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Diana: For sure. I really think the whole journey has been very difficult. Even before starting Tiny Devotions. Tiny Devotions really started out of a place of applying for 150 jobs and not being able to find employment after having seven years of secondary education. So I mean I really think this business was birthed out of hardship and along the way; I remember even the first three months I was like how am I going to make [21:00] this possible. I was trying to source products from Indonesia and I was in Canada so really there was a lot of luck and a lot of kind of angels that helped me along the way.

Tracy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Diana: I had a friend in Bali, actually the same friend who I was making Mala beads with. She really helped me pull through with a key kind of supplier that really if I wasn't able to have that I don't know if it ever would have started. As I kind of went along there were challenges with staff members. I remember there was one staff member who was kind of working sort of full-timish and decided that she wanted to pursue another passion of hers and she just told me one day that she was going to go down to two days a week and we had just kind of taken the plunge of going from my home office to getting a real office and it was a very exciting time for the company and I remember I had to make the decision, the very tough decision of letting her go and she was someone who I thought was going to be with me forever.

Tracy: Yeah.

Diana: She was I think one of my first hires and I remember she was shocked and I was shocked when I told her you know what I need people who are 100% committed as we go into this space. So really most of the challenges have always been around staff whether it's having to let go of staff or I've had many kind of situations where dodgy things have happened with staff so I had a few kind of former staff members kind of copy the business; one being a bookkeeper which there were some legal things in process as well as other kind of former staff. So in those moments you kind of have to weigh how you want to proceed and very challenging both emotionally and just business wise. The toughest one that comes to mind was a few years into the business where we're starting to get an enormous amount of momentum. I hired on a bunch of people and I was like okay we're doing this. We're in the new space.

We started to create this culture of hustle and what I had identified was I said that I'm not a jewelry designer. I'm actually not a manager/operator. So that's why hence I say I'm not a CEO and I realized that and I decided I was going to hire someone on with those skills and I hired this very bright girl on and I was very nervous because again it was quite an expensive hire. I knew she was very intelligent but I was a little bit scared how this was going to go and I should've been





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scared because in about a two and a half week period everyone had either quit or we had to terminate the other people because so much drama had been created with this person who was brilliant but completely out of integrity and really created a mess in the organization.

So this was so bad [24:00] that I actually decided I needed to take a break from entrepreneurship and what I did was I literally started at zero. I hired one new person. She was an administrator and I hired her under kind of a framework that I had never hired for. Before I was really hiring people who I thought were really cool and maybe wanted to be friends with and this person I really hired specifically for the role and as that happened I decided to actually get a job and work in management at Lululemon with a boss. I had an amazing Regional Manager named Vanessa and learn how to manage people because I realized this company is not going to grow until I become; either I become a better manager/leader or I hire a strong manager/leader.

So finally I'm still not an amazing manager/leader. That's not my kind of unique ability. I'm way more the entrepreneur than anything and that's why we have a management team and we're always kind of growing and strengthening our management but yeah that was definitely the biggest challenge and it's still honestly a bit traumatic when I think back at that.

Tracy:

It's the worst. It's really hard when you are an entrepreneur or a creative and/or whatever in a lot of ways to step into that role of manager. It takes a lot of learning and education. I mean I'm always in the process of learning how to be a better leader and really growing that skill because like you said I'm more of an entrepreneur. It doesn't come naturally to me either. So it's tough and I love; I just want to highlight something that you said because this is totally a trap that I fell into and I know that some of the designers who are thinking about hiring people may possibly fall into this. Do not hire people that you like just because you like them and you think that they might be a good culture fit only. They have to be the right fit for the job and you have to do your due diligence in interviewing them the right way to make sure they have the right skillset and I think that was an important little point that you kind of pulled out when you hired your administrator that.

Diana:

Oh yeah and we have; a quick point to throw in there is we have a very challenging interview process now.

Tracy:

Best sign ever.

Diana:

It's like a seven step process. It involves a working interview. All of our current staff will tell you it is not easy to get a job at Tiny Devotions and that's because again everyone's heard the hire slowly.





- Tracy: Slow to hire; yes slow to hire.
- Diana: Don't hire quickly but you really have to do that. If not you're wasting so much time every time you make a mistake and again it's never going to be perfect. You can take them through a seven step process and still be wrong sometimes. And that's okay. I just think again you have to do everything you can to mitigate as many mistakes as you can on your side.
- Tracy: Yes. Slow to hire, quick to fire. I think we were saying it at the same time so I want to make sure that people heard that. I went through a stream [27:00] of thinking that I was doing the right kind of hiring. I went through a stream of people with both of my businesses that didn't work out for very long and this last hire that we did it took us like a month to hire her and we put her through the wringer. Same thing I don't know if it was seven steps but it was at least five but it required a working interview. She was paid for her part of the time and lots of hurdles to jump through and we found a shining star and it's totally worth it. It's a pain in the butt to set it up but it's totally worth it.
- Diana: Well and they have to interview you as well.
- Tracy: Exactly.
- Diana: Really for a great candidate to work out they need to spend enough time within the organization that they're really choosing the organization.
- Tracy: Exactly.
- Diana: One issue we have is because our brand is very Bohemian and Yoga-esque we have a lot of people who are personally into the Bohemian style and (27:55 unclear) who are applying and think that they are a great fit and we have to explain to them we're more like a tech startup in our culture and our hustle than this relaxed Bohemian environment. Of course people wear their cool yoga clothes and we do a lot of fun stuff but you always have to make sure people are really clear.
- Tracy: Yeah.
- Diana: Of what the job really is.
- Tracy: It's not a hippy vibe over there.
- Diana: We're hustling. We're working hard over here.
- Tracy: That's why you have an awesome business you know what I mean? So as we're wrapping up here what advice would you give designers and makers out there who want to take their businesses more seriously especially for the creative people for



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whom the businessy stuff doesn't come naturally because you mentioned that the business stuff is more natural to you. What are some things that you would recommend that they do?

Diana: For sure. The biggest thing is I think it's really important for people to be honest with themselves about who they are. So again E-Myth talks about this a little bit but there's like three categories of business people and I forget the terminology they use because Tony Robbins uses some other stuff.

Tracy: Yeah.

Diana: But essentially there's the artist/skilled producer, there's the manager/leader, and then there's the entrepreneur. Now if you are an artist/skilled producer according to Tony Robbins you're actually the person that has the ability to make the most money and be the most successful if you surround yourself with the other types of people that you need. So if you're someone who is just very naturally an artist/skilled producer I really don't think you need to pretend that you're a manager/leader and miraculously think that you're going to become the next Jack Welch from reading a few books. Obviously it doesn't hurt to try to develop some of those skills because again to be successful you need to have a basic (29:52 unclear) skill in that but what I would really do if I was the artist I would find and again caveat I'm not super pro [30:00] partnerships but I would find whether it's through a partnership or through a hiring arrangement or even through maybe it's a friend or family or spouse potentially to find that manager/leader and partner with them in some way.

So a friend of mine is a very successful jewelry designer and I won't say who it is but she's actually pretty strong at both the artist component and the manager/leader but as her organization grew she had to focus so much on the artist/skilled producer side that she ended up bringing her husband in to really be the manager/leader and it's unbelievable to see their growth trajectory and how they've done this.

Tracy: That's awesome. It's awesome.

Diana: I'm thinking yeah. It's all about awareness and then not trying to be someone you're not and finding what you need to compliment.

Tracy: Absolutely. Diana thank you so much for being here today. This was an awesome interview; super fun. Where can everyone find you if they want to go check out Tiny Devotions and you?

Diana: For sure. So you can find Tiny Devotions at [www.tinydevotions.com](http://www.tinydevotions.com) and Tracy as you know we're always looking to work with amazing designers.





- Tracy: Yep.
- Diana: To help us kind of build up future collections and then myself personally you can find me on [www.dianahouse.com](http://www.dianahouse.com) and that's house like a house you live in h-o-u-s-e and that links to kind of all my current projects that I have going on.
- Tracy: Awesome. Diana thank you so much for being here. Have an awesome day.
- Diana: Thanks so much Tracy.
- Tracy: Thank you so much for listening to the show today. This is Tracy Matthews signing off for now but before I go I would love to hear from you. So your ratings and reviews really help us create content and make the show even better week after week after week. So if you haven't done this already and you're new to the show or you've been listening but you haven't subscribed yet make sure that you subscribe to the podcast, make sure that you give us a rating and a review because we really want to hear from you guys. We love reading the reviews. We love seeing how you're rating us and we love that we're getting a lot of five stars which is really cool and really what we built Flourish and Thrive Academy on was all about community and collaboration over competition. So of course we love hearing from the community.
- Alright you guys thanks so much for listening today and I'm excited to bring you the next episode next week. Until then this is Tracy Matthews signing off for real.

