



HOW TO HIRE A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT FOR YOUR JEWELRY BUSINESS WITH NATHAN HIRSCH

THRIVE BY DESIGN WITH TRACY MATTHEWS

I would much hire an expert that brings something to the table with lots of experience so that I can focus on what I'm good at which is building those processes and talking to clients on that side of the company.

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 the Thrive by Design podcast, episode number 92. This is Tracy Mathews here, your chief visionary officer and host of the Thrive by Design podcast and Flourish and Thrive Academy. I'm thrilled to be here today and I have a very special interview for you, which is going to be super exciting. Now, a lot of you are asking and have been asking over the past couple of years, "Tracy, Tracy...", you've been saying things like this. "I am so busy, there are so much to do to grow a business, and I don't have time to get everything done, and I don't have time to focus on sales, the thing that's actually going to grow your business, because I'm so busy updating my website or writing a blog post or I'm not sending an e-mail out because I'm actually spending more time creating jewelry than I am actually marketing my work." So, I mean, you can insert any scenario basically in that phrase, but it usually starts with, "I'm so busy" or "how do you do it all", and my answer to you is that you need to sometimes get a little bit of help and hire out some of that lower level non-revenue generating activity that is really important for you to keep going, because you need to do it to run your business. Like you need to update your product descriptions, and you need to up late date new photos on your website when you launch a new collection, everyone knows that, but it's not necessary for you to do that, as chief visionary officer of your business necessarily.

So today I'm excited to have Nathan Hirsch on the show, and he is going to talk about how to hire a virtual assistant, or maybe even if you want to call it a remote worker, for your jewelry business, and we're going to talk a little bit about some of the things that you can hire for, and I'm really excited to have Nathan on the show today. We're also going to talk a little bit about his revolutionary company, and sort of what he's doing to sort of improve the experience for e-commerce business owners who are trying to really grow and scale their business and maximize their time. Because I don't know about you, but I got over uploading images to my website about ten years ago, and it's much better to be able to outsource something and say, "Hey, can you pop in there and at these five images?" As opposed to you having to do it yourself and trying to find the days. I know that any time that I'm responsible for that, it just doesn't happen. So Nathan is going to talk a little bit more about hiring virtual assistants, hiring remote workers, some of the things that you can hire for,





especially when you're on a really tight budget. You'd be surprised, it doesn't cost as much as you think. There's also often the opportunities that we have to outsource we don't think, about we just like say, "Oh, it'd be faster to do it myself." Really, if you had someone sort of working with you side by side, there's a lot of stuff that you can delegate, and certain budget for hiring someone else to do that stuff and make it work even if your business is super duper small.

If your business is not super duper small and you're doing well, then you should be doing this anyway. So I'm excited to talk to Nathan today, so we're going to dive right into the interview. So let's jump right in.

Tracy: Today have a very special guest on the show. I'm very, very excited to have not only an Amazon selling expert but an e-commerce expert here today to talk a little bit more about how he grew his e-commerce business. Today I have Nathan Hirsch here of freeup.com. Nathan, thank you so much for joining us on the show.

Nathan: Tracy, thanks so much for having me.

Tracy: Great. So Nathan and I were introduced through my friend Ben. I'm really, really excited to talk to Nathan today for a lot of reasons, and you know we've been running our Laying the Foundation course over the past eight weeks or so. A lot of questions have come up about how to kind of get it all down, how to really grow and scale your e-commerce store, and also, what are some of the first things to let go when you're a busy jewelry designer or maker and trying to focus on the most important things to grow your business. So I'm excited to have Nathan here because he's done a lot to scale and grow e-commerce businesses, and I'm excited to pick his brain today. So Nathan, should we just dive in?

Nathan: Yeah, let's do it.

Tracy: Okay, so before we get started, I'm going to see a quick bio of you so people get a little feel for who you are and then I'm excited to hear a little bit more about your journey. So Nathan Hirsch is a serial entrepreneur an expert in remote hiring and e-commerce. He's been selling online for over seven years and has sold well over 20 million dollars worth of product through his e-commerce business. He's now the co-founder and CEO of freeup.com, the hands on hiring marketplace connecting hundreds of online business owners through reliable, pre-vetted remote workers. Freeup is redefining how businesses are able to hire remote freelance online. He can be found on leading podcasts, such as Entrepreneur On Fire, Eventual Millionaire and many more speaking about online hiring tactics. He currently lives in Orlando, Florida. So I'm excited to have you here, and it's funny that you were on Entrepreneur On Fire, because I was on E On Fire a couple years ago. Love John Lee Dumas, he's amazing, right?





Nathan: Yeah, great guy. I had a lot of fun.

Tracy: Yeah, it's a fun podcast to be on. Cool thing about John is, he was just at my elite mastermind with Ryan Leveque a couple weeks ago, so it's fun to finally meet him in person after all these years.

Nathan: I bet. He sounds like a good guy to get a beer with.

Tracy: I love these small world things that happen when you start working with virtual teams. So everyone is really thinking or wants to know how to grow an e-commerce business, how to grow fast, how to kind of get the most out of their effort. So I know you have a lot to share about that, before we dive in to some of the questions that I have for you, I'd really love to hear a little bit more about your journey, how'd you get started in e-commerce, and I mean you've booked 20 million dollars in revenue. That's kind of crazy still. Let's hear all about that.

Nathan: Sure. So, I started off as a broke college kid, looking for some extra beer money on the side. I was 20, I had an internship with Firestone, working a bunch of retail hours, which made me realize I hated retail, and I started getting ripped off by the book store, because I would buy, like every college student you pay a lot of money up front and then when you go to sell the book back you get pennies on the dollar. So I really wanted a better way to do that. So I started buying my friends textbooks using that money that I made at Firestone, I would pay a little bit more than the book store, and then at the beginning of next semester I would sell it back and make a profit. So I started running that business and that kind of spiraled out of control to where I had lines on my college dorm room with people looking to sell me their books. You don't get very far selling books without learning about Amazon, because back then Amazon was mostly just books. It was just getting into new things. So that got my attention on Amazon, and I quickly became addicted to that. I love their marketplace, it was even a little bit simpler than it is now with all their metrics, but I quickly wanted a better way to make money. It was also a pain to just carry around books all day. So I wanted a business where I never had to touch any products. So I start I actually came up with the drop ship model without reading it anywhere, without knowing it was even called drop shipping until years later, but I had this idea that I could sell something that I didn't actually have from someone who had it and just make a margin on the markup and I could focus on sales and customer service and they could focus on building and shipping the product and be a win-win for everyone. So I took that idea and started to get away from books, finding different products on deal sites with different vendors, on different retail sites. And before I knew it that really went out of control, I was running a multi-million dollar store out of my college dorm room, doing everything from customer service to e-mails to whole listing products all day, and did the drop shipping business just has so many parts to it, more than really an FPA business. So I was doing all these things and I was making more money than I ever had in my life, and I was so excited. I went to my accountant, so he was like, "Alright, so when are you going to be hiring you first person?" I was like, "What are you





talking about? Like why would I ever do that? I love selling on Amazon, I get to make all the money, I don't have to pay anyone, I don't have to manage anyone." and he just laughed in my face. He was just like, "What are you doing? You're going to hire someone eventually." Do you ever what a day off? Are you never going to take a vacation the rest of your life?" And at some point you just can't grow. I took that advice very seriously. So the next week, I posted different jobs online, I tried to tell other people I was recruiting to hire some college kids, and I came across this guy in my business law class named Connor who sent me a Facebook message one day being like, "Hey, I'm looking for a job." Ended up hiring him without really knowing what I was doing, didn't have much of an interview process, it was more like, "Hey, you need a job? I need a worker to hire." And it ended up being one of my best hires. He still works with me eight years later. He's my business partner in both my Amazon store and freeeup.com. So I kind of started hiring at a young age. I hired my first person before I could legally drink. So from there, I made a lot of hires. I really wanted to expand my company, and I made some great hires like Connor, but I also made some not so good hires. Interviewing is fun when you've never done it before, because you're kind of on the other side of it, but it gets old really fast. You're just going through lots of applicants, lots of people wasting your time; you invest so much money in interviewing someone only to have them quit in the first week. It's very frustrating. So when I moved to Florida and I really pursued my Amazon business for the first time, I started hiring full time people, and I opened up an office and I had people on different salary, making 50 whatever thousand dollars a year, and I quickly realized that it just wasn't as efficient as I thought it was, because I was paying these people all this money, and dealing with payroll and HR, and all this stuff, but I was paying top dollar for everything and they were doing a lot of stuff that wasn't aligned with their pay grade. So a friend of mine told me about oDesk, which is called UpWorks now, and I became addicted to building an oDesk army, I called it, of assistance for my employees. So my employees instead of spending 30% of their time doing the small task, they would each have one to three assistants who would do all the small stuff, they just focus on high level stuff and that would really help to accelerate the company. So from there, I actually got rid of the office. It was one of my worst business decisions, because it just added overhead to a business I didn't need overhead for no reason, and I went back to hiring remote teams, and I learned so much about hiring throughout the years that I had the idea to start FreeeUp and make hiring easier, because I noticed that 50% of my time was just spent on HR and going through resumes and all that stuff, and I wanted to create a better way to hire, and we could talk a bit more about that later.

Tracy: Okay, cool. Yeah. I mean, I love your story. So this is like think classic like, college room, dorm room build a business. While you mention drop shipping, because there are a lot of companies that a lot of our designers work with, that actually are businesses that drop ship jewelry. So what were you drop shipping at the time? Was it books?





Nathan: No, it was baby products, home goods, and outdoor stuff.

Tracy: Oh, cool. Awesome.

Nathan: But I tried everything. That was more just trial and error for whatever reason I got really good at selling baby products, which made no sense.

Tracy: Like a college kid, no kid, "Okay, here's my baby products." That's cool.

Nathan: Pretty much.

Tracy: Okay, so you talked a lot about your journey in the hiring process and building an e-commerce business, and one of the things that really struck me was that in order to start really scaling and growing your business and getting to that next level, you had a lot of success on your own, but in order to get to the next level you really needed to you start to let go of some of those little pieces. I know a lot of the designers who are just starting out, they put up an Etsy store or a website, they expect people to just come and they're disappointed, and they're not focusing on the right things and spending all this time on some of that, maybe what I would like to call "grunt work" for lack of a better word, that's not moving the deal forward, instead of the things that are the most important. I'm curious, I have like multiple questions within this question, but what are some of the most important things, first and foremost, that you need to have a place on your e-commerce store, website in order to have it kind of grow quickly, first and foremost? Then have a follow-up question after that.

Nathan: Yeah, so the biggest thing is processes. Especially when you're dealing with the drop ship business, when you're dealing with e-commerce, it's a business that runs 24/7. It can get very disorganized quickly, so you really have to have those processes and systems in place. It can be as simple as, all right we answer all emails at 9 AM, noon and 7 PM instead of just constantly checking your emails and responding when emails come in, because that's just not productive. The same thing goes with your suppliers. If you're relying on other people that affect your business and affect your clients and your customers. You have to have that process down, especially in the drop ship model. So I need to know how long it takes for I manufactured to ship something. When they send a tracking number, I need to have someone that double checked it and make sure it actually arrives, so there's just no room for error. I came with processes that grow as your business grows, that are expandable, that don't just work now, but they won't work and four months, that's really the key. Once you kind of have those processes down, and then you can hire good people to follow your SOP and run those processes.

Tracy: Okay, cool, yeah. We love talking about processed and systems, designers hate talking about that because that's not creative, but it





really does help you grow your business. You can set up or create some sort of, what we like to say, is like setting up certain times in your day or certain times of, or days of the week that you're focusing on specific things in order to... We call it different things, but sometimes like time chunking, or breaking things down into simple tasks so that they can move forward. E-commerce, it's beyond like Amazon, like we don't have tons of Amazon sellers here, a lot of the designers have their own websites or an Etsy store. I'm sort of thinking like, what are some other things that they need to have, like maybe on their website or have in place in order to really scale their business? Besides systems and processes, obviously. To sort of get that traffic they get things converging on their site.

Nathan: Yeah, in terms of what to get on their site, it's very much unique to what you're trying to do and who you're trying to target. There's really two ways to grow your business while hiring. Do the way where you come up with the processes and systems and you focus all your time on sales and marketing, no matter what you're doing, it's really got to be focused towards that. Anything that's not that should really be outsourced, should really be dealt with someone else. Whether it's customer emails or calling manufacturers or handling returns, even sales when you're going out, like finding new manufacturers, doing that research and contact. I spend a lot of time outsourcing. So that's one way. That way you can spend your time doing research and doing trial and error on what works and what doesn't work and how to grow your company. Then the other way, and you mention this is as designers like designing, find out what party or company you really like doing, or that you're really good at, and focus on that and hire other people to do things that you don't want to do, or that you're not good at. So that's when you're hiring more at advanced level. You might hire an expert to come in for an hour or two, something that a lot of our clients do, and just audit your business. Be like, "Hey, have you ever thought about going in this direction?" Or, "Hey, this marketing is all wrong; this is where you have to change." Blah, blah, and kind of either point you in the right direction or give you different options, or if you have the budget, really handle that part of the business so that you don't have to. I mean I have an internal team on Freeeup that builds me hundreds of hours a week, but they do all the things that I can't do. I'm pretty confident that if I spend the next six months learning Google Ad Words, I could probably become pretty good at it, but it's just not a good use of my time. I'd much rather hire an expert that already knows it, that brings something to table with a lot of experience, so I can focus on what I'm good at, which is building those processes and talking to clients on that side of the company.

Tracy: Yeah, you know it's interesting that you say that, because a lot of designers are focused, are trying to put up Facebook ads, or like figure out a Facebook strategy. They're putting up an ad, or they're just blindly promoting a post without like understanding how to actually do it, and it takes a lot of time to like really understand how the audiences work, and how to build those audiences, and so they spend all this time doing it takes so much time when they can just hire someone to actually set up for them, would take them a fraction of





the time, and probably get them better results. There's a little bit of an upfront investment, but at the end of the day.

Nathan: The base thing is valuing time. You want to value your time, you want to value your clients and your customers' time, you want to value your workers and your employees' time. Part of valuing your time is making sure that you're spending on the right things that you're very... You have those processes down, you have those systems down, so everything runs officially, but you're also focusing on the right parts your company.

Tracy: Exactly. Focusing on the right parts of your company. So we have an entire course called Multiplier Profits that we talk about this stuff. I always find it so interesting because for me, when I teach in Multiplier Profits, was one of the most important things for me to grow my... I mean not just e-commerce business, but pretty much any business that you're trying to grow, whether it's brick and mortar, or if you're just selling wholesale to stores, or any type of jewelry business, or business in general. You need to have a standard way of doing things in place, and need to understand the financials and be able to sort of take off your plate the things that you're not good at, or the things that you don't love, so that you can create space for someone else to do it, so that your business can actually scale. I had a designer in our community really struggling with writing product descriptions, and I was kind of like, "Why don't you just hire a writer to do it?" She was like so bottlenecked with it. She was like trying to get her web store up and running and launch this new spring collection, and she was getting all caught up on the product descriptions when she probably could have hired someone for a fraction of the amount of time, money trade off that she actually spent on it. Someone else could have come in, who loves writing, who loves writing about products, and could have like whipped those up in like no time, and her store would have been up and running in much faster.

Nathan: Exactly. It's not really about just taking everything off your plate and outsourcing everything, especially at the beginning, that just doesn't work. But as a business owner, there's just so much your business you could be doing. A lot of business owners are even ignoring some parts of the business that they should be working on, but it's about picking and choosing where to focus your time and growing gradually, too. Because I mean, even when I started my marketing, for example, I started with cold calling and I got a system process, I'm with that and cold emailing. Then I started Facebook ads back when I finally had a budget for that, and I had a person for that. It's like, "Okay, that's going well. We've increased the billable hours. Alright, now let's move onto Google ads." And I'd hire an expert for that. So you don't have to just go in all at once and hire everyone, you just want to hire things that you need as you can focus your time on certain things, and add as you grow bigger.

Tracy: You know, it is so interesting that you say that. I mean this is that you explained it really well. It's like, master one thing, figure out how it works best for you, and now and get that off your plate and move on





to the next. Like, don't take everything all at once, don't do everything at once because it's going to make you crazy.

Nathan: There's also some trial and error involved too. I'm a big fan of trial and error. I hate having people tell me like there's one way to do something because the way to run your business is not the way to run mine. A lot of times you never know unless you try, so if I set like a small budget for Facebook ads and Google ads and maybe I hire some people for cold e-mailing, so I know how much that's going to cost me, probably all three are going to have the exact same success rate. So I'm going to try to see where it's going and adjust accordingly and add hours, and remove hours, and a lot of times people that spend so much planning and they're like, "Oh, we're going to do all of this. Let's execute this huge plan." Six months later that plan looks nothing like it originally was. So I'm a big fan of the trial and error approach.

Tracy: That's awesome. I love that too, because I mean no one there's no one way to do something, it's your way, and the most efficient way, and then you're always sort of tweaking and making that way better. Right?

Nathan: Yeah, I mean that's really what it's about. Even your processes that you set in place, you need to spend time to go back and audit them and fix them and see what new people you need to add to the team, or if there's any inefficiencies that you need to remove them from the team. You really just have to grow and go back. It's kind of cool that we're talking in the third month of the first quarter, but that's really the time that I go back through my entire company, start to bottom, audit everything, you have performance reviews with workers, go through the processes and try to improve them and really set yourself up to be organized for the rest of the year.

Tracy: Absolutely, absolutely. Okay. So we've talked a lot about getting organized, creating some processes in your business, potentially maybe outsourcing some of the things that you don't like to do, but then there comes this, we briefly touched on it earlier, there comes this idea that we've got to figure out a way to like actually invest in this. So lot of designers are starting out, they might want to you hire someone like part-time, or just couple hours a week, but they're on, like they're kind of bootstrapping their business. So what is the best way to budget for hiring an outsourced worker when someone's trying to you start on a budget?

Nathan: So you really have to create a monthly and weekly budget. It's not worth it for you, it's not worth it for the worker for you to hire someone and run out of money in two weeks and fire them. I mean hiring is an investment. It needs to be something that can last. So if you're hiring someone and your mentality is "if they don't produce in two weeks and I have to let them go" you're probably not ready to hire someone yet. You really have to give them more time; you really have to make it more of a longer commitment, and huge budget accordingly. Like we said before, what's right for your business isn't





right for mine. You really have to find out what makes sense, but you also really want to think of are you focusing, where are you focusing your time, and what small tasks that you can take off your plate is going to help free up that time. Make a list of everything you do from easiest to hardest, and start chipping away at the easiest stuff even if it's just an hour or two every day. I can't tell you how awesome it is to have the first hour or two every day with the VA to just get organized and get you caught up for the day. That just makes the rest your day so much more productive, and then you can add hours as you grow. So maybe you go from two to three, and then three to four, and it's only going to help you get more organized and focused on the important things.

Tracy: Absolutely, absolutely. And focusing on the most important things is how your business starts to grow. So some of this hiring takes time, you know? You were talking about these crazy vetting processes and all the work that you had to put in in the beginning, and I've hired teams before, and I have a team right now, so I can completely understand it's hard to find good people if you don't put them through proper hiring process. But let's say you really want to get started right away and you don't have a lot of time to vet people through an entire, what I like to call, hiring hurdle. Do you have any suggestions, or hiring tips for designers, so that they don't waste time trying to do this, or hiring the wrong people?

Nathan: Yeah, I mean, that's why I really created Free Up to begin with. Because, there's all these job boards with lots of different people, and the whole process of going through applicants and even setting up interview, multiple rounds of interviews, and then once you decide to make the hire, like on-boarding them, and training them, it takes up a lot of time. So I wanted Free Up to be that way, where instead of doing all of that, we get hundreds of applicants a week for you, we go through them, we vet them, we put them through multiple rounds of interviews, we even have communication test because, I don't care how talented you are, if you can't communicate with me, that's never going to work out. So my solution to that is the company I created, Free Up, where you can become a client for free, not get locked in with no minimums, and whenever you need a worker, you request one, and you're essentially getting a worker from the top 1% of remote workers that have already been vetted. I haven't found a good solution besides that. I mean, I spend lots of time on UpWorks and Online PH, and all those different places. No matter what I do, no matter what the reviews are, and the feedback in the profile, you never know unless you interview them, and you never really know after that until you hire and work with them. So, it is a very long process that it's tough to create a solution for.

Tracy: Alright. So you talked a lot about outsourcing and external hiring. What's the word that you used to call? I always say "outsourcing", but that's a different word.

Nathan: I just call them remote workers.





Tracy: Oh, remote workers. That's a much better word than outsourcing. So remote workers, so there are a lot of different types of things that you can hire force. Tell us a little bit more about Free Up and the kind of services you offer, or the type of remote workers you help match up people with.

Nathan: Yeah, so we offer workers both U.S. and non-U.S. From \$5 to \$50 an hour, we're about 40% U.S., 40% Philippines and 20% scattered throughout the world. We really offer everything from customer service and data entry, to content writers, to graphic designers, to people that can build Etsy and Shopify sites. So we really have all different levels from lower level people that have experience, but you can train to do your processes and systems to experts or specialists that can come in and do something at a high level with no training, that you might not be able to do.

Tracy: Okay, that's amazing. So you mentioned before the call that you wanted to offer something really special to our audience. So why don't you share a little bit about that?

Nathan: Yes. So everyone that signs up through Tracy's link that she'll provide in the show notes gets \$1 off their first worker forever. I mention it's free to sign up, there's no monthly fees, you only pay for the hours worked, and you can hire a worker for 40 hours a week long term, or you can hire worker for an hour a week, or an hour a month. It's totally up to you.

Tracy: Awesome. So thank you so much for that, because I know that when you're starting out it's always awesome to get a little bit of a deal when you're testing something, and you want to get the help and dollar off its great offer. So thank you so much for that. You guys can check that out over at www.flourishthriveacademy.com/freeup. I'm going to have the link in the show notes, but Free Up is spelled F-R-E-E-E up. So www.flourishthriveacademy.com/freeup. Alright you guys, thank you so much for listening today. Nathan, thanks for being here and for the wealth of information.

Nathan: Thank you, Tracy.

Tracy: Alright, my dears thank you so much for listening to the show today. Wasn't that an awesome interview? So, as I mentioned, you can check out Free Up by going to www.flourishthriveacademy.com/freeup, that's www.flourishthriveacademy.com/freeup, and take Nathan up on this amazing offer to get \$1 off your first worker for life, and it's just a really amazing value. So I hope you'll check it out. I know that I am, I'm going to be hiring some of Nathan's workers, and I'm very excited for it. And just remember, as the chief visionary officer of your business, it's very, very important for you to be thinking like the chief visionary officer, and not like an employee working in your business. You really need to be thinking about strategy, need to be focused on the highest leverage tasks that are really going to be bringing revenue and building your brand into your business, and maybe it's time for





you to start delegating some of the stuff that is not necessary for you to necessarily actually do. I think I said necessary twice in that sentence, but we'll let it slide, whatever. Anyway, I hope you'll check out what Nathan's offering, head on over to www.flourishthriveacademy.com/freeeup. Of course, all the things we mention on the show will also be in linked in the show notes over at www.flourishthriveacademy.com/episode92. Alright you guys, this is Tracy Matthews signing off of the Thrive by Design podcast. Take care and let your jewelry business fly. I hope you guys are really considering taking some of the stuff off your plate and making the most of your business. Alright, talk to you soon!

