



Visionary Series: How to Focus on What Really Matters in Your Business

THRIVE BY DESIGN WITH TRACY MATTHEWS

It's really about being able to show up and be of service to the people in the best way possible. If you get to a point where you can't do that anymore, it's time to make a tough decision.

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 109. This is actually the first, next week it's going to say it's the first in a series of Visionary Theories, but this is the real first one. I decided to move a few episodes around so that we could start this series early. Today, I've really wanted to talk about how to handle difficult decisions in your business, because at any given point we have to handle super tough decisions. Things that maybe break our heart or keep us awake at night like the things that are eating us up inside that maybe we know is the right move for our business but we're either terrified, or there's going to be some other repercussion for actually making that decision.

I've wanted to discuss this today because I think at any phase in business like we're all going to have to face these types of difficult decisions. What we want to do is to be able to show up in our business like a visionary, be able to handle the situation like a rock star, and move through it with love and grace and positive resolution for all parties involved.

These are just these difficult situations with people. It could be difficult situations maybe difficult choices you have to make as far as cutting things back, or making an investment. There's a lot of difficult types of decisions that you might be making. Oh gosh, I don't even know where to start here because this is such a good conversation.

Before I dive in and start going into the nuts and bolts of what I want to talk about today, I'm going to take a word from our sponsor and our sponsor today is Whatify. Whatify is an amazing platform for all of you at C sellers out there. Whatify was founded by a professor, a designer and an MBA all driven by the





ideas that data analytics should be used not only by big companies but by everyone helping to reach their audience.

Here's what Whatify does. It is an AB split testing platform that allows you to test different images to see what your customers are actually going to respond to you better, aka increase your sales. This AB splits testing platform has proven to increase sales up to 10% or more. It's pretty awesome.

AB splits testing has been used by huge companies like Google and Amazon and Netflix, and we use AB splits testing over here at Flourish & Thrive because we want to know what you guys respond to you better to you not in everything but in some things. It's a really awesome way to increase your sales, so if you're an Etsy seller and you're struggling to get the same kind of reach that you used to, or you just want to grow your sales I should say definitely check this out.

Whatify's offered a really generous free trial so you could head on over to your flourishthriveacademy.com/whatify, that's flourishthriveacademy.com/whatify to find out more about what this platform can do for your Etsy business.

All right, let's dive back into the episode. Today is all about how to handle difficult things. I'm going to be honest with you guys this year has been a really tough year for my jewelry business and I like to be authentic here, I don't like to sugarcoat things too much. It's been tough for an interesting reason, I've been super busy. I have one of the busiest springs that I've had in a long time, but the problem was is that I was encountering a lot of problems with my manufacturing for some reason.

I had switched over to some new people, I've been using some of my tried-and-true manufacturers, and for some reason there was like consistent communication problems getting the pieces done and my customer service with my clients. Because of that, I had to remake I think two pieces of jewelry, which I have never had to do before and that's really disappointing that's not a way that I shop my business. I also have some customers who were less than happy with my service because I hadn't set proper expectations for them.

This year has been a huge learning experience for me on how to be a better visionary for my jewelry business and a better visionary for Flourish & Thrive. I wanted to share with you some of the things that I uncovered when having to deal with some of these situations. The good news is that I turn all the situations





around and made the customers happy, I did lose a little money in the process by trying to deliver something in a way that wasn't ideally the most profitable for my business, but at the end of the day I find it a win-win because I learned so much about how to up level.

And because of everything that happened, I'm making some changes in my team, I'm hiring an executive assistant because I've finally broken down and realized that I can't do it all by myself anymore and I need some help. I'm really just one of those people who wants to consistently and constantly evolve and grow. If you're someone like me who has that visionary mindset, who's always on a growth path for their business they like to learn from their mistakes and if you want to know how to really handle the tough stuff that comes up because it always comes up from disappointed customers to having to make tough calls on shipping and order to a store and all that stuff, to just dealing with like the day-to-day financials and actually hiring people.

There's so many ways that you might have to encounter difficult decisions. This episode is for you today guys, so hang tight. We're going to talk about some fun things and I'm going to talk about some difficult things that we've had to do here at Flourish & Thrive over the last couple of years, and sort of with the outcome and some of the results of what's happened.

Recently, a couple of weeks ago we announced that we were closing our free Facebook group. I'm still a little bit teary eyed about it because it was a very disheartening decision for me because we started the group about a year and a half ago, we hadn't had a free Facebook group ever. We only had a Facebook group for our graduates and for when we were running a live course.

One of the things that happens though with me as the leader of our company is, I have so many ideas and I also want to make everyone happy. I'm just that kind of person and so I'm very directive, so I tell people what I think and I like move them forward, but I have a hard time cutting things off when it's time to cut them off.

For many months, the JBI was growing at a pretty significant rate but what we'd realize is we weren't getting really the types of people that we wanted in that group. We had some really amazing people in that group like the core of





Flourish & Thrive Academy, incredible designers who were connecting lots of our grads, lots of other people. It was seriously an amazing group.

What we realize is that the amount of time that we were spending dealing with all the spammers, all the people who weren't really jewelry designers who were just going to go in that group and do junkie stuff was overtaking our ability to be able to give value in the group. That's not something we ever want to do here.

We do have our main focus which is our Diamond Insiders, it's our membership community, which we really are super focused on that community helping them grow their business and getting to the next level and creating this intimate community of people who are willing to share and grow, and really give actionable feedback to each other. It's really built on that idea of community and collaboration over competition.

We had to make this tough call, what do we do with the group? We decided we didn't actually close it we archive the group so that people could no longer comment but they could still access the material and it's heartbreaking. We've got a lot of pushback. People were really mad at us, they were really disappointed in our decision to do it, and I understand why they were disappointed and it was hard.

We didn't come to it easily but our team is overwhelmed because we are trying to get like a great service to the people who are actually paying us to help be their partners in business and we're here dealing with riffraff over in a free Facebook group that was just sparked as an idea a while back. I'm so grateful for it, it has been amazing but we decided to archive the group. It was hard like how to deal with really mad people, people are probably still mad at us for doing that.

What I do know from the history of being in business is that any time I've ever had to make a tough decision like this, and this is not been the first time, there have been many tough decisions that I've had to made even with Flourish & Thrive Academy, and that Rob and I have had to make together. What I do know is that once the decision is made, something really big opens up on the other side. Because what ends up happening, we're really focused on what's not going right and all this difficult stuff that we have to handle is we end up taking all of





our creative energy, all that creative juice, and focusing on something that is sucking us dry.

I'm not saying that happened with the JBI, but like just these difficult situations that happen in business. I don't know if you guys have ever had a really PO'd customer e-mailing you and you don't know what to do and you did nothing wrong but you're trying to make it right and how hard that's hard and how like you might deliberate and stress over it because they're demanding something that maybe you don't really think is in the budget or that you have the right of way.

At the end of the day, it's really about being able to show up and be of service to the people and in the best way possible. If you get to a point where you can't do that anymore it's time to make a tough decision. This is what visionaries do. This is one of the first in a series of the visionaries series, I'm not 100% sure how many are going to be in the series, but it's to start of something really new for me, because as I've been growing as a person as I've been growing as a mentor here it Flourish & Thrive.

As I've been growing as a business owner and entrepreneur, I've been really passionate about stepping into my role as visionary for the company. I read a great book, which I mentioned on the podcast for next week because I've watched these podcast episodes together. I read a great book this year called Rocket Fuel by a man named Gino Wickman, and I would highly recommend all of his business books because they're amazing. Traction and Rocket Fuel are two of my favorite books ever, and they're really great books to help you grow your business and be an amazing business owner, or entrepreneur, or however you identify yourself.

During this whole process of like really learning stepping the role of visionary after reading this book, I realized that all this time when I would be so frustrated with myself because I'm super creative and I'm an idea person and I drive my teams crazy all the time because I'm always throwing something new at them, or changing my mind because I don't want to hurt someone's feelings is that this is what I am good at as a visionary in the sense that I get to focus on the creativity, I get to focus on the ideas, I get to focus on big picture vision for what





I want for my life, in front of the business, in front of my teammate mates, and for everyone who I'm supporting and growing.

When you're up leveling to that next step you go, often times go through a really rough patch where you might want to like shut it down, or move in a new direction, or throw in the towel. Has anyone ever felt that? I would love to know. If you are listening to this and you're on our podcast blog posts, I would love for you to comment there or you can leave a comment on iTunes in the rating section if you'd like as well. Hopefully you'll give us a good rating.

I would just be really curious to know because sometimes that point when it's the tightest and the most crucial we're facing these really tough decisions is becomes the biggest platform for growth and your ability to step into the role as the leader of your company.

Over the past couple years, I've really been passionate about leadership and passionate about owning the fact that I am a visionary and then my talents are not an implementation or integration, and that I have a hard time a lot of times with follow through it and completing tasks through to completion.

This is true, I know I talk about this all the time because it's something I've struggled with my entire career, and probably my entire life. I'm really good at getting things done because I've learned how to work with what I'm good at. This is what I want to start to help you see and even when you're dealing with these tough decisions and tough opportunities in your life that this is a really great time to step up.

I just want to bring this back to when we decided to archive the JBI group. Kirsten [Shell 00:12:12] one of our members and she's been in our Diamond Insiders for a long time, which is our membership community, super amazing. Kirsten said something, "I've been following Flourish & Thrive for many, many years, and one of the things that Tracy has always told us and Robin too, is that we shouldn't be spending so much time in these Facebook groups or distracted doing things that aren't really focused on growing our business, that we should be focused on working on our business and not dealing with like all these other things that are distractions from keeping us focused on business growth."

I was just so grateful that she said that because like the point that I wanted to serve Flourish & Thrive with from the very beginning was this idea built on the





book called The E-Myth was great entrepreneurs, great business owners focused on their business not in their business. That's where this growth as a visionary starts to come. I'm in a cycle of back to this difficult decision thing because sometimes we're going to face with difficult decisions. Maybe it's disappointing a customer or maybe it's doing something that might be a challenge financially for you to win a customer over and keep that customer loyal for life.

I have a couple of steps that I use when I'm trying to evaluate what to do in any given situation. I have to say like I'm a really quick action taker but I'm not very quick at cutting the cord. In fact, I could tell you that a lot of relationships, this is like total personal story, but a lot of like love relationships in my life have gone on way too long because I've had a hard time ending it, because sometimes it's hard to make a decision that's difficult even though you know in your heart of heart that it's probably best for you.

The first step that I like to always talk about is to step back and evaluate the pros and cons of the situation. You've probably heard about this before, but think about it like if you continue in the way that you continue or you don't handle the difficult situation, what are the pros of doing that and then what are the cons? List them all out.

Then I want you to think about those things like which ones outweigh the other? Because like oftentimes, we can turn some of those cons into pros if we learn how to understand what the upside of some of those things are, because oftentimes there is a benefit there or the cons just lead us to the next step of what we need to see.

This is my favorite one and I think the most important the second step of this is to really check in with how you feel about your current situation, so something is stressing you out or you can't get control over it, or it makes you really anxious, or feel terrible, or if it's keeping you up at night. This week I've had to make some tough decisions and I've been up at night all night and I haven't slept very well because I worry about things. I'm one of those worrier people.

Check in with how it makes you feel like if it's causing you worry and anxiety and it feels heavy and it's not a heck, yes. Then take a look at that because there's a reason why and it's time to probably move on or make that difficult





decision. Then you also want to check in with how it's affecting your business currently. When we started having a discussion about archiving the JBI and the Team FDA, one of the things that we were talking about within this was about the fact that the engagement and the conversations weren't really going in like the Flourish & Thrive way.

I know that sounds kind of cheesy but people were putting like a spam post and they didn't know how to use the group and they were just asking, they weren't really asking questions, they were just posting stuff. That's never been the purpose of the group. The purpose of the group was always to have get peer support around specific business questions.

When the water start to get muddied and people aren't responding to what you do as the owners of the foundation of the group, then you know you have to step back like, "Why is this happening? Is there something I can change about it?" The effect on our business was taking people away from doing their jobs really well and focusing on that parts of their job that really mattered, it was taking our team members away from our actual customer support for our paying members.

It took energy away from me focusing on creating podcasts and content, which has pushed back some really amazing things that we're bringing here because my energy was diverted. That's just one way to put it. Then when I think of a situation that I was having with a customer earlier this year, I had this great customer spent thousands of dollars with me but he was very difficult to work with because he had unrealistic expectations of what was supposed to happen, and he needed a lot of hand-holding. That's just not how I operate.

I realized at that point that I really needed a customer service person to step in, but I wasn't in a position because of all the other things that were going on to hire an executive assistant at that time. I'm making some changes based on what happened, and because of the way it made me feel, it made me feel terrible, this guy have invested a lot of money in jewelry with me. I wasn't able to deliver the service that he expected.

I think in some respects the expectation was his expectations were a little bit demanding and not what I'm used to working with, I used to working with a little bit more solid people but he was still a client of mine and I wanted to over





deliver. We ended the arrangement in a way that probably felt good to both of us, and when I take a look back how that was affecting my business it was really sucking my creativity dry, and was having a really hard time like designing and getting pieces out to other clients because it was diverting my focus because it was taking so much time.

I handled it. We moved on and it's disappointing I probably won't ever work with again. It was a great revenue source but I think we both felt good about the solution. He's happy, I'm happy, and we move on. The other evaluating factor, this is sort of set four on how to handle difficult situations in your business is to ask yourself this question, if I make this decision will it make space for me to grow to reach another goal?

Because sometimes we have to close one door to move on to the next level of our business, and sometimes that might be painful. I remember this is a really great example, I think it's a great example. I don't know if you'll think it's a great example. I started my business out as being a jewelry designer back in the '90s, I was a trained metalsmith but I was working out of my apartment and it was a small San Francisco apartment. I was married my husband was there, we were living in 500 square feet, and there wasn't really space for me to set up a torch and make jewelry, and I didn't have a studio space at the time.

I decided to, because I wanted to get my jewelry to market quickly to design a line of [inaudible 00:18:14] jewelry I had already been doing it sort of on the side in my home, before I kind of officially started my business and that was the first thing I was going to bring to market. I sold out for many years, I started building a great following with that, I got into some great stores with that collection including even Twist Online, which is an amazing store in Portland, Oregon. I have a huge online presence.

I decided that I was no longer happy designing, I was getting bored, my design started to suck. I mean I thought they sucked, I don't think other people thought they sucked but I thought it's sucked. I'm just not inspired anymore, I knew I wanted to transition and it was time for me to take that next step and it was a tough one.

I started designing some pieces that incorporated metal, and I have to be honest with you, the first time I launched the collection to market it wasn't totally





well-received. People didn't love it and it also wasn't something that ... I mean we sold some of it. I'm not saying that people didn't love it like it was good jewelry, but people weren't used to seeing that for me, maybe that's a better way to put it. They didn't know what to expect or they didn't know what to ... If it was going to actually work for their store.

I alienated a lot of customers in my business for a while. For some reason inside, I knew that that was the right step because that was going to be the transition or the gateway to get me to this other collection of jewelry that actually ended up selling really well and really put my name on the map as a designer. It was a really tough choice because my sales dipped for a while, I was having a hard time getting new people to get onboard but I stayed really committed to the process.

I stayed really committed to my ideas, I stayed really committed to the fact that this was going to create a lot of space for me to step into the designer that I wanted to be, step into that visionary role of the designer that I wanted to be.

Then the next thing part of this process is when it involves people this is step number five, make sure that you have thoughtful heartfelt conversations and a lot of given times there's going to be people involved and it's going to be really hard to communicate because there might be backstory, there might be things that you want to say that are negative, but it's really important to stay focus on the positive and to share your truth in what this means to you and what this next step means to you.

I remember I used to not do this very well, I had a designer who worked for me for probably four years. In fact, I even moved her to New York and she was my head design for many, many years. She was a great designer, she had what I would call like the not, but not the best work habits. She was a smoker and if you're listening and you know who I'm talking about I just want to say I love you.

She was a smoker at the time and would take a lot of smoke breaks, and this was right around the time when cellphones started come into play with text messaging. My workers had their cellphones at their desk all the time. Nowadays, if I had a production team I would not allow cellphones at anyone's





desk, at any given time because if they're spending their time focusing on texting their friends back they're not working.

I don't mind if they're checking their phone on their breaks or whatever, but cellphone put away. One of the things that I know I had to have difficult conversations with her about this behavior at any given point. There came a time when it became really tough at one point and we decided to part ways, she quit full disclosure, she decided that the business wasn't working for me wasn't right for her anymore and I totally respect that, she wanted to move on to do other things. She went and worked for a competitive designer for a short period of time, and I remember it being really tough.

I was really disappointed in the fact I've invested so much time and energy into mentoring someone who we ended up having a falling out for a short period of time. We've since made amends she came back but the point of this, I want to tell you this because I didn't handle it very well, I could have handled it a lot better and ask more questions about why she felt the way that she did. If we decided to still part which I think was actually the best thing for both of us at that time.

Maybe we could have done it a little bit more gracefully, and in a way that worked for both of us a little bit better. The interesting thing about that whole scenario is that I'm still in touch with her to this day. She's a really amazing person, super talented, super creative, and she came back to me many years later and she said, "I didn't realize how could I have until I left," and started working for other people because I was a really flexible boss and I like independent workers. I don't like micromanaging. I'm a visionary. I'm not an integrator, so I like for people that take what they want and run with it and just get the job done.

That's my working style and that's what I like. I always start to lose my creativity when I have to micromanage. That's sort of a little bit of a tangent, but also just an example of the fact that we might not always do it the right way the first time but the point is to continue to grow and to try to heal those relationships and have thoughtful conversations with people when you have an opportunity.





Then also it's important to be authentic and real and understand that if there is another human on the other side of a difficult decision or a conversation they're coming in with their own baggage and own set of concerns as well just as you are. It's important to be able to see both sides. When I was handling this customer earlier in the year, I honestly like sat in his shoes, and I talk with my coach about this a lot. I said, "You know what, I can see how he's disappointed in the way I've treated him. I don't think that I did anything wrong and I don't think that I did give him because poor customer service but I feel I can see how he could view it that way. Because he had an expectation of something else and that was my fault for not setting proper expectations of what to expect."

This is sort of my visionary episode today, it's sort of a little bit higher level, higher level conversations but I think it's really important because at any given time we're going to have to be dealing with difficult decisions whether it be, "Do I keep my business open, keep moving towards things, even though this is a struggle? Do I take on more debt so that I can launch a collection?" That's a difficult decision, not that that's going to happen for everyone but I'm just saying, "Do I hire this person or let this person go? Is this really the right fit?"

All these types of decisions are going to be coming up over and over again. As I mentioned many times throughout this episode, a lot of times like this has to do with dealing with your customers as well. Think it through. Think of how you're going to handle it. Remember oftentimes there's another human on the other side with feelings and a perspective and a point of view. Try to see both sides even though you're feeling like panicked or in anxiety.

I really encourage you that instead of reacting in the moment step back a little bit and just be thoughtful about what to do next but don't wait too long to make your decision, because I promise you on the other side something really big is going to happen. As I mentioned, this is the first series of a series of podcasts that I'm doing all about stepping into your role, becoming the visionary of your company and building a visionary brands.

I'm really excited because in a few weeks I'm going to be announcing something. An opportunity for you to work with me and be a part of a visionary circle of like-minded designers who are really trying to get to that next stage of business. This is not for necessarily for people just starting out, it's for people who've been in business for a while who are really wanted to up level, be better leaders,





be better business owners, be more profitable, really grow their companies and get to that next level so that they can reach their dreams and their goals and have sustainable profitable jewelry businesses.

All right you guys, if you're interested in hearing more about that head on over to www.Flourishthriveacademy.com/episode109 and you'll have links to everything that I mentioned here, and make sure you check out our sponsor, Whatify and if you're interested in learning more about the visionary circle head on over to www.Flourishthriveacademy.com/episode108 and you can just click on the link on the podcast blog post to just get on the list when we make the announcement.

It's going to be really fun. I'm really excited about it, so we'll see what's next in store. All right, visionaries, thanks so much for listening today. I hope that you have an awesome week and that your holiday season is off to a great kickstart. We're really excited because Flourish & Thrive live is happening here in just two weeks. What up? I hope you'll join us and I hope you are getting excited about your business and I hope you're flourishing and thriving. All right, take care till next time.

