



# Why Selling at Shows Might be Killing Your Business

THRIVE BY DESIGN WITH TRACY MATTHEWS

*"Your energy as the chief visionary officer of your company is to be working on growing your business, working on your business, and not in it."*

**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 Thrive by Design, I have Episode 216 today and I'm excited, per usual, because it is Friday as I'm recording it. I'm heading out of town for the weekend and I'm excited to take a couple days off. Anyway, today's show is a good one. I should probably introduce myself, maybe that would be a good place to start. I'm [Tracy Matthews](#), I'm the Chief Visionary Officer over at [Flourish and Thrive Academy](#), Flourish and Thrive Academy that is, and also the CVO, chief visionary officer of [Creatives Rule the World](#) and I'm excited to be here today talking about something that a lot of makers, a lot of designers, a lot of brands, a lot of people in the jewelry industry are doing and it could be killing your business, and I'm just going to be straight up with you.

Because I've been working with a lot of struggling jewelry preneurs, and I call them struggling jewelry preneurs because... A struggling jewelry preneur is someone who I think of as like me, like when I was just starting out, I was ambitious, I wanted to grow my business, I really wanted to scale, but I was making a lot of mistakes that were stunting my growth and preventing me from actually getting to a place where I could grow as quickly as I wanted to.

I realize the difference between that and eventually like transitioning into what I call in demand designer, and that's someone who eventually became, and you can too. We've helped so many designers become this, and these are designers who are really grounded because they know exactly what they're supposed to be doing in their business to grow it.

They grow their businesses every single year, when problems come up they don't freak out, they know how to handle them and they are really good at not only rolling with the punches in business, but continuing to



keep their business is growing and continuing to have this desire and demand for their products because of what they're actually dealing.

I'm super excited about today's episode because it's all about why selling at shows might be killing your business. Now I have a resource that I delivered last week on last week's episode, [Episode 215](#) it was what to do, ditch or delegate in order to scale your sales. So this resource that I have with this I think will be really valuable for all of you who are trying to grow your sales and who are trying to grow your business, and it's called [In Demand Jewelry Designer's Guide to Scaling Your Sales](#). And even if you're not a jewelry designer, this will help you.

So discover what helps ambitious designers who are in demand scale their sales, this is what this is all about. I have to tell you, it's not luck or good fortune, it's all about knowing what to do, knowing what to ditch and knowing what to delegate to get to six figures and beyond and keep growing your business once you're at that level.

This is all kind of culminating in a masterclass that I'm doing on September 26th. We're not going to really announce it till next week, but I would like for you to mark your calendars, because September 26th at 3 PM Eastern I'm going to be rocking your world with some scaling advice so that you can grow your sales and get your business to the next level. Because if you want to be someone that has a fully leveraged business that is not reliant on you being there all the time to make money...

And here's what I want to say about this. Imagine if you broke your arm and you couldn't make jewelry anymore, what would happen to your business? Imagine if you got really sick. Let's say you got cancer or something like that, like one of our students [Ana Maria](#) did, and you had to stop doing all your shows. Or what if you had a family emergency and you weren't able to avoid missing a big sales opportunity and there was no way that anyone but you could actually do it.

I'm saying all these things because I remember building a business back in the day, it was so hard, especially in the beginning and as we started to grow for me to leave because I wasn't setting myself up for success. I felt like I had to keep doing all these shows, trade shows and in person shows and I was spending all my weekends doing this, and one of the reasons why I left Nordstrom in the first place where I was working through college and then after college was because I wanted my weekends back.



I loved working in fashion, I loved working in sales, but I was tired of working nights and weekends and having, basically building someone else's business. I wanted to build my own business.

I ended up creating a job for myself instead of creating a business. When I created a job, here's how you know that it's a job. If you stop working you stop making money. If you're developing a business it means that if you stop working you'll still have money coming in, because you set it up the right way. And businesses generate revenue on an ongoing basis, and they don't require the founder to be involved in the day to day all the time in order to keep growing. Now, don't feel bad if you're not there yet, there's no reason to. This is really about a process of discovery and understanding how you can remove yourself too so that you can continue to do what you love, continue to feel passionate about building your jewelry business and continue growing.

I remember [Jen Leasia](#) who was one of our SOS students, she's a graduate now, last year, like her number one goal was to remove herself from all the shows that she's doing. She was exhausted, she was doing 35 shows a year, and there's only like 32 weekends in a year. Can you imagine how many weekends are taken up by these shows? She would go to the weekend show and then spend all week making inventory for the next show, and then go to a show and then spend all week making inventory, it was like this vicious cycle, so she could never focus on growing her business.

Well with our help she went to you from doing 35 shows a year to reducing that I think to about 20 in one year and kept her income consistent and the same and was able to replace the missed income from the shows, but also save time, energy and money so that she's fully leveraged. What that has allowed her to do is to grow her business and focus on building additional revenue streams. So she's making consistent sales now on her online website by sending out emails and doing the things that we told her to do. And she picked up, since the beginning of the year, she would have four wholesale accounts, and it's up to 12.

She's about to negotiate a really awesome deal with a really great vendor that is going to really explode her sales, and I'm really happy for her. But the only way that she would have been able to increase her online sales and to get all these new wholesale accounts would be if she started



working on her business instead of working in it so much. It's hard to pull yourself out when you're busy doing all the things and all the shows.

My [episode last week](#) really is combining like ideas and philosophies with what I'm going to be talking about this week, because at the end of the day I don't want you to have to rely on one way to make money in your jewelry business. Unless it's only selling online. If it's only that, we can work with you if you have your website set up for conversions and you're building innovative product and you know how to reach your customers, I think that's a fully leveraged way to sell jewelry.

As long as you're not only doing it on Etsy. But sometimes when you're doing, like putting all your eggs in a wholesale basket or putting all your eggs in a show basket like Jen was, it becomes really hard when you change your mind and want to maybe pivot in a new direction. In particular the show route, if you're someone who is doing, if the majority of your income is reliant on these in person shows you need to start, not necessarily reducing the number of shows if you don't need to, but start leveraging the shows and turning those into opportunities to follow up with people later and to sell to people online, and actually to train your customers buy from you online.

I mentioned Ana Maria earlier, we've been working with her for a very long time, and she's now one of our SOS coaches. She took our [Laying the Foundation](#) program the first time we offered it, she's been through basically everything that we do here, and she's doing so well in her business. She works on her business alone. She has maybe a virtual assistant and maybe some outsource professional services help, like a bookkeeper and stuff like that. But she does all the shows and does all of her online sales and wholesale accounts and all those things alone. I actually don't think she's even wholesaling quite frankly, but in the beginning the way she was building her business on these shows. She would do shows every single weekend in the Baton Rouge, Louisiana area, New Orleans, like all in the south where she's living right now and she got breast cancer one year. When she found out that she had breast cancer she had to stop doing her shows because in order to recover she couldn't lift the booths and she was going through chemo and all those things and she wasn't able to, she didn't have the strength to actually keep doing it. She had to replace her income some way, shape or form.



She followed our Desire Brand method and ended at literally replacing her income by selling jewelry online. And instead of having just like trickles of orders here and there on her website, she went from like maybe average order size of like \$60 to \$350, getting consistent sales daily, and that saved her business while she was sick. You have to find the leverage, because if you have to be somewhere in person, if something happens you're setting yourself up for tragedy. Potentially, maybe that's a wrong word. Anyway.

I don't want to discount how powerful shows can be. Because [Deirdre Donnelly](#), and I'm trying to get her on the show, she's one of our SOS students right now, just did a in person show and she is working really hard to leverage those show sales into customers on her website, and she has a lot of follow up to do, which is great, but she left that show with \$50,000 in sales. So I'm not discounting that potential and the possibility and the excitement about being able to sell at a show, because they can be really good, but you have to identify a couple of things.

So what I want to do is to walk you through some of the pros and the cons and the best ways to leverage your show so that you are building a business that is actually working for you, that is highly leveraged, that is something that you can continue to build on over and over again.

So let's start with the pros. The obvious pro of doing it in person show is that you get immediate sales. If the foot traffic is right and you are confident about talking about your jewelry, you can make great sales like Deirdre did or like Ana Maria has for many years, and like Jen was doing even with her shows. But she realized that I think the difference between Ana Maria and Deirdre is that Jen was just doing shows to do the shows, and wasn't really paying attention to the ROI, the return on investment each of those shows would have. So this is an important piece of the puzzle.

The other thing that you get when you do shows and you can get your product in front of people is you can test new ideas and get immediate feedback on designs. So you can tell what people gravitate towards with what they buy. I heard something interesting from one of our students, I can't remember who it was now, but she said that the pieces that sell at those in person shows are not the things that actually sell on her website or wholesale. And so sometimes that's also good information too, to know



what to create for shows if you're getting feedback on your products right away.

I think shows are great way to come face to face with people and build your audience and your email list. Because if they actually know you that considers you a warm lead and you can use those shows to really build other areas of your business. This goes the same for trade shows, you can use that to build your client list or your potential prospects list, because you'll get a lot of people walking by who aren't ready to buy yet. I think if you have a great product and you're able to get that product in front of the people who most want your work, then this is an opportunity for you to keep selling more jewelry, but in different ways, not just when you're standing there in front of a booth in front of someone.

There's other pros, it's like being able to interact with people and being able to, I mean going to say practice selling, that practice, like talking about your work and selling your products, so that's always a good training. Right? When we're able to do that.

The cons. First of all, typically shows have a pretty big investment. I've heard occasionally of shows that maybe are \$200 to join, but typically they're maybe \$1000, \$1500, and in order to really get the proper return on investment from doing a show like that, you want to be getting like five to ten times your booth fees. That was at least what we would shoot for when we were doing trade shows, me and my team.

The reason why you want that investment is because there's a lot of hidden costs. First of all, it costs you money to travel oftentimes and to stay overnight if the show's out of town. There's your time investment, you might have to hire someone to help you run the booth, so these are all extra expenses that sometimes don't really pay off for the amount of work that you're doing.

The second con to this, and I spoke a little bit about this with Jen, is the prep time, because you need to build up so much inventory up front that may or may not sell. That takes a lot of time, it takes you away from some of the other things that are actually going to build your business. That kind of sucks, right? So that prep time to get ready for a show can sometimes be all consuming, and I'm sure those of you who do shows might be shaking your head right now and saying, "Yes Tracy, I totally get it." Doing shows is very time consuming and it's exhausting.



The next piece of this is that there's, as I mentioned before, you need to prep for inventory and preparing for the show, but you also need to have inventory in hand, and if that inventory doesn't sell, that's like cash that's just sitting in made goods that you don't necessarily want a ton of on hand, unless you have a way to get rid of it or offload it. So when I would do shows, we had inventory backed up for when I was selling wholesale because we would stock items that would sell often, in particular our hoops or the components that we used to make different types of jewelry. We would be able to whip up for a show pretty quickly, but that inventory, it's not just like we were making it specifically for the show, it's stuff that could have been used other places as well.

Another con to doing in person shows, and this is trade shows or craft shows, any of them, it's that it's reliant on the weather sometimes, and foot traffic, and/or foot traffic. So if you're doing outside events, so many designers have said, "My best show this weekend was rained out and it was sideways raining." and if it sucks, like they're not going to just... You don't have an opportunity to repeat, and what are you going to do if you're like counting on getting like \$5000 in sales over a weekend or more, and there's no one there buying? Or you're standing outside in inclement weather, it's terrible. It's really reliant on foot traffic, and I think the interesting thing is that you don't have control over the kind of foot traffic that's walking a show like that, whereas you would have a lot more control over trying to drive traffic to your website or something, which is much more leveraged.

Also, I think shows are time stuff, like if you're standing there all day, breaking up, setting down, it's back breaking work, it takes a lot of time, takes a lot of energy to kind of tie in together. And I wrote here "hard freaking work", because it is really hard. I would be exhausted. I'm 48 now, like I remember being so exhausted after the show in my late 30's even. Can't even imagine doing them now. And for those of you who are maybe a little bit more experienced and mature than I am even now and you're doing shows, like that might be like really seriously back breaking work and exhausting.

You have to really decide like is this worth the energy that I'm putting into it, is this worth the time, is this worth the physical toll. Shows are physically tolling, like carting around your booth and setting things up and doing



construction. I mean I remember when we would even sign up for a trade show, putting together the displays, painting the walls, like all the things that you had to do, it's just a lot of work.

And then this is a con of mine because like if I was bored I would be like walking around buying other people's stuff. While I love supporting small businesses, I probably bought a lot of things I really didn't need. It's one of those things that if you don't need it, if you're just buying it because you're bored, like is that really a smart investment? Anyway, that's sort of a side bar, ignore that one. But I do remember doing trade shows and I sort of miss it, because I would be able to buy sometimes for my friends at wholesale prices, like products at wholesale prices, and I do miss that. But at the end of the day, shows are hard.

And then also we wanted to talk about the best way to leverage their shows. So if you're going to continue doing shows, first of all, you need to build your contacts in your email list, you have to be doing. If you're doing trade shows, you want to make sure that if someone asked for a line sheet or information that you're getting their information too, so you can follow up. Maybe you're not going to add them to an email list, but in the very least this is an opportunity for you to follow up individually with them.

Another way to do this, so building your email list is important, building your contact list, maximize the show dollars by following up after the show. So a lot of times you're going to collect all these contacts, but are you following up with them? So one great strategy is to send out emails to people, if this is a direct to consumer show, and say like, "Hey, thank you for joining my email list, I'm really excited, just for show people I have this really special event or a gift with purchase or gift for those of you who joined me at the show, and the only way you can get it is by going to my website and buying it online or getting it online." whatever it might be. That's a great way to get, like to start training people to actually buy from you and get on your website, and it does take a lot of work.

That actually plays into point number three, which is about driving people to purchase on your website and using that as leverage. Another way to leverage even building your email list in creating excitement to engage customers is to have contests or giveaways at the show. I think something fun you could do is to actually create virtual events while you're at in person shout and sell online, like do a tandem event. Sell online and sell in person at the same time.





Then most important is following up with the customers who actually bought from you at the show to offer them something special as well. There's a couple different touch points that you have here, it mostly requires follow up. I think the most important takeaway here is that if you're going to do in person shows, number one, be selective on the shows that you're doing. Here's a reason why. If your time and energy is only spent preparing for shows because that's all you have and the only bandwidth you have, then your business is going to be really held bent on being able to operate and generate revenue without you. I think what we all want is we want money coming into our business without us having to actually take actions all the time. So if you can use what you're doing in person to leverage your online sales, this can become really powerful.

Shows take a lot of time and upfront investment, and you kind of almost are like leaving your business up to chance if you don't leverage them the right way. You're going to be wasting a lot of time on revenue streams that might not get you to your goals faster. So this is one of the reasons why I think that shows in general can be killing your sales, besides the fact of them being really expensive and taking all your time and being back breaking work and really hard to do, is this the best way to really grow your business?

And maybe the answer is yes, but I think based on most of the feedback that I get from so many designers, it's not always. Be selective about the shows that you do and replace that income, that maybe if you think you're going to have a little drop with building your online sales and building an omni-channel presence. This is a really, really important if you want to be able to survive the next economic downturn or the next economic corruption, or whatever they're calling it here in the United States

If you want to fully leverage your business, having to be somewhere in person is not leverage. I just want to drive this home. It's not a leveraged way to sell. Leverage is when you can remove yourself from the equation and your staff can be selling without you. Also, sure, you can continue doing shows and hire someone to do the shows for if you can train them to sell, and that's another way to keep participating in shows to make it work for you. But your energy as the chief visionary officer of your company is to be working on growing your business, working on your business and not in it. Working on your business and not in it, and that's exactly what our little free resource is all about.



I want to make sure that we're kind of like driving this home. Shows might be killing your business if you are not leveraging them the right way, and if all your time is spent at shows. If you're exhausted, feeling overwhelmed, like not getting a return on investment from all the shows that you're doing, then you need to start thinking about it different way and work on reaching your goals from the chief visionary officer's perspective.

In fact, I'm really excited because next week we have I think 60 or 70 SOS students coming to town to our SOS retreat here in New York City, and we're going to be talking about how to fully leverage yourself in your business so that you are being your most creative, so that you're working in your zone of genius most of the time, and so that you're building your business and reaching your sales and growth goals, and it's going to be amazing.

If you haven't heard about #, I'd love for you to check it out. We have a wait list going right now. You can check out what the program is all about at [FlourishThriveAcademy.com/SOS](https://FlourishThriveAcademy.com/SOS). This is a perfect program for anyone who wants to stop working so hard while making more money. If you are interested in growing your online sales, that is the modality that we're using. But the program's so much more than just about selling online or selling wholesale or selling any way. It is a sales accelerator program that we work with you basically from the ground up to set the right structures in your business, so that you can actually be prepared and successful when it's time to grow.

Because if you can't do that, you will always be in the same place, and if you aren't crossing the six figure mark, you're in a place where you are going to be struggling for a very long time, especially with a jury business, because even if you wanted to replace your full time job income or if you wanted to get to a place where you're able to scale your business and pay yourself \$100,000 or more, selling \$100,000 in jewelry even isn't going to get you there. You need to get that critical mass, multiple hundreds of thousands if you want to get to that place. So you decide on the goals for yourself, you make it happen and you be the boss of your business.

That's why I'm giving you this great resource. The In Demand Jewelry Designer's Guide to Scale Your Sales and Grow Your Business. Let's do this. So you can grab that over at [FlourishThriveAcademy.com/episode216](https://FlourishThriveAcademy.com/episode216), you



can also head on over to [FlourishThriveAcademy.com/scale](https://FlourishThriveAcademy.com/scale) to grab this amazing resource and jump in on it on your own.

I want you to save the date, because on September 26th we're having an amazing masterclass that is going to talk about how to basically scale your growth and overcome these business hurdles and plateaus that you might be experiencing in your life and your business. I'm very excited about it, and mark your calendar, we'll be making announcement next week and get on our email list, because if you aren't, you're going to miss the invite to join us for this amazing masterclass.

So anyway, I'm really looking forward to supporting you, and I love hearing what you have to say. So if you haven't read and reviewed the podcast yet, I would love for you to do that. I'm going to read out a five star review right now. Here is a review from [Kate Sidney](#), this is so sweet. She actually just did this today as I'm recording this. "Tracy brings many years of experience in the jewelry business and is not afraid to talk about her own failures as a way to help others learn how to optimize their own business. I always get some pearls of wisdom is out of these podcasts, keep up the great work." Well Kate, thank you for the five star review and thank you for telling me, or telling everyone that you need this podcast in your life because I am on a mission to help people grow and really build a business that is helping them get to the next level.

I think this is so funny. "Mind-blowing podcast", "my go-to podcast", these are some of the headlines. "This podcast is amazing for any products business." Okay, cool. Thanks guys, I'm finally reading through some of these reviews. Not finally, I've been reading through them quite often, but reading through them again. Thank you so much for your feedback, and I would love to hear from you, so if you haven't written a review, we have thousands and thousands of listeners every week, so I'd love to hear from all of you. Thanks for being here today, I'm going to sign off, have an awesome week.

***Thank you so much for listening to today's episode. It's my mission to help thousands of creative businesses, inside and outside the jewelry space, use their creativity to make money. Make sure that you're subscribed to Thrive-by-Design on iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher and wherever podcasts are played. We would love to hear what you think, please rate and review the show. If you're inspired, please share this with your friends. Here's to seeing you flourish and thrive.***