



She Hired a Virtual Assistant and Her Business Scaled – Here's How She Did It.

THRIVE BY DESIGN WITH TRACY MATTHEWS

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Tracy: Welcome to the Thrive by Design podcast, episode 228. Hey, there. It's Tracy Matthews, chief visionary officer of Flourish and Thrive Academy, and also the creator of the Desired Brand Effect. I am so excited to be here today to interview one of our students Krista DeJoseph. Krista is a rockstar and she is in our [SOS coaching program](#) and did something pretty incredible. She hired a virtual assistant and her business completely scaled, and in this episode we're going to talk a little bit more about how she did it.

Now, when she posted in our [Diamond Insiders](#) membership about the change in her business when she basically hired a virtual assistant and also mentioned that her VA, virtual assistant, VA was looking for more help. She got a ton of requests from students in our programs. She asked me, "How did you do it What was next?" I thought I would have her on the show to talk about the biggest impact about hiring a VA what it had on her business because as I like to say and this is part of the desired brand methodology is that you got a delegate to elevate. And this is really the key because when you're doing your business alone and you're trying to run a business on a shoestring budget and do all the things and you're having all the fields and everything's happening, it gets overwhelming and you end up spending your time doing the things that are the least leveraged but have to get done because they're easy to check off your plate.

Raise your hand if you've ever done that. You're like, I have a million things to do. I'm just going to check off all the easy things first and then the end



of the day the most important thing that are actually growing your business don't get done. So this is why hiring a virtual assistant can be especially in the early stages of your business can be super powerful and as you start to grow is essential. Basically, you're not going to be able to do it all alone.

I want to tell you a little story about my business. When I pivoted from having a production line and selling into stores all around the world to doing a custom jewelry model where I was designing one-of-a-kind pieces and offering those to private clients at a much higher price point. My business completely changed. And the reason it changed is because I went from having a ship thousands of units a month carrying inventory and all the things that you have to do having employees having a whole slew of contractors from that ranged that gamut from PR, outsourcers, to production facilities and stuff like that, and individuals doing production for us, to having just basically a one-man show with one person helping me.

And it was a totally different model. And in the beginning, I did it all myself. I was running around the jewelry district and this is when I was teaching yoga and doing all the things and quickly it started to grow and once it started to grow I realized that if I wanted to focus on getting more clients and getting more sales and really working with the people that I love so much in this business, I needed to get some of that busy sort of administrative work, aka, running around the jewelry district, picking up supplies and stuff like that off my plate.

And so that's when I hired my first production assistant and he was a VA. His name was Daniel, and Daniel worked for me for many years and he literally changed my life. If I didn't have him, I'm not sure that I would have a jewelry business today being able to do all the things that I do now. And when Daniel decided to leave I ended up bringing on another production assistant for about a year and then Sara who's been working for me for about two years now came on board as my executive assistant and she is running my production as well in the jewelry district.

She does not have a jewelry background, I just taught her what she needed to do in order to have this be successful and we always use mistakes as learning opportunities. For instance, the other day, we had an issue with a quote from one of our manufacturers and... Or I don't like to call them manufacturers. It's really a jeweler. It's like a guy. And he was just



arbitrarily charging us like exorbitant amounts for labor on this ring and he couldn't explain why, and it went way over quote.

And so we use that as a learning opportunity because the margin on my piece obviously went down, but also we use it as a learning opportunity on how we can communicate better to get really solid quotes from our vendors. And so when you're working with virtual assistants you're always going to have opportunities for growth and learning lessons. And I just want to make sure that before we dive into this episode, you understand that when you hire a VA, you have to set them up for success that requires you to set this is the third pillar in our desire brand effect methodology. You have to set system's up so that you can actually scale your business in a way that works for you.

I don't care if you are a one-person show and you make all the jewelry yourself. You still need systems, and eventually you are going to need to get help depending on your goals. And I'm saying this, depending on your goals because I have a story that I'm going to share in a later podcast because if all you want to do is sit there and money is not an issue to you, and you don't care about growing your business and you're just doing this sort of more like a hobby business like you're making some money from it, you enjoy making and the money that you're making doesn't really matter to your survival, then you maybe your goal is to just be able to have fun and work in the materials and hiring a VA doesn't matter to you because the revenue coming in the door won't matter.

But for most of us who are trying to build profitable brands, the revenue does matter because we're supporting ourselves and our family with this revenue. And if you're at a place where you don't have consistent sales in your business, I want you to listen up because there's something that I think will really help you with this as you move forward and grow in your business. So here's the deal. We have a signature program over here at Flourish and Thrive Academy called Laying the Foundation. This year for Flourish and Thrive Academy has been a transformative year.

It's been transformative for me as a founder and transformative for my team and our community because everything's been changing. We basically retired almost all of our programs and we are giving basically our entire ascension model, and what I mean by ascension model is like the offerings that we deliver here at Flourish and Thrive from our free content all the way to our highest paid coaching programs and mastermind



groups are getting basically a facelift, and that includes Laying the Foundation, our signature program. And what I've always liked to honor is that anyone who bought Laying the Foundation the first round still has access to Laying the Foundation in every iteration that we've ever done every single time we've revamped it. And we revamped it four times now.

We typically revamp every two years, and because we learn more about what our students need and we learn more about how we can deliver them faster results, because at the end of the day my goal in business is to help people get desired outcomes, and typically that looks like the lifestyle they desire, the money that they want to make, and a life that they actually enjoy and love. I do that through business coaching but really what I'm trying to help you do is to elevate and have the best life that you can possibly have. #liveyourbestlife.

And so that's what this program is really all about. So I want to tell you a little bit more about who this is for, and the reason why I'm talking about [Laying the Foundation](#) now is because we are raising the investment for LTF in the new year, and we have a really special promotion going on right now. And here's the deal with what's going on. We are raising the investment for Laying the Foundation to \$1,995 in the new year, in 2020. I will tell you in a minute why we're raising the investment, but right now you can still grab this program, you can start at any time for \$995.

If you pay in full, you get a very special pay in full bonus. And the reason why we've decided to raise the investment over the years we knew that as we were developing this, it was a \$2,000 program or 1,995. And the reason why we haven't ever charged that much for it is because we wanted to be able to help you get in with great value deliver amazing information to you so that you can implement it into your business and really get quick results. And we found that in order to get you the fastest results, we require to give you a little bit more support.

So we're going to be adding an extra level of support for you in the new year and we're going to be completely revamping the content again. But the good news is that you get access to the revamped content if you by Laying the Foundation at this \$995 price point now. So you can start now and when we release the new program in the spring, you are golden and you get this on gangbusters. So that's the deal. And I want to tell you a little bit more about who the program is for so that you understand if it's



for you. This program is designed for anyone who is trying to get consistent monthly and weekly sales in your business.

If you can honestly say to yourself you are not getting sales on a daily or weekly basis and you're not getting consistent sales monthly, and those consistency of the sales is not where you want it to be, meaning maybe you get consistent sales of a couple of sales a week for \$50 or a couple of sales a week for \$150 but you really desire to have 20 or 30 or 40 sales a week at that level then that's something that this will help you to do. If you have a business model like mine where it's high price point and your goal is to maybe sell like 10 pieces a month, we are going to show you how to book those 10 pieces a month and get that consistency in your business so you know exactly where you are all the time.

This is also great for anyone doing less than \$100,000 in revenue. So if you're just starting out or you've had a business for a while and your business is not making \$100,000 yet annually in revenue every single year, then this program will help you get there if that's your goal. It doesn't have to be your goal. Let's say you just want a lifestyle business and to make a couple thousand dollars a month to support your family, totally cool, Laying the Foundation will help you. But if you're someone who's ambitious, and you can't seem to crack that \$100,000 marker, this program will help you get there.

It is also for people who want to sell more from social media email and direct-to-consumer channels, is also great for anyone who wants to sell wholesale. We're going to give you the basics of sales strategy and how to really deliver exceptional service to your customers. This is great for designers who want to feel confident about when it comes to selling and become their best salesperson. We've had hundreds of designers say like, "I always was looking for a rep and I ended up taking this program, became my best salesperson because no one really wants to buy from a sales rep. They love buying from the designer.

And so if you can learn how to master those sales skills and have it be like second nature ingrained in your psyche, this is going to be super easy. And I want to remind you the type of business model that you have, doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if you're selling wholesale at shows, online. If you have a custom or a fine jewelry or a bridge jewelry or a demi-fine line or even a costume jewelry line, this program works for all of you. And I'm clapping my hands as I'm doing this because that's the case. And I want to



remind you that the investment goes up for this program to just under \$2,000 in 2020.

So this is your last chance to grab the home-study version for \$995 dollars. And we also offer some really easy payment plans to make it easy for you to get in, but we do love those of you who commit upfront because we have a very special pay in full bonus if you join. So head on over to flourishthriveacademy.com/ltf to join us for this epic program today and don't miss out on getting Laying the Foundation yourself right now.

And remember, this is a self-paced program. This is your opportunity to take it on your own pace. We suggest the pace for you, but you can take it slower, you can take it faster. Our goal is to help you reach your goals basically. And if we're helping you reach your goals and you're feeling good, and your business is growing then we've done our job, and I'm super stoked about that. So let's dive in to today's episode.

I want to tell you a little bit more about Krista. [Krista DeJoseph of Queens Metal](#) has been at the helm of her company for over a decade. She loves daydreaming about designing and fabricating jewelry. It is really her passion and nothing makes her happier than smashing the hell out of a piece of metal, which I love. Anyway, let's dive in to today's episode. You're going to love what Krista has to say about hiring a virtual assistant.

Well, I love having some of my students on the show and today is no exception. Welcome to the show, Krista DeJoseph.

Krista: Hi.

Tracy: I am so excited to have Krista on the show today. She has a company called Queens Metal and she's in her SOS program and Krista sent me a private message on Facebook and said, "Tracy, I think I got something here." We were chit-chatting. She posted something in our Diamond Insiders group about how she was hiring a VA and your VA needed extra hours or something like that. She was looking to pick up more clients. Yeah, her virtual assistant, VA was looking to pick up more clients. She posted in the group and people went bonkers. And we're asking her tons of questions. And so Krista is like I think this might be a good topic for the podcast. I'm like, "Well, why don't you come on and talk about your experience because I know it's been pretty game-changing for your business. So thanks for being on the show with me today."



Krista: Thank you.

Tracy: I'm excited. So before we dive in. Why don't you tell us a little bit about Queens Metal and your journey into the jewelry industry if that's cool.

Krista: Sure. I started my business by accident. I was living in New York City. I was living in Queens which is where the name of my company comes from, and I thought it would be really cool to just take like a continuing ed class in the evenings as just like a fun thing to learn some new skills, so I was like, "Oh, I really want to

learn how to weld or maybe make furniture." And then when I went to sign up for the class it was full. So I was looking to see what else was available. A jewelry class was available and I was thinking well, welding, soldering, it's all heat. Okay. I'll take this jewelry class and that'll be fun.

So that was how it started and that was more than 15 years ago. And I've been making jewelry ever since and I just accidentally stumbled into this thing that I'm so passionate about and I honestly, I live and breathe it maybe to an extent that's too much. I love sitting at my bench and working, and I could do it all day every day. So I'm so, so happy with this career that accidentally came my way. When I took the class, I took some more classes. At that time, the website Etsy was just starting and I thought, "Oh, well. I'll put a piece up on Etsy and see what happens." And it's sold within a couple of days. I was so shocked when I saw the email that I had sold something I thought maybe my mother had bought it, and I couldn't believe that someone had bought something I made and that feeling was totally addicting of just thinking about someone else wearing and falling in love with something that you really are passionate about.

So I started on Etsy. That rolled along and grew and grew. I started doing art shows, started doing travel shows, and it just went from there. So first it was just a little side hustle, then it became a part-time job while I was working on my masters. And then I moved to New Orleans in 2012 just because I thought it was a fun city to try to live in, and it really opened up so many opportunities for me in terms of it being a city that's very welcoming to artists. It's a lot cheaper than New York so you aren't feeling that constant pressure to live and die by every dollar because you've got more flexibility. And so that's where I am now.

Tracy: That's so cool. I love it. Okay. So when I heard your brand name Queens Metal, I just obviously, or not obviously, but assumed that it was like the



queen royalty, not Queens, New York. I love that first and foremost. The other thing that I think is... I think the reason why that's so cool to me is that it's like a double entendre in a way. The other thing that I think is really cool that you said, and I think this is the reason why everyone who designs jewelry at the core what they really want like, "Oh my gosh. It's so cool. I made this thing that someone else loves just as much as I love it."

So it's pretty cool that you really been able to dial that in. I'm so excited to talk more about this. So we're talking about hiring virtual assistants today, and one of the things that... One of my mantras I should say is delegate to elevate. And what that means to me is really like as the chief visionary officer of your business when I was an artist and a creative, and someone who has so many amazing talents and skills like we're just not good at everything and at a certain point we're doing everything in our business. In order to get to the next level of where we want to be, we have to start delegating and getting things off our plate.

And a lot of times for small business owners they aren't in a place where they can hire like a full-time assistant or someone like that, so hiring a virtual assistant is a great way to get some tasks and low-level things, low leverage things maybe I should say is a better way to put it off your plate. So I want to start my first question for you, Krista is at what point did you realize you need a virtual assistant, and then how did you actually make that leap? Because I know for a lot of people it seems terrifying. They're taking a look at this being an expense or a cost of their business instead of seeing this as an investment in their success that they're investing and getting stuff off their plate, and that's going to allow them to really grow and step into what they're meant to be doing. So can you chat about that a little bit?

Krista:

I mean so many aspects of my business have been happy accidents and I stumbled upon my VA without really doing a search for a VA. When I was living in New York, I was trying to really enjoy the flexibility of being self-employed, and so I had decided after a few years of running my business that I wanted to take winters off and travel. And I wanted to leave the country and close my business, and then I would reopen it in the spring when I got back. So I did that for one year and it went great except that I noticed that when I got back, my web sales were really, really down and it was because I had been dark for three months, and no one could reach me.



I mean I was answering emails, but I wasn't making new items, there was nothing to buy. So I thought, "Well, I can't have that happen again if I want to travel again." So the next year I decided I was going to have someone who was going to just take all of my inventory and anytime someone placed an order, they would ship out the package with the jewelry in it. And I had a close friend of the family who was just like a good jack-of-all-trades person and I just approached her and was like, "Hey, would you mind? I'll pay you." I think we had decided a flat amount. "And whenever you get an order just put it in a box, put a business card in, print out the shipping label, pop it in a mailbox." And she said, "No problem."

And I thought, "Well, the worst thing that can happen is this doesn't go well and I just shut it down quickly and resume my business in the spring." But it actually went amazing. And the whole time that I was gone, occasionally, she'd email me with questions, but for the most part things just seemed to be running pretty seamlessly. People were getting their packages. I was still getting positive reviews on Etsy, and so I knew things were... She was handling things. So when I got back into town, I said, "Well, let's meet up and you can give me back the jewelry, and we'll go over some different things."

And so she came over to my house, we sat at my kitchen table and she pulled out this plastic container, and I was like, "What is this container?" And she goes, "Oh, your jewelry, I thought it needed to be a little bit better organized so I went to a craft store and I bought these little plastic bins and they have these little individual sections, and I put each of your different styles in each section

and I was going, "Oh my god, this girl." If only she could get inside my brain and organize my brain the way she just organized my jewelry.

I was so impressed that she had taken it upon herself to do that. And then she handed me this jar, and I said, "What's this jar?" And she said, "Oh well, someone ordered a piece of jewelry, but they had wanted it to be oxidized black, and you didn't have anything that was already oxidized." And she said, "So I googled how to oxidize jewelry and I learned how to do it, and I ordered this little jar. It was liver of sulfur. If you make jewelry, you know what that is. And so I oxidized it and I sent it to the customer. And I was going like, "Are you kidding me? I wouldn't do that if I was working for someone else." I would be like, "I'm sorry I can't fill this order right now. Reach out to me in the spring."



Tracy: She was a go-getter, it sounds like.

Krista: I was so impressed. And she had never even told me that this problem had arisen, she just tackled it. And at that point, I thought I need to start finding more ways to use her in other capacities because clearly she has skills that are beyond putting jewelry into envelopes. So I just started thinking about different ways I could use her and I knew I wanted to grow my online business, so I just started tasking her with different projects, and I would say like, "Oh well, do you know how to do this?" "No, but I'm sure I can learn." "Okay. Teach yourself how to upload products to Etsy. Teach yourself how to..." I mean, some of this stuff is outdated because it was eight years ago. So she grew with the business, really.

Tracy: That's so great. So is this person still working with you?

Krista: She's still working with me, yeah. It's been years.

Tracy: Awesome. So is she in your office or she virtual?

Krista: She's virtual. I'm in New Orleans, she's in New York.

Tracy: Okay, awesome, awesome. Okay, perfect. So you started touching on some of the things that she does for you. What's her name? Can we just give her a name?

Krista: Her name is Emily.

Tracy: Emily, okay. Emily your virtual assistant. What are all the things that she does for you?

Krista: As the years have gone on, I've tasked more and more to her. At this point she does all of my Shopify updates. So anytime I have a new product, I'll send her. I'll write up a description and I'll take the photos, and then I send it to her and

she'll add it to my Shopify, she'll add it to the wholesale arm of my Shopify. She'll add it to Etsy. She'll add it to... I sell on the wholesale platform Fair so she'll add it to Fair, and whatever else I need to do if I want to email blast it out to a list or a wholesale list she'll put that email together. So she does that.

She'll help me with technical updates to my Shopify. She'll help me with managing Facebook Ads. She'll help me with little projects that just come



up through the course of the year. A couple years ago I was doing a trade show for the first time. I think this was maybe five, six years ago and I was totally overwhelmed with the amount of rules and the amount of things that you needed to prepare for. So I just handed her this packet of 60 pages of information and I was like, "Go through this packet, read it with a fine-tooth comb, make notes of everything I need to know and check back in with me." And she did and she got back in touch with me. And she's like, "Okay. We need to buy electricity. We need to do this. We need to put an ad here." And and so then I delegated those tasks to her where it made sense. Over the years there's been a lot of projects.

Tracy: So basically she just basically can figure out how to do anything.

Krista: Yeah, pretty much. The thing that I've realized and that her and I have talked about is as an artist I think a lot of creative people feel very possessive of your art and your voice of your business. So I try to do the things that I want to be in my voice, I try to write them. So blog posts, emails. Even my social media I like to do that in my voice. So I'll write all those things out and then I give it to her and she'll do the technical stuff like adding links, adding photos scheduling a blog post. So we've found this balance of what I want to task her to do and not.

Tracy: So you found a balance to do that?

Krista: Mm-hmm

Tracy: Okay. That's amazing. So I know that you were getting a ton of questions from designers in your Facebook Messenger. What were some of those questions that designers were asking in [inaudible 00:28:12] right now?

Krista: There was a lot of questions about what my virtual assistant does, and there was a lot of questions about people who were concerned about hiring someone and then not having enough work to keep them busy, which is a very valid concern.

Tracy: What do you say to that one if people are concerned about not having enough work to give to them?

Krista: What I would say is... Well, first of all you really need to... Before you hire someone, I think you really need to sit down on your own and do a real brain dump of what are the daily tasks, weekly tasks, monthly tasks, quarterly tasks



that I could outsource potentially, that could be a more admin and not so much of a creative task. So what are those tasks and then are there also other like just projects or things on the horizon, or things that have been on your to-do list forever that maybe could be outsourced?

So you may have more potential work for a virtual assistant than you think you do. That's the first thing. And also I think you're not trying to hire. You're not necessarily hiring a full-time assistant. I think as long as you're being very clear what the job description is going to be, it's okay if it's just, "I only need you for five hours a week or I'm going to need you for one marathon week of the month, or I have a project that's going to take up a ton of time for the next month, but then I probably won't need help again for another six months."

I think all of those are really valid things to say to someone that you're hiring. The only flip to that I think is that the more someone is involved with your business, the better equipped they are to be self-sufficient. So if they're only dipping in and out of your business every few months, I think they're not going to have as much sort of ownership over making decisions because they're just not as comfortable with the ins and outs and that may be more, you need to probably then devote more time to helping them and answering questions.

Tracy: Yeah, I totally agree. And I think that this is where having systems in place in your business can become really powerful because if you're documenting the work that you're doing then when you need to bring someone in for short projects or these small sprints that you're talking about or even just a couple of hours a week, they have a roadmap of your way of doing things and how you like to do stuff so that they don't... One of the biggest... I'm going to use term pain point for a lack of better word that I hear from a lot of designers is they end up hiring someone, but they aren't themselves equipped to really hire someone because they don't have standard operating procedures in place.

And so what ends up happening is they end up spending all their time training the person. They're like this is just taking me more time. I'm now doing two jobs at once. And so it's important as you go even if you don't have anyone on your team now is to start getting some guidelines and at least loose systems in place so that when the time is right, you can start delegating some of those lower leveraged tasks as Krista and I have been talking about. How are you documenting systems in your business?



Krista: At this point my virtual assistant knows it and she probably has it much better documented than I do, but it's definitely... You need to do that preparation before you hire someone around so they're going to be frustrated.

Tracy: Exactly.

Krista: And you're going to be in turn frustrated because they're going to feel like they're hired to do this job, but they don't have all the tools.

Tracy: Oh, go ahead. Finish your statement and I'll chime in.

Krista: Well, just in terms of systems I mean, it's good to sort of whatever task you're going to be hiring them to do for you to do that task yourself first or do a portion of it so that you can step-by-step force yourself to say, "Okay, do they need to know the login information for my website? Do they need to know the hex code for the color of font that I use?" All those little things that are going to come up as they try to complete a project.

Tracy: Exactly. Like all those things. When you're developing systems in your business, that piece is really powerful. And I think the one thing that the reason why documenting systems, and having a way to... You mentioned something like your virtual assistant Emily, she's better equipped to document the systems now and making sure things happen, you're 100% because each individual as you start building at a team whether they're a virtual team or an in-house team or a hybrid, whatever you want to call it of different types of options is that you want to make sure that it's captured somewhere because if something happened in that person, this is the same issue that you have is like you get sick. You need to be able to delegate and get things off your plate so that your business doesn't stop running without you.

But if for some reason, and let's say they had a family member that's sick and then they had to leave and they're doing all these things, and you don't know how to actually... The business owner doesn't actually know how to do it, and they need to either get someone in else in to do it or step in themselves, all these things need to be captured because what you risk when and if someone has an incident where they have to like be away from your business and or they actually leave because it does happen even if people have been with you for a long time, you put yourself at risk if that stuff isn't documented in the very least by a team member.



And I wanted to bring that up because as I've grown businesses over the years one of the biggest mistakes that I made in the beginning was not having clearly documented systems, and I would always say to... It's funny. One time my bookkeeper Laurie Bjork. She said to me, this is back when I was in San Francisco years and years ago. I said, "Can you just write out the systems for my business?" She's like, "No, because you won't use them. It has to be your way."

One of the things that we work on consistently with Flourish and Thrive Academy and my jewelry business and creatives around the world is that as far as... The people on our team or whatever, there's a lot in their heads and and sometimes you're like, "Ah, that team member, they're just not pulling their weight or they're just not getting it. I don't understand why this isn't being done

XYZ way. And then the first thing that we go to is we look at the system. Do they have everything that they need and an expected outcome? And so it goes even deeper than that. As your business grows and as... It sounds like Emily is a total superstar and you likely don't have this problem, but this is something that we all want to think about upfront is as your business grows and you might potentially be bringing on more people as your business grows, you need a way to actually evaluate how well they're doing.

And sometimes the onus is on us because if we don't have clear expectations, a clear job description and deliverables of what they're supposed to do and then also have that backed up by a method in which the job gets done then it's hard to really be able to evaluate whether or not someone's doing a good job. Does that make sense?

Krista: A hundred percent.

Tracy: It seems like you're killing it with that which is awesome. So I wanted to ask you a question because I know one of the most stressful things for designers when they are considering getting a VA, but they're on that fence part. It's like how did you budget to hire someone. I know that it just happened to you, but how did you figure out how am I going to budget for this? And what was the impact after you brought someone on?

Krista: So because I started hiring, working with my virtual assistant in piecemeal tasks at first, it was less of a financial hit, but what I've come to learn and this has been true of not just hiring my virtual assistant, but also other



people who helped me with production and helped me as sales assistants at markets and things like that, is that you have to think about how much your own time is worth first of all and how much potential work you could be completing in the allotted amount of work hours in your day.

And if you have more potential work than you have hours in your day then hiring someone is probably going to be a net gain at the end of the day if you're doing the... if your estimates are correct. If I want to pay myself \$40 an hour let's say and I know that I can hire a virtual assistant or a production person to work for me at 15 or \$20 an hour, I'm already making better use of my own personal worth. So that's how I started to think about it. I've also started to try to outsource other things that eat up time in my day like I started using a grocery delivery service because I realized that extra hour that I could be working that I was spending grocery shopping, it was just better financial decision to have someone else do that for me.

So I've started to think of a lot of different tasks that way. So that's how I created sort of the room in my budget. I knew that I had orders that I wasn't fulfilling quickly enough. I knew I had customers that were waiting for me to get back to them and I knew if I had some extra sets of hands then I could just boost all of those revenue streams more quickly.

Tracy: That's so good. I love it. And I think the other thing that I think is so powerful and everything that you said is like you're thinking about... I don't like to... For any owner of a business to think about themselves in hourly wages, but because you're really making a salary. You're not working per hour, but the point of what you made is really powerful because if you can hire someone for half of what you want to be bringing home, and they can take so much off your plate, then that just leaves you to uplevel and get to the next level.

We have this exercise that we do in one of our programs that is all about identifying like the \$1,000 an hour task, the \$500 an hour task, the \$100 an hour task, the \$25 task so that you can figure out what do I get off my plate first. And all those things that are remedial that don't really take a lot of mind power are you making strategic decisions in the business or design decisions should get off your plate right away because they're not usually the things that you personally need to do.

Krista: And a lot of times the virtual assistants have a better skillset at some of the tasks as well. So it's not just the outsourcing, it's also my virtual assistant



can type way faster than I can. My virtual assistant is much better at Excel than I am. A task that might take me three hours to do, she can do in half the time. I also think about it that way.

Tracy: It's so amazing, and it's true a hundred percent. So I'd love to hear a little bit more about how your business has grown. I mean, I know you've been working with your virtual assistant for a while. So I'm sure that there's like you've seen changes and evolutions in your business since that time. So tell me a little bit about that.

Krista: Absolutely. And the other thing I wanted to say just in terms of hiring is I was talking to Emily last week and telling her I was going to be speaking to you and I was asking her questions about what issues she sees when she's working with new clients and she told me something really interesting from her perspective is she settled... A lot of times people will hire her when they're in panic mode, and at that point they're expecting her to just jump in and work miracles and it's a really difficult position and it's a really difficult expectation to set.

It sort of puts you in a tough role right from the start. She said, "Don't hire VA when you're in panic mode. Don't hire a VA when you need something due in three days." You need to take the time, first of all to properly vet the person and make sure that you're not hiring someone just because they're telling you that they're available and because they're telling you that they have basic knowledge of the tasks that you need completed, but because you need to hire them because they're problem solver, they're an independent thinker, they have attention to detail, they are going to deliver on time, and those are all things that really it's a hiring process. It's not just hosting something on... There's a million websites where you can hire virtual assistants and if you post on one of

those websites, you'll get a million responses, but that doesn't mean that all of those candidates are good candidates.

Tracy: Got it.

Krista: So you need to take the time to do the work of hiring the right person and you need to give that person time and the role without expecting them to just immediately solve all your problems. It may mean in the hiring phase that you start them off with one project that has a clear end date or a clear goal, and then if they complete that project to your satisfaction then you bring them on for a more broader role. And if they don't really complete it



very well, you're not thrilled, you can just say, "Okay, thanks." And you don't have to continue a relationship with that person. So that was really interesting that she was saying that people just have this expectation that miracles are going to occur and these are people, and they need help, they need direction. They need training, and that takes time.

Tracy: That's so true. That's the worst time to just throw someone in the fire or you can't expect them to succeed. It's very hard.

Krista: Right. When you're in panic mode you're not taking the time to really think through your processes. You're not giving them all the training that they need so they're not going to be successful.

Tracy: Yeah. Brings me back to the systems thing.

Krista: Exactly. That's where those systems really help.

Tracy: I think the other thing, you said something else about giving people tests projects. In our SOS program we're developing like hiring funnel for you guys, and part of that system it's like having behavioral questions on the front end and a few small tasks in the initial job application. And then as part of the interview process for the top candidates, we always suggest doing a paid project. And you want to ideally have three candidates at a time because you don't know how well someone's doing unless there's something to compare it to. I mean, you might have a lot more, but you want to narrow it down to three final candidates and be able to give them all the same project and be able to compare that project against the others.

It's interesting. So many times I've hired, and for my executive assistant for instance here in New York, she... The person I hired wasn't my first choice in the beginning. She's very nervous on her interview. She kept fumbling over her words. I was like, "Oh, geez. How did this person actually make it?" But she said some things that really intrigued me and then I gave her the sample project, which was to run around the jewelry, just start and do all these things. She did it in half the amount of time. She did all the sourcing and she came back with such clearly documented notes and a spreadsheet with all the pricing I asked her to do, and it was pretty incredible. And it just goes to show you that verbal interviews aren't the thing that really show you how well someone can work. And it's really about getting them into their actual job of what they'd be doing.



Krista: I'm totally not nodding along as you're saying this because I 100% agree. It is so hard to really know until you thrown them into it. So that's why not being in panic mode. And the other thing is a lot of these websites that help put you in touch with virtual assistants, a lot of times these people are coming from overseas, which is totally fine but you have to keep in mind that you may want someone who's on a similar time. You want them to be awake when you're awake so that you're not trying to negotiate a time difference every time you need to talk to them. And if English is their second or their third language, and you're asking them to do certain writing projects, then you may end up having to do a lot more proofreading than someone who's a native English speaker.

So I'm sure there are a ton of really qualified virtual assistants on the other side of the world, but you just want to be thinking about the potential roadblocks that could come up with hiring someone who's in a different time zone or who doesn't have a strong command of the English language and don't let your budget be the only deciding factor of who you're hiring. Virtual assistant, you're going to get what you pay for a lot of times. So you're trying to hire the absolute cheapest person possible. They may not work as quickly as someone who charges more, but who has more experience who's savvier, who can do the job more quickly. So don't let that be the only deciding factor when you're making a hiring decision.

Tracy: Absolutely. So, so true. I asked you one question, but you didn't answer it yet.

Krista: I'm sorry.

Tracy: How has the business grown since you hired a VA?

Krista: Since I've hired a VA, I would say my online sales have really been what I can turn to and say that is because of her, because that's always the stuff that I always push aside when I'm faced with a production deadline. That's the stuff that I put on the backburner and it never gets done during the busy times of year. So to be able to turn to her and say, "I really need you to list these new things on Shopify, I really need you to send an email out to all my wholesale accounts," and let them know this and that, that's where I really see the results of the work.

And also just peace of mind knowing that I don't have this endless list of projects that are sitting there getting stale while I struggle to fill orders or keep up with demands of holiday shoppers. So I don't have real solid



numbers because my assistant has been with me for so long that there's no real start point, but she's just integral. I can't imagine my business without her.

Tracy: That is so awesome. So we're going to wrap up shortly, but you've been in our SOS program for just about a year I think now or just under a year I should say, and I wanted to just ask you a little bit more about your experience in the program and how your business has changed since you've been in it.

Krista: I was really excited to join SOS because I started this jewelry business with very, very minimal knowledge of how to run a business and a lot of it was just figuring it out as you go and making tons of mistakes. And I spoke to someone who had completed the program a couple years prior who had encouraged me to do it because she just said the amount of mistakes you can avoid making by having people who've already made those mistakes steering you clear of them, God, if I could go back in time I just wonder how quickly my business would have grown if a program like this had even existed 15 years ago. It's been awesome.

The help and support and friendship of my pod which are the women that I chat with every week and we just check in with each other about what's going on with our business that support has been just leaps and bounds above what I expected it to be, and then I've just been going through the archives of old trainings and old lectures and been listening to your podcast and just trying to get as much information as I can, so it's been really helpful.

Tracy: That is so awesome. Well, thanks for sharing that. Where can everyone find you who wants to stalk you, follow you, ask you more questions?

Krista: Definitely follow me on social media, Queens Metal Jewelry on [Instagram](#). I'm on [Facebook](#). And then my website is [queensmetal.com](#). And definitely, definitely come visit me in New Orleans because New Orleans is the most fun city in the world and you will eat, you will dance, you will have a great time. Come to New Orleans. I'm in every market you can think of in New Orleans selling my jewelry. So you will find me if you come.

Tracy: I will be there at some point to visit you, Krista. Thanks so much for being here. I appreciate you.

Krista: Thanks, Tracy. It was fun.



Tracy: Thank you so much for listening to the show today. I want to thank Krista too for joining us and sharing all that valuable insight on how she grew her business and continued to scale by hiring a VA. And if you're thinking about getting help, I'd love to help you. And that starts with our Laying the Foundation program. So if you haven't grabbed it yet, I want to read just a little testimonial from our student Andrea. Andrea went from zero profits to selling out collections.

"Before Laying the Foundation, my business was directionless, expensive and not turning a profit. I was referred to Flourish and Thrive Academy by a friend in my stone setting class. And even though my sales were slow, I was determined to invest in the program. After taking Laying the Foundation and applying what I've learned, I've launched my e-commerce website and I'm selling out of collections every season. During the course. I learned how to private label and I recently launched and landed six stockists before my formal outreach campaign. Laying the Foundation is a great fit for any designer ready to get serious about turning their hobby into a real business or taking their existing business to the next level." This is by Andrea Lee of Andrea Lee Designs.

So if you're interested in grabbing this epic program before the investment goes up in the new year, head on over to flourishthriveacademy.com/ltf and get it today for \$995 instead of the price increase of 1,995 which is going to happen in 2020. Thanks so much for listening today. This is Tracy Matthews signing off.

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