

You're listening to the Your Next Best Step podcast, episode number 18. And today we're going to really dig into, what the heck are seasons in your business anyway? And what can you do in each one of those seasons? So stay tuned because we're getting started.

Well hello there, and welcome back to another episode of the Your Next Best Step podcast. I am your host, Theresa Cantley, and I am so excited that you're here for another episode. And I am so excited to talk about today's topic, which is all about what are seasons in your business? And what can you do in each one of these seasons to really help to grow your business?

And this is a topic that I have always been interested in, especially more in the past couple years. It's a topic that I've always known about, I've always been involved in in corporate America. But when I first started my first business with my friend, which was a retail store, and we were trying to really dig into this even more, because we had such, you know it was something that we dug into when we were in corporate America, and kind of watching how people were managing the different seasons, and basing the seasons in their business off of other businesses, what other businesses were doing, and what the industry said.

And it was interesting, because while many times what's happening in the industry and what's happening with other, like if you're in the retail industry, what's happening in other retail businesses can impact your business, if you're in that industry, but many times, most often than not your seasons in your business are going to be unique to you, okay. There's different rhythms, there's different things that happen. You know, business is cyclical, just like life and just like the regular season, you know spring, fall, winter, summer, but each business is unique, and different things happen in each one of our businesses. Just because you are a retail business in the retail industry doesn't mean that your seasons are going to flow and fall the way that everybody else in the retail industry's seasons flow and fall.

Especially if you focus on, which is something that I work a lot with in the businesses that I work with one on one, especially if you focus on not just simply selling your products and services, but building a unique experience, a key signature experience for you that sets you apart from everybody else. And if we really focus on building that experience versus just selling product, I mean that's something that's different, because each experience is going to be different in each business, and it can shift whatever those seasons are.

So I've worked with businesses where they are in the retail industry. And typically retail's very busy in November and December, slows down in January, sometimes it's slow in February, and then it might pick up back in March. But I've worked with businesses that follow those trends, but I've also worked with many businesses where we focus on building that experience and really figuring out what makes them unique, and their seasons are completely different.

So the thing that we need to focus on is, our circumstances are our circumstances, okay? And what happens in our business is unique to us. And we can't, you know when we're having a slow period in our business I know a lot of people are like, "Oh, it's so slow, why are things going so slow? Let's put more stuff out there, let's sell more product," and they try and push through it and rush that season, instead of looking at it for exactly what it is, and looking at what they can do in that season that they're in, so that they can prepare for the next season.

Because, just like in life, things don't, you know, when something's happening it's not happening forever. It's not going to be there forever, the slow period isn't going to be there forever. And if it is, that's another topic. But the slow season isn't going to be there forever, the busy, busy, busy, busy, busy season isn't going to be there forever either, okay? And if it was that would be another discussion too, because that's where a lot of people really have to shift, and adjust, and scale, and do all kinds of things, but that's another topic, okay?

So this, I found this quote from Jim Roan, it's, "You cannot change your circumstances, the season, or the wind, but you can change yourself." So I wanted to dig into and break these down individually. And then what you can do within each season, so you can figure out, okay, where are you in your business right now, and what you should be focusing on, and then also what you can do to plan for the next season.

And I've been digging into this topic a lot with my clients lately, it's something we've touched on before, I've always touched on it with people when we're doing business planning or strategy, or one of the things I teach are 90 Day Goals, and creating, focusing more on the process to get you to achieve your goal than the actual goal itself. But with this, going along with things that I've focused on forever, really focusing on seasons and getting people to understand what season they're at in their business, and to really understand that each business is unique, you know?

Each business has, we have those cycles that we go through in our business, and oftentimes, sometimes a season might ... One of my mentors, James Wedmore, always said, "It's like a hockey stick effect." Okay, so your seasons in your business, you might have that flat period, and then all of a sudden you have that heel or whatever it is, of the hockey stick where it starts to bend, and that's a new season. And then you have that season of huge growth, and that's another season, And then maybe you start to get to the flat point again.

So seasons look different to each business. I started to look at it, I've been teaching project management for a really long time, and I started to look at these seasons the same way, and explain the seasons the same way that I talk about managing projects. You know, coming up with the ideas, and how to manage it through to the end.

So what I wanted to do is kind of break this down for you from the standpoint of the energy that goes behind each season, and kind of what you're doing in that season, as it relates to the seasons that we have in nature, alright? A lot of people do it this way, they look at the seasons of nature, but what I started to do is I put my own spin, my own name behind it, that kind of helps people to understand what that particular ... So if we relate it back to spring, okay, what action words relate to that, so that it helps them to understand where they are in their business and what they should be focusing on.

So, since we're talking about spring let's start there. So spring. Spring typically is a time of growth, it's a time of planting things, it's a time of starting to put things into action, it's a time of regeneration, okay, because we're coming out of winter. Right? Winter, yeah, if we look at the regular calendar. So it's a time of growth, it's a time of putting things into action. So I like to call that season of our business or that period of our business the Create and Build phase, okay? Just like when you're managing a project, the first phase that I have people work through is all that brainstorming stuff, that creating and building, the brainstorming period, okay?

And you can kind of think of these seasons, I like to think of it a clock going around in a circle. And in each season, when we're looking at it, it could be, like I said, the hockey stick effect. So as you're in the slower seasons where you're building, and growing, and planting seeds, your results might then start to go up like as in a hockey stick. But I like to look at the seasons themselves as clock or a circle.

So if we start with the first one, again, spring is a period of everything kind of starting to grow and come out of hibernation. So it's putting things into place, and it's watching things so they can bloom. Because towards later spring into summer things really start to bloom, okay? So in this, this is the Create and Build, this is the brainstorming, this is the creativity thing. This is like sitting down and building a clear, focused plan. This is also a time of planting the seeds, but we want to make sure that we're planting the right seeds.

So what I mean by that is, when we are putting new projects into place, and we're getting our ideas together, and we're really having a lot of clarity on what our purpose is, and what do we want to do with our business, and what do we want to do to move forward, and the impact that we want to make, and the goals that we want to, we have the process, and we're putting all of this into place, we want to make sure that whatever we're doing aligns with the bigger vision that we have. Where do we want to go, what do we want to do? What future do we want to make for our business? Where we can move things, and where we want to go. Where we see the future of our business, and what our people and our team are doing to make that happen.

So we want to make sure that whatever we're putting into place, that projects, or new initiatives, 90 day goals that we have, we want to make sure that whatever we're planting aligns with our vision. And whatever things that we're brainstorming and we're starting to create and build, like I said, that's my Create and Build phase, that's number one, that we have a lot of clarity behind it. That whatever we're putting into place, whatever projects we're doing really aligns with the vision that we had.

Obviously, if the vision that we have is to build an amazing experience that teaches people about Celtic culture, we're not going to put something in place that teaches them how to work on a computer. I don't know, it needs to align with whatever our vision is. It's a really good time to really ramp up and put any kind of new projects into place. Really take a look at your 90 day goals and focus, because that period of our business is going to last for more than one month. And maybe not, maybe it'll only last for one month, maybe it'll last for two months, but typically it's a period where we can really start to put a new project into place, put a new initiative into place. Focus, really focus on those 90 day goals, and whatever process we're going to take to achieve those goals.

So like I said, if it's a new project, or if it's a new initiative, it's a new event that we want to have, it's a new service that we want to offer, whatever that looks like. That spring phase, that Create and Build phase, is a really good time to really start putting stuff into action.

So the second one is like summer, okay. So we go from spring to summer, alright, and I call that the Growth and Connect phase. That's when we're really starting to take action. We're watching all of the seeds that we planted, so all of the things that we were putting into place to really get them to bloom. We have a clear, focused plan, alright, now in this new Growth and Connect phase, which is like summertime, so if you think of summer, everything's starting to bloom, the flowers are out, the trees are out, everybody's out, they're out connecting with each other, there's lots of parties, there's lots of

going to the beach and getting together with family, and going on vacation. So there's lots of stuff, so it's a time to really watch everything blossom.

So all of the things that we really put into place, and the action that we took to create and build things in the first phase, in the first season, this is where we can really start to see the project really take shape. We can really start to, we're seeing everything bloom, and we're seeing all of our ... if we put a new plan in place and we had an event in place, a new event that we wanted to do, or a new project, we can really start to see things really take action. And it's that growth, it's a time to connect with other people, it's a time to connect with our community, it's a time to connect and really plant the seeds with relationships, and tend those relationships. It's a time to really water and nurture our seeds.

A lot of people think, okay, so a lot of people think summer, summer season, they think it's a time to rest, because now you're seeing everything really start to take shape and start to blossom, and start to do all this stuff, people think, "Okay, I'm going to sit back on my laurels." No. That's the time that you really want to water your plants, water your seeds, nurture your seeds.

So in your business, let's say you have this whole initiative to put new marketing into place, or to launch a new product, okay? So your springtime, your Create and Build phase, let's say your launching a new product, that could be kind of brainstorming out the plan, getting everything into place, and putting together what the project looks like to get it launched. And you start to go into what we call your Runway phase, this applies to even a new event, or a new product you want to launch, or anything like that, same thing.

So then the Growth and Connect, that's when you're building up, you're ramping up your runway. You're blogging every day, you're planting the seeds, you're posting every day, you're connecting with your audience, you're doing your Facebook Lives, you're putting your marketing initiatives into place. You have your three different types of funnels to bring people into your store, to bring people into your business, you're planting those seeds and you're starting to, your project is moving forward, and it's starting to get to the point where you're going to be wrapping up soon.

The pace is going to start to slow down, but things are going to start to, because the next phase is your Harvest phase. But in the summer phase, or that Growth and Connect, you are focusing on ramping up, you're building your runway, you're putting everything into place, you're connecting with your people, you're planting and watering your seeds. Because, guess what? Like I said, the next phase is your Harvest phase, which is like fall.

That's when everything comes to fruition. That's when you have lots of clients in your pipeline, you have customers coming into your store, you launched your product and you're selling everything, you're getting new people into your program, you have a new service in place and you've been promoting it and seeding it, and now people are coming to your door and they want to get that new service, they want to take that new class. You've got your pipeline full of leads, and you're really, it's that Harvest phase.

Now these things, like Harvest and all this planting the seeds, I grew up out towards farmland, and we were surrounded by farming. So this is another thing that I was kind of thinking about, like with seasons of farming, same kind of thing. You know, in the summertime it kind of used to smell really bad because they'd be putting the manure down so that things would be growing, and harvest, and ugh. Anyway, so

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but if you think about the farmers are harvesting stuff, it's that they're bringing in the crops, and they're getting ready to go to market, and they're selling all of that stuff, and everything, they're harvesting it.

It's also a time to really invest back in your business. Because, typically, at that Harvest phase ... In the spring phase, when you're creating/building, okay you've got cashflow coming in, but maybe it's, as you're planning for things, cashflow is starting to ramp up. Summer, in the Growth and Connect phase, cashflow is starting to ramp up even more, you can manage it, it's flowing, it's not like, "Oh my, we have to cut back," it's flowing, it's starting to bloom, it's building up, it's building, and then when we have the Harvest season that's when you have a ton of cashflow coming in.

So one of the things that you can do is you can actually, this is the time to invest back in your business. Alright? so I have a client, their major Harvest season is October through December, okay, and that's when they have a huge cashflow coming in. And that's the time to take that cashflow, and that's why managing your cashflow and looking at what's coming in and what's going out on a regular basis so you can learn how to manage these seasons better.

So when you have that huge influx of cashflow in the Harvest season it's a really good time to figure out, because as you go through these seasons you'll know when the slow season comes so you can stash some cash away, because you know you have certain expenses coming in. But this is also a time when you can hire, you can invest back in your business. So that could be hiring a coach, it could be hiring a consultant, it could be hiring new team members, maybe you're planning for the future, because remember, you have your vision, you have your Five Year Vision, and we're not planning based on current circumstances, we're planning based on the future and how these seasons kind of flow. And not fighting it either, we're taking it as things come and preparing for it, we know, we kind of get an idea of how the cycle goes.

But during this phase, like I said, this is the time to reinvest back in your business. It could be maybe this is the time that you pay out bonuses, you want to reinvest in your team. Maybe it's getting new equipment, maybe it's getting new software. Maybe it's repairing furniture in the store, getting new fixtures. Like I said, hiring people that you've been wanting to hire, like maybe you need some new virtual assistants, maybe that's what it is. But it's a time when you have a lot of cashflow coming into your business that you can then reinvest, okay?

Because when you see huge amounts of growth, like in the hockey stick analogy that I gave, it's that stick, it's the ramp up, it's whoo, you know? Big, huge amounts of growth, that's when we can reinvest back in our business. We can also get ready for the next season, which is like winter. And that's the Restore, I call that Restore and Reflect. And that is the time when we can look back at all these other seasons and we can, you know things are start to dwindle down, swindle, listen to me, dwindle down, people start to kind of get some rest, because after that busy, huge season that you just had it's a time to kind of take a breath, take a breather, and kind of have that restoration period.

But also that is a huge time, huge time for reflection and taking a look at where you are, what worked, what didn't work, and start to really figure out, okay, where do we want to go next? Where are we with the vision that we have, and where do we want to go next? And this is the part that people miss. They don't want to take time to have that reflection period, I know I used to do it. I used to function in one season, and that was just go, go, go, go, and that was probably a cross between spring and summer. And

then I would get to Harvest, and I would go back to spring and summer and Harvest, spring and summer, Harvest, spring and summer, Harvest.

And I forgot to do Restore and Reflect period, and that's really, really important, because that gives us, it gives us some more clarity on what's working, what's not working, so that we're not just adding random stuff into our business thinking that's going to help us grow. But we're actually, it helps us to set ourselves up for the Create and Build season, so that we can plant the right seeds. Because when we're in that reflection, that helps us to prepare for what's coming ahead, so that we can plant the right seeds, so that when we're planning our 90 day goals and putting the processes in place everything aligns with the vision that we're creating for our business, and we have the cashflow. We have the cashflow, because things get slow at that period.

So we know we have expenses coming in, we know obviously we have to make payroll. And the money that we invested back into our business during that Harvest season, now that's kind of coming in, and the people that we've invested to help us to grow to the next level, that's when we can really get ourselves set up for the next level of success. That's when we can really focus on, what do we need to do to scale our business?

You as a business owner, as a leader, as a CEO, what do you need to do less of so that you can do more of the things that you need to do, such as focusing on that vision, such as building relationships and connecting with people that you're going to be doing in the Create and Build phase, and the Growth and Connect phase. What can you do to set yourself up so that you can start in that next season in your business?

Also reflecting on what can you do to empower your team, how can you show up as an even better leader? What do you need to do differently so that you can scale to the next level? What has, what things, maybe that you have team members that are in the wrong places, so that when you've gone through these seasons, and you've gone through the busier seasons maybe they were struggling in some areas, how can you go back and do some training? How can you go back and do some, let people be creative, let them take a break and breathe and focus on what they could do better, and how they could show up better?

That season of Restore and Reflect is so very important, and it's a season that a lot of people skip. And skipping also means that literally they rest and do nothing, so that when we get to, okay it's time to Create and Build they're creating things that don't align with what they want to do, they're doing more of the things that didn't work, and then they can't figure out why they can't get started, or why things are kind of all over the place and don't really align.

So these seasons, even though a lot of people do name them spring, summer, fall, winter, okay I've seen that a lot, or like I said growing up around farmland they have their seasons too. But I want you to think of it more from the action standpoint, and how it relates to that season. So like I said, the spring, I call that ... the first one is Create and Build. That's when we're really focusing on brainstorming ideas, and getting clarity on our purpose, and really putting things into place. That's the time to, if you have projects that you really want to do, new events, new services, new offers, that's the time to really start to get things ramped up. If you want to launch a new product that's the time to really build your strategy, that's the strategy phase, to really get the strategy going and start executing.

And then the second one is that Growth and Connect, like summer, to really see things. You have that strategy in place and you've started executing, and it aligns with your vision for where you want to go and what your team is focusing on to make a bigger difference in this world, so the Growth and Connect, or summer, is that time to really watch things blossom and really watch things bloom, and see those projects really coming to fruition.

You're also starting to get to the point, it's that ramp up phase, and then we come to the next one, and you're nurturing your seeds, you're watering your seeds, you're building connections, you're doing all that stuff, it's that runway phase like in a launch, or even with a new event or a project, or anything really, it's that building the excitement so that you can harvest it.

You know, you have lots of cashflow coming in, you have customers coming in, it's your biggest time of year, it's that biggest ... And it could be, these seasons, you might cycle, I've seen people cycle every quarter. I've seen people cycle like each quarter is a season for them, it's different for each business, it just depends on your business, what you do, the products that you offer, and kind of how you build your strategies. So it could be different for each business.

And then you have your winter, which is your Rest and Restore. So just because you're in retail doesn't mean that January and February are your Restore months, and then March and April are going to be your spring months, or March, April, May are your spring months, it doesn't go like that. It could be different for each business. I've seen retail stores where January is their Reflection month, okay. Then they ramp up, and they start brainstorming February, and so their Create and Build is February and March, and then April and May becomes their summer, actually May and June become their fall, their Harvest. And then July and August start to slip, and then they start to go back up again. So it's different for each business.

It's just a matter of, and really what it comes down to with these seasons and managing is, it comes down to building that experience, and looking at your business not as just another business in your industry, but looking at it as an icon. And really focusing on what you can do to not just sell product or service, or service, but to really focus on building a signature experience.

And that's why I say that these seasons are different for each business. It doesn't necessarily matter what industry you're in, or what other businesses in your area, what their seasons are, what matters is what you're building for yourself. You know, businesses are shifting and changing, and there is a new generation, a new generation economy and a next level of business that we really want to focus on going to, and it's more about creating that signature experience that's unique to you for the people that you really want to help and serve.

So the seasons, that's why seasons can be so different in each business. It doesn't matter what it is across the industry. I mean sure, we pay attention to industry trends, but depending on what you are building to build your business, and what you are doing to create those unique experiences, your seasons could be completely different. You might see some ebbs and flows in sales depending on what industry standard is, or what the industry is forecasting.

It doesn't have to be that way. Just because they're saying that retail, and I've seen this time and time again with my clients, just because they say that retail is low, I mean I've seen clients where they forecasted that retail was going to be low in certain months and they blew it out of the water. Because

they didn't focus on being a retail store, they focused on being an icon in their area, and in their industry, by building an experience and by focusing on where their different seasons were and what season they were in, and then using that season to prepare for the next season, or even using that season to prepare for where they're going in the future. And that's the difference.

So think about it, where are you in your business? What season are you in? Are you skipping a season like I was at one point? One of the most important ones, which was to Restore and Reflect, reflect back. I mean one of the biggest exercises that I do with clients in that Restore and Reflect season is we take a look at, and we dig in at what worked, what didn't work. Where are they, what are other people doing in their industry, and where are they, what do they do differently? What products and services are kind of not really fitting with what the vision is, and really what the vision is. Where do they want to go, what do they want to do? What difference do they want to make in this world?

And that is the biggest, biggest, it's one of the most important seasons, because it kind of sets you up for everything else, and gets you moving in the right direction. It allows you that space and time and grace to give yourself room to be creative, to really create and really have that creativity time. To think about, "How can I make a difference? How can I make a bigger impact in this world with what my business does?" And it gives you that space to do that, because the next season is all about creating and building, and then after that it's all about growing and connecting. And then after that it's harvesting so we can get back to Restore and Reflect.

So I hope this helped you. And one thing also to remember is we don't ever want to plan for our current circumstances, because we're always going to be growing. We're always going to be ... it's cyclical. Just like we have 24 hours in a day, the sun always comes up the next day. The sun always comes up, it always sets, the moon comes up, the moon goes down. That always happens, it always is light and then dark, and then light, and then dark. So it's always cyclical, same thing with our business. We just have to learn what season we're in, what we need to focus on in that season, so that we can manage our business better and we can continue to scale to the next level.

Just like seasons don't really skip here, although sometimes, I don't know, our spring tends to be shorter now, and the summer longer. But still, we always have the different seasons, so we're always going to have seasons in our business. It's just a matter of what you're doing to create an experience versus just being another business in your industry. So, I don't know, I think I'd rather be an icon than just another business.

So I hope this episode helped you. And remember, you can't change your circumstances, the seasons, or the wind, but you can change yourself. You can be different, you can set yourself apart, and you can be an icon. So I hope this episode helped you, and I think I said that three times. And I thank you so much for joining me, and I look forward to seeing you next week, take care, and have a great one.