

Hey there and welcome to another episode of the Your Next Best Step podcast. I am your host, Theresa Cantley, and I am super, super, super excited that you're here for yet another episode talking all about business strategy, marketing, strategy, leadership, and everything in between. I am super, super excited to talk about this week's episode because working with a lot of local business owners, I run into this a lot where people, I hear from people a lot, they want to be popular, they want to be the most popular place.

And before I dig in, I wanted to tell you a little story because today we're going to talk about how popular can be a distraction if you want to be an exceptional business. And long ago, long ago, seven years ago to be exact, my husband and I decided after many, many years being together that we were going to, that we decided, "Okay, you know what? It's time we really do this and make our marriage formal and actually get married," because we had been together for 13 and a half, 14 years, 14 years.

And so we decided that we wanted to get married and we're looking at all of these popular places in the Caribbean because I wanted to have my wedding next to blue water. I wanted it to be warm because it was my second marriage. My first wedding was a big Italian, like the big fat Greek wedding, it was a big Italian wedding with a big giant poof froufrou dress, way back in the early nineties, crazy town. So for this wedding, I wanted to do it the way that I really wanted it, and I wanted it just very small and intimate, and I wanted to go to the Caribbean.

So again, we're getting on Condé Nast's list and we're looking at all these popular destinations and all these popular places. And we were talking to the travel agent and she said, "How about you look at the Island of Nevis?" And we were like, "Nevis, where the heck is that?" I was like, "No, everybody's going to Turks and Caicos or everybody's going to Aruba. What about like a place like that?" And she said, "No. I think you should really look at the Island of Nevis." And she said, "It's in the Caribbean, it's next to Saint Kitts." And I'm like, "Oh, okay."

So I look and the island is pretty. It doesn't have any chain restaurants or chain hotels, not mega chain hotels. And there is one hotel, one big hotel on the island and the other ones were smaller, more boutique type hotels. And the big hotel that was on there was a Four Seasons and I was like, "Okay." There were no Hyatts, there's one on Saint Kitts, a Hyatt on Saint Kitts, but there's a Marriott in Saint Kitts, but Nevis didn't really. It had the Four Seasons and it had a bunch of like boutique hotels, smaller hotels. Bed and breakfast, a lot of bed and breakfast. But it was very not built up. There is a mountain, a dormant volcano, on the island.

And I'm looking at this, and I'm looking at this Four Seasons and it's not your typical Four Seasons. It was very spread out with all these gardens at the base of this mountain. And I'm like, "I've never heard of this place. Are you sure it's going to be okay?" And I remember saying to my husband, "This place isn't traveled to a whole lot. It's not one of the popular places, so do you think it's going to be okay?" And he's like, "Of course it's going to be okay. She wouldn't have recommended it if it wasn't going to be okay, Theresa."

So I kept going on and I remember going on and on and on looking at these pictures of this island, and looking at pictures of the resort and thinking, oh my gosh, is it going to be good enough? People don't even know about it. Even today, you say, "Oh yeah, we go to the Island of Nevis." They're like, "Where? What did you say? Knee? Knee, what Nevis? Nevis? Nev?" Yeah, so not a popular place.

So like I said, for the wedding, I'm freaking out thinking, oh man, even though it's a Four Seasons, this is going to be, I don't know, it doesn't look like a normal Four Seasons and it kind of looks kind of empty and there's nothing to do on the island and this is, this is not going to be good. I'm not sure.

Well, we get there, you have to fly into Saint Kitts, and then from Saint Kitts, the Four Seasons comes and picks you up. And I'm like, "I don't know," again. We're driving through Saint Kitts and I'm like, "This

is not going to be good. I don't know. This isn't one of the more popular places. It's not a big destination." And next thing you know we get in this boat and we take this shuttle, this boat across. Nice boat. They're offering you drinks, rum punch of course because you're in the Caribbean.

And we start to pull up to this Island and I'm like, "Oh my." The most beautiful lush flowers and you see this amazing mountain in the back, the dormant volcano, lush and green. And we found out that that was actually a rainforest where in a tropical rainforest there's a lot of plants and herbs and medicinal things in there. On the top of this mountain is this extraordinary cloud that supposedly never moves, or very rarely moves, and it looks like snow on the top of the mountain. And I think it was Christopher Columbus is the one that named it Mount Nevis, Mount Nev. And it stands for the mountain of snow.

And I'm looking around and we get greeted by these such nice people at the dock, and the only people in the boat where me and the people from my wedding, 14 people. And they greet us at the dock and each one of them individually takes each couple to their room separately. You don't have to go check in at the front lobby, you don't have the herds of people coming in at the same time and, and they're driving you through the resort and they're explaining everything. And I'm looking about at how sprawling the grounds are and how lush and beautiful the flowers are and how beautiful the buildings are, and everything is open air and where the main building is, where like where you eat. And this open air bar area and the beaches were just white sands and the water was blue. And I'm looking around and I'm like, "Wow."

And then we get to our room and it's this big open room that goes out in 12 balcony that's overlooking the ocean and the guy goes to leave after he helped us with our luggage, and my husband says, "So are you still doubting that we didn't pick a popular place for our wedding?" So I was like, "No, I'm not doubting this anymore at all." And ever since then, we go back there time and time again, year over year because it is an exceptional place, an extraordinary place. A place that is rare and uncommon and so different and so out of the ordinary from the popular spots.

So I wanted to talk about this because so often local business owners that I've worked with, or that I've talked to, have this focus, this super focus, on we need to be the most popular, we need to have the most likes, we need to have the most followers, we need to have the most reviews, we need to be the most popular business, and that's what their focus is. And they set their sights on that. We need to be the most popular business in the area. I even had one client at one time that said to me, "We want to start a YouTube channel." And I was like, "Okay, great." And he goes, "We want to be the biggest YouTube channel out there for our industry. And we want our all our videos to go viral and have and just create these viral videos."

And the thing is is that when we focus more on being liked and being popular, you make it more about you and less about your customer. And what ends up happening is that when we have that focus on us and what we want and being the most popular place, that's how we can really lose that focus on our purpose, right? So as I said, I've worked with a lot of local businesses, I've worked with a lot of business owners. And when we talk about their goals, and we talk about why did they start their business and what is it that they want to achieve with it, what is their vision? And many times over the number one thing is, "Well, I want to make money."

The number two thing is, "I want to be the best in the area." I always hear, "I want to have the best burgers, I want to have the best wings, I want to have the best... I want to be the best retail store. We want to be busy all the time." Instead of thinking more along the lines of, "I want to have my business be the best business in the area because we take care of our customers," or, "Because we are different," or, "We are the place to go. We are the place to be in the area because we don't do things like everybody else does because we have such a unique offering." And when we focus on being popular, we're

focusing on just that external glamor, fame and fortune thing instead of focusing on what that deeper meaning is in our business.

And all the businesses that I've ever known where their focus is fame and fortune have not lasted very long. Either they burn out or the business burns out. I've seen many, many restaurants where they open up and they are the place to go, they are the popular spot, and they don't last that long because guess what? That popular sense, it's a fad. And what happens with fads, they change. It's trendy, they change. So instead of focusing on that, that is where we need to focus on because if you want to be extraordinary, if you want to be exceptional and extraordinary and uncommon and rare and different, there is no path or there's not a set blueprint to get there. That is where carving your own path and figuring out what makes your business unique is so very important.

And the businesses that do carve their own path and the businesses that really focus on that they want to be exceptional, and they want to be exceptional because they're creating something different. Those are the people that really understand who their customer is. They understand that it's not everybody. Yes, you'll get a variety of people that will frequent your business, but they know who their ideal customer is. And anything and everything that they offer, sell, build, do stems from what they believe a pairing of what they know their ideal customer is going to want and enjoy and want to come back time and time and time and time again for, and what their own super strengths are in a business and when we can figure that out, when we have that focus more on being exceptional, and having our business be exceptional, and creating exceptional offers and services, that is how we can end up creating that popularity anyway.

And it's not about being popular. It's more about creating a place that people just want to frequent. They want to shop there, they want to dine there. They want to go there time and time again because it makes them feel good. The experience that you've built for your customers, for your community, for the people that work for you, it makes people feel good. Being popular doesn't necessarily make people feel good. It's a vanity. It's just the vanity metrics of how many likes do you have and how many followers do you have? I had a client one time that said to me, "We're offering this new class and we want to get guest teachers to come in. But we only want to get guest teachers to come in that have over 10,000 followers on their page." And it was like why? You could have somebody who has 10,000 followers on their page and only 10 people are really engaged with them. And you could have somebody who has a hundred followers on their page and a hundred of those followers are engaged with them. Who has the bigger engaged following, right?

So it's not a matter of, and that's where many business, and I don't care if you're an online business or if you're a local business, and I see it time and time again, and I will say, I am guilty of this too, that you look at somebody's page or you look at something and you see the outside and you see that they have 20,000 followers or 20,000 likes, or a YouTube video has 20,000 downloads. But how many of those people, how many of those likes and followers and the people that download it, how many of those people are super engaged, super engaged with that person who created the video? If it's 20,000, great. But more often than not, when we see those vanity metrics and we focus on those vanity metrics, that can actually derail the whole underlying purpose of our business anyway, and what we're really trying to accomplish in this world.

So instead of focusing on being popular, focus on being exceptional. What can you do to create an experience, an internal experience and an external experience that makes people feel good? What can you do to create exceptional services, exceptional products, like I said, an exceptional experience? And when we do that, when we do not get stranded with distracted, with being popular, because if we're focused on the vanity metrics that we're focused on, "I want to have the best wings." And we just focus

on that, that is a clear and big distraction for doing what we were really brought here to do, or doing what we were really meant to do with the business that we built in the first place.

Focusing on being popular is a super distraction and leads to comparing ourselves to others, comparing someone's front end to our back end. Comparing ourselves to everybody else in the area which leads, which starts a whole spiral of competing on price and competing on product and doing the coupon game, and doing things that really take us away and devalue our brand and devalue our business. But if we can stay focused on being exceptional, yes, it may take a longer period of time to get things up and running, to really get our message out there and to have people see it and to really build our business. But that slow growth, that's slow and steady growth of our business, and the more we focus on continually improving that experience, the more exceptional we're going to be and the more our business, we are building something that is going to last long after the first time they ever visit our establishment.

But when we focus on popular and just being popular, that becomes more about us and less about the people that we're trying to help. It becomes less authentic and it also completely derails us from the thing that we were actually meant to do in our business. So for me, I know I would rather focus on being exceptional. I know I would rather focus on what are my customers really need and how can I create that transformation for them in my business? Instead of how can I get more likes on social media? Because likes and followers don't necessarily transform into customers and buying and sales. But if we can focus on being exceptional, and being exceptional, that's what helps us to build better relationships with our customers. That's what helps us to build a better brand and just make people feel good, like I said.

So focusing on being exceptional is where we want to be if we want to be a thought leader, if we want to be a leader in our industry, if we want to carve our own path and build a business that makes a huge difference in this world. So what are you going to focus on? Are you going to focus on being popular or are you going to focus on being exceptional? I think if you're listening to this podcast, you're going to focus on being exceptional. So think about the things that you can do to be exceptional. How can you up level the experience for your customers? How can you build a deeper connection? How can you build a better relationship with them? And how can you really get your message out into the world?

So I hope you enjoyed this episode of the podcast and until we talk to each other next week, have a great rest of your week and may lots of blessings and miracles and magic fill your life. And I'll see you soon.