

Have you ever wondered what really does being authentic mean? We hear a lot of people talking about the need to be authentic. And really, what does that mean? And possibly, what should you be instead of being authentic? So today that's what we're talking about on the Your Next Best Step podcast, episode number 62.

I am your host Theresa Cantley, and I'm very, very happy that you're here with me this morning. I have my coffee, and I am ready to chat with you. My husband and I are still in the shelter in place at the time of this recording. My husband's been working from home, which has been great. I know a lot of people are like, "Ugh, having the kids home, having my spouse home, it's like mass chaos." But with us, it's actually been good. We realized that we love each other, but we really do like each other, too.

Just me listening to some of his conversations that he's had, conference calls with people and stuff and just kind of as he's been having these conference calls, listening to the way that they are focusing on solving challenges, but then also he's also getting a glimpse at my business and what I do and how I'm working to solve problems with people. And really, they're not that different. They're just in a different, between corporate and entrepreneurs, just a different way of ... just different perspective in a way of going about things.

But one of the things that we were talking about is content and messaging because I'm getting ready to ... Well, I'm actually in the middle of launching my Business Growth Formula as well as my Business Crisis Navigator program and talking about how people show up out there. It's funny because we were just having this conversation about we look at how people are, are on social media and what their external looks like, or I say what does the final show look like, and we're comparing their final show to our behind the scenes, and you really can't.

We were having this conversation about how some people, when you look at them and you just think to yourself, "Are they really that way? Is that really them being authentic?" And it's funny because we were just having, like I said, my husband and I were having this conversation about things and about what my Business Crisis Navigator is all about and what the Business Growth Formula is all about. And one of the things that we talk a lot about in there is building your brand. Because if you focus on building your brand, you'll end up building your business as a result of it.

So today, I was listening to this podcast, because part of my morning routine is I get up, I meditate, I write in my book, I plan my day, I have a cup of coffee, talk to my husband. And one of the things that I do most days is I listen to a podcast. I was listening to this podcast today, and they were talking about, and it was just funny, about how this word authentic is kind of all over the place and how you need to be authentic. And is that really being authentic? Like I said, it was just funny because my husband and I were having this conversation about building your brand and what does that look like. And when you build your brand ... And really, what is a brand? It's a set of stories and experiences, feelings and emotions that, this is Seth Godin's definition of it and I'm paraphrasing it, that determine whether or not somebody is going to buy from you or buy from someone else.

So this podcast this morning was all about being authentic, and really what does that mean, and really what you should be instead. It was funny because it was enlightening for me to listen to this podcast and really absorb what they were saying. Because so many people they'll say, "Well, I don't want to do that," and they use authenticity, or not being authentic, as an excuse not to do something. So they'll say, "I don't want to do that because it doesn't feel authentic to me." Well, what does that really mean anyway? When the speaker was saying this on the podcast, I was like, "Wow. That really does make sense." And I've heard a lot of people say, "Well, we don't want to do that because it's not authentic to us." And they say this before they really understand really what they're about to begin with.

When I've worked with lots of businesses and we've talked about ... When I've started working with businesses and we do the initial visit, the initial call, and I'll say, "Well, these are some of the things that I recommend that you do. I recommend that we need to change the copy, or we need to change this, or we need to we need to focus on the experience." And I've had people say to me, "Well, that doesn't feel authentic to me." Well, how can it be authentic to you if you don't even really know what your business is about and what you stand for, right?

I heard this this morning, and it made so much sense. It's something that I talk about a lot, and I think I'm going to talk about even more is instead of focusing on being authentic, we need to focus on being consistent. And I don't mean consistent. I mean, part of it is being consistent and showing up every day and serving our customers and putting ourselves out there, but being consistent with what feels right to us based on what we stand for.

The example that they used this morning is that if Hulk Hogan ... He's a brand. He's not necessarily a person, but a brand. So if Hulk Hogan decided that he was going to open up a flower shop, well, that doesn't necessarily ... That's not consistent with who his brand is. It's funny because with everything going on in the world today, and I talked about this last night, and it's just so fitting that I talked about this on a Facebook live and this morning I'm listening to this podcast about it, is that so much right now I see people, businesses that are trying so hard to keep their business, to keep themselves in business, and to save their business, that they start doing things that are not consistent with really who they are. I think that ends up happening a lot because people haven't spent the time to figure out really what they're about besides the products and the services that they sell. They define themselves as we are a restaurant, but not really what their brand is about.

That's why I go back to my first statement of ... And I learned this long ago from one of my own mentors, is that if you focus on defining and building a brand, your business will build as a result of it. So when we talk about this whole authentic versus consistent, being consistent keeps us in alignment, and that's really what it comes down to. But in order to be consistent and be in alignment, we really need to first, number one, is discover who it is that we are. What is our brand really all about, and what is it that we stand for?

Like I said, I see a lot of business owners who just open up a business and they say, "I'm a restaurant," or, "I'm a retail store," and that's all they are. And you know what? And that's fine for some people. But when we have downturns in our business, no matter what it is, coronavirus or not, when we have downturns, the thing that ends up saving us is not random tactics, and strategies, and trying anything and everything and throwing it at the wall, and functioning in chaos. That's not what's going to save our business. What's going to end up saving our business is connecting back to what that brand is and staying consistent with it.

What I mean by that is understanding, yes, you are a restaurant, but what are you beyond that? Are you a place that wants to make people feel good and create an atmosphere that people can come and gather and feel comfortable and feel like you're at Cheers, the old show Cheers. Or are you a gift shop that teaches people how to redecorate their home with what they have as well as decorate, find things that will make their home feel even warmer, turn a house into a home?

So understanding what it is that you stand for, and what your brand is about, and staying consistent with that because then the next piece of this, the next part that really becomes important is when we are consistent with what our brand is about, there's a deeper purpose there than just what we sell. And the deeper purpose is, is that we are making the work that people want or making the work that people want to share.

I have a client who they understand what their brand is about. They're very, very consistent and in alignment with what they do and what they put out there. And if it doesn't align, they don't put it out there, and they move from that place first. So in this coronavirus pandemic, they've been staying true to that and staying true to being consistent with what they've always been known for, and the biggest thing that they've been known for is creating community. I mean, yes, they're a restaurant, but the bigger thing that they're known for is creating community through the love of food and good times.

They have been doing a lot of charitable things. They've been doing a lot of connecting with their community. What's ending up happening because they've been moving from that space is that people are sharing out their content. People are commenting on it, and thanking them, and appreciating it. And they didn't do it to become famous. They did it to be consistent and stay in alignment with who they are, but to also do what they can to help people because that's part of who they are. But then also, they know that if they stay in alignment with what they're about, they will be able to put additional services out right now, alternative services out right now, that people need but also that people want.

And it's funny because I had somebody say to me, "Well, I hope that out of all of this we become the top rated pub in the area, the top rated restaurant. I hope that we do. We should put a press release out. A press release should be put out of all the things that we're doing so we get voted as the top pub." And I looked at this person and I said, "That's not consistent with who you are. These things are happening.

People are appreciating what you're doing and you're getting visibility from it because you are consistent with your brand and because it means more to you to help the community and stay connected as best as you possibly can with what you do than it does to be famous. So if you want to put a press for like press release out there to get fame and notoriety, it will fall flat, and it's not staying in alignment and staying consistent with who you are. Because when we can stay in alignment and when we can stay consistent, the effect of that is having that authenticity to ourselves and to our business."

So if we don't focus on being authentic and instead focus on being consistent and in alignment, we can then, the third piece is, becoming irreplaceable. Become the business that people want to go to, that people want to visit frequently, and contact, and be around because you have shone, shine, shined a light where there was darkness in a time like this. Or in any market, you're able to shine a light on what people want, what people enjoy, what people are passionate about, or even things that people need because of staying in alignment and staying consistent with what you have defined your business to be all about, which becomes your brand.

Just like Nike is a brand, we know what to expect from Nike. We know how to feel when you see Nike or what Nike is going to deliver. So no matter what Nike does, whether it's clothing, or sneakers, or building a hotel, we would know what to expect because we understand and they've always stayed in alignment and stayed consistent with what the Nike brand is about. But some other brands out there, such as maybe Hyatt, or Marriott, or ... If they decided to open up a sneaker business, we wouldn't necessarily know what to expect. Because what is Hyatt? I mean, it's a name of a hotel chain, but what is their brand about? Nike has a very strong presence as a brand.

So does Apple. Apple has a very strong presence as a brand. Apple, we know what to expect. Some other businesses out there that compete with Apple, we don't necessarily know what that set of stories, or expectations, or experiences are with them because they focus more on building a business than building a brand. And remember, a brand is a set of experiences, expectations, stories, feelings, emotions that determine why someone would buy from one person versus another, right?

So how can we be irreplaceable? How can we become that business that people want to go to time and time again, no matter what the market is? And the more we stay consistent with who we are and stay in alignment with what our brand is all about, no matter what we do, people will know what to expect and they will know that we are a phenomenal business, a phenomenal brand. They will know. They know

that whatever we deliver, it's going to be amazing. It's going to be the work that people want to share. It's going to be the work that's going to make things better because we focus on making better things.

So it's not about being authentic, and people throw ... I realize this now. People throw that word around a lot. It's more about alignment. Alignment. And you can't get into alignment if you don't know what you're aligning with to begin with. So no matter what the market is, whether it's now or whether it's in a thriving market, understanding what you are in alignment with and what that difference is that you want to make in this world will help you to become irreplaceable, will help you to be consistent, to stay consistent with what you're putting out there, but will also help you to keep your business going no matter what happens with it.

Because if we are consistent and in alignment with our brand and we fully understand what we stand for and what we're trying to do, the bigger cause. No matter what happens, we will be able to rebuild, and redefine, and move forward. If we solely focus on our products, and services, and being like everybody else, and being famous, and having that big fortune, then when things like this happen, when those downturns happen, or no matter what happens in our business, it's harder to recover from that.

So think of this in your own business, not so much being authentic, but being consistent in an alignment. This was a big epiphany for me and looking at it because I do talk a lot about alignment. I always talk about it in the sense of people don't necessarily have an achievement problem, but they have an alignment problem because I've seen ... And this is what happens when people want to work with me, is they built their business to a certain extent and they can't go any further than that. They haven't had a problem achieving, but they have a problem aligning. They have an alignment problem. They're doing things that aren't in alignment. They're doing things that aren't consistent with their business because they don't really know what their business is all about. So in order to go to the next level and scale or come out of a crisis like this, one of the things that you need to understand is what is the deeper purpose of your business because that's how we can come back to a foundation to build stability and to continue to move forward. Don't think about being authentic, think about being consistent and in alignment.

When I listened to that this morning, I wanted to share this with you. Because with everything going on, the more we can stay in alignment, the more we can understand what we're about, what our brand is about, not necessarily our business, because our business will follow, but what our brand is about, the more we can stay consistent and stay in alignment and put things out that we know people need right now, that we know our customers are really struggling with and we know we have a solution to help them. And that will keep us going and continue to make us irreplaceable.

I hope this helped you. I hope you have a great rest of your week. I would love if you would ... If you have friends that need to hear this message, please share this out. I would also love, love, love, and it would be important to me because I read every single one of them, if you could go on and leave a review on iTunes. I would absolutely love it. Every time someone leaves a review, it helps me to get my message out there and get my mission out there, which is to help small business owners to really dig in and think differently, to lead differently, and to also achieve the freedom that they want to live an extraordinary life. So please, I would love, love, love and be so very, very grateful if you would leave a review, and then if you could also share it out to your friends, share this message out to someone that really needs it and needs to hear it. So until next week, have a great rest of your week. Stay healthy, stay safe, and I will talk to you soon.