

Theresa Cantley:

Hello there. And welcome back. I am Theresa Cantley and I am a business growth strategist. And I wanted to talk today about two things that people are really looking for. Two things. The past 19 months or so, for some businesses, it's actually been the past two years, things have been changing, things have been shifting. And then when COVID happened, when the pandemic happened, it really exposed a lot of different things that were good and not so good in different industries. And since the pandemic things have just shifted and changed. A lot of industries were affected. If you read the news, if you watch the news, right now they're talking about disruptions in supply chains, from plastic silverware, to electronics, to cars, to, you name it. They're talking about increases in costs, food costs, different product costs that are out there.

I heard a news report, this is no surprise, but they're talking about, what to do with Christmas gifts and when to do your Christmas shopping and how that's going to be impacted. So there's like lots of craziness going on right now. Lots of stuff. Okay. And like I said, some industries have been harder hit than others, but I think pretty much every industry across the board, I think business has just had so many disruptions. And as I said, the pandemic really, it impacted a lot of this, with the market opening back up, economies opening back up and waking up again after the slumber of quieting down or having to shut down because of the pandemic, people are trying to get production back up and running, people are trying to get supplies back up and running and just get supplies.

So you have the economies waking back up and things starting to happen but then also having such a disruption in production and the two converging together, it has just caused a ripple effect. So like I said, I think it's just impacted so many different industries. It's just business in general. Okay. And the one thing that I wanted to bring this up because as we are experiencing all of these issues, I have clients who are involved in electronics, to clients that are restaurants and across the board they've all been experiencing this. But I wanted to talk about this because there is a similarity or a common theme, commonality across all industries of what customers are looking for now in business because of what we've had to deal with the pandemic.

And we had the pandemic that happened, back in 2008 we had the recession. There is always something that's going to happen. And every time we have something like this, every time we have a crisis, whether it's in our business or just in the world in general, there are always going to be changes, it's going to point out where we've always hindered our growth as a society, or as an individual business, or just as an individual where we've hindered our growth and also, it points out areas that we can innovate on. It points out areas that really need somebody to step up and say, "Hey, I got this. I can make a change. I can make a difference." It points out where we need to collectively make things better.

So, as I said, in looking at the pandemic and looking what's happened over the past 19 months, even let's just say two years, there are two things that people are really looking for, whether you are talking about the car industry, or the food industry, or retail industry, whatever it is And I think the pandemic really pointed this out. And these two things that people are looking for are convenience and connection. Convenience and connection. In my opinion, in my expert opinion based on working with small business owners, local business owners for 10 years now and even prior to that, I think that particularly before the pandemic happened, I think we were moving at such a fast pace and things were starting to happen in the world was changing and new things were being introduced and things were just moving at such a fast pace that we had a tendency to over-complicate things.

I work a lot with the restaurant industry and I've seen people over complicate drinks that they're making, over complicate food, their menus. I remember going into a restaurant and sat down with my husband, you got five different menus. And it was like, what am I supposed to be looking at? Okay. So over complicating menu items, over complicating seating, over complicating drinks and just over

complicating everything. But again, that's just one industry. I think it's been happening in many different industries. And when you work with me, one of the things that we focus on is creating an experience. It's not just about the products that you sell, it's not just about the service that you offer, but it's about the experience that you create. Now, that experience doesn't start on the outside. It doesn't start with your customer.

It actually starts on the inside with your people, the people that work for you, your leadership team, if you do have a leadership team, but also it starts with you. So when we talk about the convenience and the connection, there's two separate things that we want to look at. So let's start with convenience. People want to be able to get food easily. All right. It's getting colder out. We have all these different variants that are coming up with the COVID virus and people are maybe not going to want to go out to eat and sit inside. So having it be convenient to order out, to get food, to be able to dine there and if they don't feel comfortable being inside, what does that look like? So when we talk about convenience, and this is one thing that the past 19 months has pointed out, is that a lot of businesses, as I said, we were over-complicating things.

We were moving at such a fast pace and we were over-complicating things. So now what we need to do is we need to go back and we need to optimize our operations. So how do we optimize our operations? What does that look like? That means how can we make things easier, better, faster, more ideal in a busy situation so that we can keep the highest level of quality, but do things in the least amount of steps so that we're not over-complicating things? All right. Taking a look at what do our standard processes look like? Do we even have any processes? And what I've experienced when people come to me and say, "I need to increase cashflow." Okay. That's great. When we go back and we look at, all right, what are your operations look like? How can you get someone from point A to point B in the smallest amount of steps, but keep the highest amount of quality in your service, or your product, or whatever?

What does that look like? And most people that I've talked to don't have those standard processes in place. So when we are looking at what is making something convenient for somebody? If you're a retail store, it could be online shopping. It could be doing personalized virtual shopping. Okay. What does that look like? All right. How can we deliver the highest quality of whatever it is in the shortest amount of steps? All right. How can we make things less complicated? It might be cutting down your menu items. It might be curbside whatever, curbside delivery, curbside pickup, curbside whatever that looks like. How can we optimize our operations so that we can do more? And when I say do more, it could be more sales, it could be do more in the terms of customer experience.

And it could do more volume of whatever that looks like. So how can we make things convenient for somebody but not sacrifice our quality? And it's funny because some people say, "Well, how is that even possible?" Well, I can tell you this, prior to the pandemic, I witnessed many businesses who had it in their mind that if we over-complicate, we have all these steps and all these things and add more inventory to our mix, it's going to make things better for customers. And what it did is, it made things confusing. And as I've heard many times over, a confused mind doesn't buy. A confused mind isn't happy. A confused mind isn't going to come back time and time again. So if we take away that over complication or take away that confusion and simplify things, that's how we're able to amplify the level of service we are providing for our customers, but also for our staff, for ourselves.

Okay. So that's the convenience side of it. So taking a look at your business and how can you optimize what you're doing? How can you uncomplicate it? How can you simplify it? On the other side of it is connection and this is a big thing. Right everybody is craving live connection. Right now things in the world just feel heavy, they feel stressed. I know people have been working their butts off, even if they're still working from home, they're working harder than they ever did. And just with everything

that's been happening, it's very heavy. All right. And people are feeling it. So people crave connection now more than ever, but it doesn't necessarily mean it has to be live connection. It could be some kind of virtual connection. It could be connection in the form of a handwritten note.

So taking a look at this connection and taking a look at your business and saying, we have two different things. We have relational, which is building those relationships. It's building that connection, versus transactional, which is just looking at our business and saying, "How can we sell more? How can we get more customers in the door so we can have more cash? How can we get more customers in the door so we can have more sales?" So there's a difference between the two. So when we look at relational, when we look at how can we be more relational in our business, that's how we look at our customers and our employees and our staff and our leadership team and whatever, our vendors and it's like, how can we build better relationships through what we do? So if you are in the retail industry, how can we recognize people who come in and visit our store or shop online?

How can we recognize them in a more personalized way? How can we go above and beyond to serve them? It's not just a matter of selling to them or having them come in our restaurant and buy meals from us, or even come into whatever business, our yoga studio, or our car or showroom... I can't even get my words out, our showroom and buy something from us. It's not just about that, but it's about how can we be more relational? How can we build that stronger and better relationship? How can we go above and beyond to serve? I taught a class last week, a workshop for one of my clients and it was all about building relationships, not just having transactions. How can we build a deeper relationship with our customers?

How can we create that better experience by learning more about them, really, by learning more about them and simply asking more questions? Going above and beyond just selling stuff in a store. So how can we go to a higher level of service for our customers? How can we go to a higher level of service for our employees? For employees, it's not just about telling them what to do, but educating them, taking time to understand what their concerns are, taking time to understand what it is that they want and focusing on what do they need to learn and focusing on building a better relationship with them. Transactional is just simply, again, you're hired to give a speech, you come to the event, you give your speech and you sneak out the back door. You collect your check and you sneak out the back door.

That's transactional, versus relational. So you're hired to give a speech. You come to the event, you give your speech, you stay around and answer questions, do a Q&A, or even you hang around even after the event to do additional Q&A. In a store, transactional is just customers come in, they buy their items, maybe they'll ask questions, maybe you have a small conversation with them and then you check them out and they leave. Relational is they come in, you ask them how they're doing, you have a conversation with them, you show them different things. Maybe you tell them stories about the different products. At the end of the day, you walk outside, around, you walk around the cash register, you hand them their bag, you thank them for their visit and then you also take time to take some notes down and potentially send them a thank you card, a handwritten thank you card for their purchase.

It's how can you build that connection? Okay. How can you build that connection? How can you build that lifetime relationship so that it makes them want to come back and see you time and time again? How can you build that deeper connection so that you're building a relationship, you're building a deeper relationship with the people that are buying from you, or coming to see you, or getting a service from you, whatever that looks like? Okay. Because at the end of the day, it's not about the product that you sell or the service that you provide. It's not about that at all. It's about building connection. It's about building connection and building community. And a lot of small businesses forget that point, because I know we get tied up in, we need to make money, we need to make money, we need to make money and we forget about the other stuff.

And then we wonder why things aren't necessarily working. So how can you be more relational? How can you build a relationship and build connection, versus just focusing on the transaction? So the two things we want to focus on are, how can we build more convenience into our business? How can we go from live experience to virtual experience and keep the same level of connection, keep the same level of experience, whether they are live with you or they're virtual? Okay. How can we optimize our operations and get rid of the complexity, that's the word, complexity, not over complicatedness, but complexity in our business so that we can optimize our operations and optimize what we're doing so we can simplify to amplify? And then the second thing is the connection piece.

How can we be more relational in our business, versus transactional? How can we build better relationships with our customers? How can we have more of a personalized experience, versus just focusing on the sale? How can we get to know our customers better? How can we talk to them and find out what it is that they really like and what it is that they don't really like so that we can make that experience better for them? Okay. So the two things that you want to focus on, again, this past 19 months, two years, if you want to stretch it out, has been difficult and it's really exposed the challenges and the areas of businesses where we've hindered our own growth, or even as business owners how we've hindered our own growth and also it's shining a light on the things that we can actually improve on.

So that we can make things better, we can make our business better, but we can also have better relationships and better connection with our customers, but also with our team and our employees. Because remember, at the beginning of this I said, experience doesn't start on the outside. It starts on the inside. It starts with, how do we connect with our team? How do we connect with our management? How do we connect with herself? How do we show up so that we can build a better inside so that we can have it flow to the outside? So remember, convenience and connection. Those are the two things that we want to focus on that will make our business better and will also help us to provide a better experience for our customers.

So hope this helped you. I would love to hear what your biggest takeaway was. So make sure you leave a review. You leave a comment below because I read every single one of them, and I would love to hear what your biggest takeaway was. But until next week, have a great rest of your week. And I will see you soon. All right. Bye for now.