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Launching When You Don't Feel Ready

The Marketing Chat Podcast ep. 034

Podcast Transcript

Welcome! Thanks for being here today!

If you're a new entrepreneur, you may delay launching a program because you don't feel "ready." Even if you're an established entrepreneur, launching a new program can feel daunting if it's something you haven't done before. Maybe it's something that's branching out for you, and you're sort of testing the waters.

In both cases, new entrepreneur or established entrepreneur, you aren't sure how your audience will respond or even if your program is something they'll want.

Man, do I feel you! Working for myself since 1999, I've been there so many times. In fact, I just went through it the past couple of months.

I just launched the Women Podcasters Academy, like, a few days ago! And it was really daunting.

Even though I've worked for myself for more than 20 years, this business is still pretty new. I scrapped my old list and started at zero in this business. So, my list is pretty small in comparison.

Now, I've gotten questions since starting this business about podcasting. Since I host this podcast and co-host another at Geek Girl Soup—since 2011—people ask me for tips on how to start a podcast. They've also asked me to recommend courses on how to start a podcast. So, I decided to start a course and community of my own.

I know there's a demand. My ideal client has been asking for this! But I keep wondering if there's enough of a demand. And I keep wondering if my list is big enough to do this.

Basically, I've been wondering, "Am I ready to do this?"

I thought about waiting—waiting until I have X number of people on my list, waiting until another X number of people ask me about podcasting, waiting until another X number of people check out my blog posts and podcasts about podcasting.

But I decided that that's just an excuse. Yeah, it might make strategic sense—and financial sense—to wait. But there are two things in play with me—personality-wise and strategy-wise.

First, I'm both impatient and patient. When I decide to do something, I "Nike the shit" out of that thing and just do it! I don't like to wait! When something feels right, I know there's a demand, and I know I have the knowledge and experience to do it, I go for it —and quickly.

So, strategically, is this always a good idea? Like, with a small list, wouldn't it be better to wait and launch with a bigger list?

There's mixed advice on this.

With a larger list, you can make more money upfront when you launch. And, if you're launching a program that includes group face time, it looks better to have more people sign up. You have to think about how you'd feel if you don't get many registrations and you're doing Zoom meetings in a group where people can see each other. Are you cool with just a few people showing up?

Here's where the other part of my personality comes into play. Yes, I'm cool with that. I'm comfortable enough being vulnerable and telling the members, "Hey, y'all get my special attention! Y'all get more coaching than you would if there were more people here. So, be sure to show up to the live sessions to take advantage of this before more people join when I open up membership again in a few months!"

Also, even though I'm impatient to get started, I'm patient enough to let the program grow over time. It doesn't have to be huge right off the bat. I figure that, when founding members have a great experience, they'll tell other people about it. That word-of-mouth can help the program grow even more than starting out with a bigger list.

I can also get testimonials from founding members. Testimonials are great for helping people decide to join a new program. How do you get testimonials for a program unless you just go ahead and launch it?!

Then there's the feedback. Part of the hesitation in launching a new program is wondering how good the program will be. Will participants like it? Will they find enough value in it?

When you go ahead and launch, you can request feedback so that you can make tweaks for when you launch it again in the future.

So, I took all of this into consideration—my impatience to get started, my patience to let it grow over time, my desiring feedback, my need for testimonials, and the strategy of getting referrals—and I decided to launch "before I was ready."

You see, the thing is, *I* felt ready. I knew that there were people on my list and in my audience who were ready. The biggest questions were: Are there enough people ready to sign up, and will the program be what they're looking for?

So, there are two really great ways you can launch a program "before you're ready."

You can do what I'm doing and do a founding member's launch. Or you can do a beta launch.

With a beta launch, you are telling your clients that this first round of the program is a test and they're the guinea pigs!

You let them know that the price is super-low for that reason. You tell them that you'll want feedback and testimonials. Basically, they get the low price in exchange for feedback and testimonials. Even though it's a beta launch, or trial run, you're not holding back on content or quality. They're getting everything that you'd be giving in a full launch. You're just doing a beta launch to test things out.

Now, you're not asking for feedback every step of the way. You're the expert, and you're running the show. So, you take them through the program and ask for feedback at the end. You create a questionnaire or survey with mostly open-ended questions. And you can use any answers that come across as testimonials.

Then you outright ask for testimonials. And you may need to provide guidance or a format for them. You don't write the testimonials for your participants. But you can give prompts in the form of questions.

For example:

"What did you most like about the program?"

"What was the biggest benefit you got out of the program?"

"What was the biggest change you made as a result of the program?"

"Would you recommend this program to a friend or colleague?"

If you ask these questions as separate fields in a survey, then you can put them together as a testimonial or use the answers as soundbites.

Or you can use the prompts to ask for a one-paragraph testimonial. You can still pull out single sentences to use as soundbites.

A founding member's launch is very similar to a beta program, but you're not setting it up as a test. It's the real thing. But founding members get bonuses for signing up the first time you offer the program.

You give founding members the lowest price you'll ever offer. If your program is a membership, you'll keep them at that price for as long as they keep their membership active. If they cancel and sign up again later, they don't get to go back to their founding-member price. So, they'll have to keep their membership active to keep the founding-member price.

You should also give them some other bonus for signing up in the first launch. I'm giving my founding members a 1-on-1 session with me. In the future, I'll offer that only with an annual membership. For founding members, I have no annual membership option. When I increase the price in the next round, I'll make sure that the annual subscription costs more than what founding members will be paying over the course of a year so that founding members are still getting a great deal.

Now, you'll still ask founding members for testimonials. In fact, you'll want to ask for testimonials will every program you launch and every service you offer. You can't have too many testimonials!

You can also still ask founding members for feedback at the end of this first launch. But, again, this first launch isn't a beta program. You aren't telling them that you'll be asking for their feedback. Do it toward the end of the program when you ask for the testimonial.

How do you price a founding member's launch compared to a beta launch?

You'll price them both lower than what you'll end up pricing a full, regular launch in the future. A beta launch should be significantly lower. A founding-member's launch doesn't have to be quite as significant. But there does need to be a real difference in the mind of the participant.

For founding members of the Women Podcasters Academy, they're joining at only $20/month. I haven't decided yet if the next launch will be. Even if it's $25/month, that $5/month adds up to a significant difference of $60/year. That is a real measurable difference.

If you're offering a program for something like $197 or $297, for the next round, you'll want to increase it by at least $50. Increasing the price by $100 would be even better. And telling founding members or beta participants that upfront can really help. You don't have to be specific in your future price. You can say something like, "I'll be increase the price in the future by at least $50." (See how $100 makes the first launch sound even better?!)

Do these strategies help you feel more ready to launch your program?

If not, what's still holding you back? Is it a mindset issue?

Sometimes it's imposter thinking—feeling like a fraud, wondering if you're good enough to do this, wondering if people will approve of you, or even wondering if you're capable of doing this.

There's no quick-and-easy way to get out of imposter thinking. So, let me ask you a few questions.

Do you have the knowledge to run this program? Do you have the experience to run this program?

If you thought of it, I'm thinking that you do. Now, sometimes we have ideas that we don't have enough knowledge or experience to pull off. You need to be at least 10% ahead of your clients in order to teach them something. You need to be successful at the thing you're teaching before you should teach it to them.

For example, you shouldn't teach how to have a 6-figure business if you haven't created a 6-figure business. You shouldn't teach vegan diets if you're still eating dairy.

I'm assuming you are in integrity with your programs and with your clients, and you're teaching things where you *do* have knowledge and experience.

So, what specifically makes you feel "not good enough"?

Is it because you've never taught this before? Is it because you're comparing yourself to other people out there who have more experience and who've been running similar programs longer?

You know what? They started out with lists of zero. They started out never having taught this before. They started out with founding members' programs or beta launches. They've been exactly where you are! It took time for them to get where they are today.

And that could be you one day—but with your own unique voice and your own unique style. When other experts don't appeal to someone, you very well may!

Finally, what are you afraid of if some people don't approve of you?

What do you think they won't approve of? And *who* won't approve?

Whose approval specifically are you trying to win?

I want you to write about this one. Get an image in your head of who that is whose approval you desire. Is it a single, specific person? Is it a group of people?

What do you think they think of you right now?

Why would they disapprove when you launch this program?

Now, why does it matter if they disapprove? In other words, what effect would it have on you if they disapproved?

Also, how would you know if they disapproved? Would you be imagining it? Or would they actually get in touch to express their opinion?

So, what's the absolute worst thing that could happen if you launched "before you're ready"?

I thought about this a few times before I decided to launch the Women Podcasters Academy.

Here's what I came up with:

• Fewer people than I'd like would sign up
• I'd be embarrassed with not many people in the program
• I'd be spending money on a membership site that wouldn't pay for itself at first
• With not many people in the program, I'd be doing hours of work every week essentially for free
• Some people would think I'm crazy for launching with a small list

Now, with that one, who would know I have a small list? It's not as if people can log in to my email provider account and see my subscribers! The only way they know about my list is if I tell them. And I just told y'all. So, some of y'all may think I'm crazy.

But I'm cool with being vulnerable. I want to help y'all take action. So I need to be an example of that—even if that means showing vulnerability!

When I looked at my worst-case scenario, I decided that I could live with all of that—at least in the short term. Can I work essentially for free indefinitely? Of course now. But I can be patient enough to give the program time to grow. This won't be my primary source of income right now.

If I don't get as many registrations as I'd like, then I have answer for that for my participants—what I already mentioned earlier. I'll tell my members that they get more of my attention. I won't make excuses or explain myself. I'll focus on how special *they* are.

So, what you do think? Do you feel more ready?

I know you've got a great idea for a launch. If you've been holding back for a more "perfect" time, I want you to consider that there is not "perfect" time. Yes, there can be bad timing. But there is not "perfect" timing.

You can be strategic about your timing, as in, will people sign up over Memorial Day or July 4th? Is your program better for spring or fall?

Of course, you don't want to launch when you're about to go on vacation!

But many of those old "rules" about spring vs fall launches have gone out the window. Plus, with all the other people who still do spring and fall launches, you just may do better launching "off-season" when people don't have to pick between your program and the program of someone who's better known than you are.

So, what I want you do when you're done listening to this is:

• Do you writing or journaling that I suggested earlier about people disapproving of you
• Then I want you to look at your calendar and pick a launch date

Okay, so it doesn't have to be this week! You need time to plan out the program, create the materials, and leave a window for registration when you promote the program. That should be about a week.

So, after you put a launch date on your calendar, next schedule in a day to create an outline for your program. This should take just an hour or two. Don't dwell on it. It can be a rough outline that you tweak once you start creating the individual modules. Create an outline that includes the separate modules and lessons within each module.

Next you're going to schedule time to start creating the content for each module. I scheduled several full days to do this. To start with, I blocked out 3 consecutive days to create as much content as I could in one go. I wrote the worksheets for the how to podcast course part of the membership. Whatever I didn't get done, I scheduled block of time to finish on other days.

Then I blocked out days to record videos for each lesson. Then I scheduled blocks o time to edit the videos.

You don't have to block out all this time at once since you won't know how much time you'll need for everything until you get started. So, start with scheduling your launch date, your outline-creation date, and your content-creation date. From there you'll schedule more time to work on everything else you need to do—such as creating a new webpage or setting up a digital course platform, creating an email automaton, setting up your payment processor, writing your promo emails and social media posts, and writing your sales page.

Now, I know it sounds like a lot! So, write it all down in a document, or use a project management system. A bunch of them, like Asana, have free tiers.

Okay, I think you're ready! I know you can do this! And I don't want you to wait indefinitely for the "perfect" time.

Wherever you're listening to this, please leave a positive review and subscribe! You can leave comments on my website. Link in the show notes.

Thanks for being here! See you next time on the Marketing Chat Podcast!

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Women Podcasters Academy

Link to this episode

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Angela Kelly Smith is a marketing strategist, Squarespace website designer, and the founder of the Women Podcasters Academy. Her mission is to help women entrepreneurs create the successful business of their dreams through strategic marketing that establishes them as authorities in their field and helps them attract more of their ideal clients.