

The Legacy Lounge Podcast with Tiffany Neuman  
Season 1, Episode 17  
Legacy Leader on Values: Karen Seargeant

**INTRO:** Hi, I'm Tiffany and you are listening to The Legacy Lounge podcast. If you are a high achieving, mission-driven entrepreneur who wants to elevate your income, impact, and influence, you're in the right place.

I left my corporate career as a creative director for Fortune 500 brands to create a legacy with my work and to support entrepreneurs to do the same. I'm not talking about having your name on a building or statues in your image. I'm talking about leaving behind a positive impact and creating something enduring that can be passed on. You pour your time, energy and passion into your business, so let's make sure your efforts will create a ripple effect that reaches far into the future.

Each monthly series will guide you through the business leadership and life skills you need to successfully leave a legacy that stands the test of time, and each episode is totally valuable on its own. We are here to provide you with the tools and ideas to make massive shifts and quantum leaps in your business, transforming you from entrepreneur into legacy brand.

**TIFFANY:** Hello and welcome. I am so excited to introduce you to this month's Legacy Leader, Karen Sargent. Karen is a team growth strategist and helps business owners survive their growth spurts, grow their teams, and cultivate a strong culture based on consent and accountability.

For 25 years, she's guided teams through high stakes, high uncertainty situations, from counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan to software project management at the dawn of the Internet boom. Also, as a COO, she's helped clients achieve seven figure launches, roll out new product lines, architect full team reorgs, and build strong equity centered business practices and teams.

Karen, thank you so much for being here today.

**KAREN:** Thanks for having me. Thanks for asking.

**TIFFANY:** Yeah, absolutely. And because this month's theme is VALUES on the Legacy Lounge, I've asked you to come and talk to us about the importance of values while you're growing a business from the perspective of being a seasoned business owner yourself. But also to talk about the importance of values when being involved with, and behind the scenes of, so many other businesses.

A lot of the people that you've probably admired online, Karen has worked with, and she's still working behind the scenes with a lot of different people.

Before we dive in, I would love to just give you the chance, Karen (I gave you an introduction), but to give the audience a little bit more context of the work that you're doing in the world, because I think that will also just open up their eyes to where you're coming from.

**KAREN:** So for this season of my business, I am usually in the back, helping entrepreneurs and business owners, especially those who are seeing growth spurt, figure out how to not break everything in the back office. That's one of the funny pain points, is when you've just licked sales and marketing, and that's taking off and the volume is coming in, and then what you have in the back end was everything that was good enough is now starting to break or show some stress tests and things like that. So I love sailing in right at that point and helping square it all out, get not just a new org chart, but maybe some team growth plans together, but then also giving them the operating system, like meeting cadences and how to interact and how to kick off projects and how to project plan and those kinds of things so that the back office is really supporting all of those sales goals.

**TIFFANY:** Amazing. And going through some of those growing pains myself, I know how valuable of a service that is.

And then when you're growing with the team, it goes from just being a solopreneur to adding in a team so you can get tuff off your plate, but then there's a whole other level involved. It's just amazing what you step in with and can help people with.

So my first question is, when we're talking about values, I'd just love to hear what is your first reaction as it pertains to businesses? What is the importance of values that you see with all of your experience?

**KAREN:** Yeah, so maybe I come with a very back office perspective, but values to me are telling me how you're going to go about doing your business. To me that's very informative both when I'm evaluating you as a client, considering if we're aligned and how you want to get work done, what do you tend to value?

I'm especially looking to see if you value the folks who are in your org chart helping you out? I feel like values often are very externally focused and they talk about clients and they kind of talk about—I don't want to necessarily call them performative because they can be very instructional that way. But then it all kind of dissolves when work needs to get done, and I want to know that the values that you're putting out there that are client facing are also team facing. And that you promise to operate by those values when stuff is hitting the fan and things need to get out the door. So I have like a dual lens when I think about values.

**TIFFANY:** I love that because it's so true. I've even seen Instagram posts that showcase people's top values. And I think sometimes—you said it—it is performative in some people's world.

I love that it's so much more tangible when you look at it because this is really where you're operating from. That's why I believe it's so important to get clear on your values and your brand, and really live from

your values, whether that's client facing or back office facing. That's huge. And it also helps you make decisions. So I love that 100%.

**KAREN:** If your values aren't helping you make a decision, they probably haven't been refined enough. You might be close, but no cigar. But your values should really rule things out and rule things in, both about who you will do work with, but also how you're going to do the work. And it really should be a guide post.

**TIFFANY:** Absolutely. For those of you who are listening and like, "okay, Tiffany, I don't even know how to create my values." Go back and listen to the last few episodes because I dive really deeply into how to create your values, what that looks like. (I want to make sure you get that value as well.)

But today Karen and I are really talking about the importance of values from a different perspective. I think so many people shrug off values because it just feels so corporate sometimes. You might be thinking, "oh, I don't need values, I'm just a solo Nurse...I'm just a business owner with a few contractors or a small team." And that's just not the case.

Are there any stories that you can share from your journey as it pertains to, again, why those values are so important? Specifically, maybe some different situations that you've experienced or how different businesses owners operated their businesses based on differing values?

**KAREN:** Yeah, so I'm actually in like version 2.0 of my values, and mine got a glow up even just recently because I needed to refine them and make them more helpful, make them more impactful in how I do the work. What was funny, and you'll love this Tiffany, because when you have a look at the values (they're up on my about page), you're going to recognize them because that was the framework that you and I created about how I help folks.

What I really ended up looking at was the IP that I used to go into other clients' companies and solve their people problems. And once I just kept stepping through those, it was like a three or a four step process. And then it just finally clicked in my brain that this is how I approach work. This is how I want to solve every problem. Because it has an equity lens. It looks at systems first rather than performance or people first, that people perform in the context that you've set for them. They want to do good work, but not always allowed to do good work, and that we have to tackle systems before we get into nitpicking somebody's performance.

And so that's how I want to operate in the world. I took that idea and incorporated it into my own business values. I really am so pleased because I backed my way into them. I was already living them out and then went, "hey, these are values" and that's how I refined my list.

**TIFFANY:** I love that too, because the list is, like you said, what you're living. So often people create their list based on what they think it should be or what they think others want to see. That could be things like

integrity. To me these are lame words. What do they really mean? Everybody should just operate with integrity anyways, right? I'm so glad that that came up.

You also have your values on your site—I'm actually looking at it right now, definitely go and look at Karen's website—but just so we have context while we're talking, they're" ownership, a curious lens, transparency, agreement, and accountability. They all go together, but then on the side, Karen also talks about that "every human being deserves to be safe and loved...Black Lives Matter." She's "committed to elevating entrepreneurs and communities that have been marginalized." So I love that you have the piece that really ties into your system itself, but then you also talk about what you believe in. I know you enough to know that you live that out too.

But that can be where values can be performative, like you're saying. That's I'd love to have a discussion, too, because I feel like at some point you'll be found out if you're saying these things and you're not actually following through with it. RioS if you're going to put those types of values on your site and you don't follow through with it, you really need to think about that and think about are you truly living out your values? So I love that we looked at where you were living and made the values from there, instead of vice versa.

**KAREN:** Yeah, and I always wanted to just say that I'm a work in progress and so not every time you ever interact with me, I'll get an A plus. But that's what I strive to do. I mean, they values are important to me that I operate this way. And so I want to make sure that I am always trying.

But I'm with you. There's a drum that I beat. And the way I say it is, don't talk about your values and then turn around and shove three weeks of work into three days. Your values, the ones that you aspire to, really should, in a way, cramp your style. Like, you're going to have to make different business decisions because of the values that you espouse. So be careful, be aspirational, but be realistic and be ready to change your ways for the better.

**TIFFANY:** I'm getting chills. Karen. Well, you are listening to this, obviously, but make sure you just rewind and listen to what Karen just said because it's so true. Even with my own values, I value "freedom: and I realized more recently, I valued "spaciousness." So often this is something I'm actively working on ismaking sure I'm not filling my calendar and overworking. It's so easy to do for driven entrepreneurs. And if you have those values like "spaciousness" or "freedom", like you said, you're not walking your talk.

I've seen a lot of people who say they value "family," but then they're working all the damn time. That is such a good point that you touched on.

So, we talked a little bit about how we worked on your values together. Can you share just a little bit about that process? I think you did a little bit about how we really looked at where you were and went a little bit deeper than the typical person might do when creating their value stament. How do you think that informed where you are today and the transition in your business?

**KAREN:** Yeah, so one of the things that I found really helpful was to flip the values question around and consider what drives you crazy when other people do it or when you see it happening in the workforce? Because there's a value hidden in there. Instead of thinking of all the positive words and getting out the thesaurus and being very philosophical, thinking about what pisses you off in the way other people are doing business or the businesses you don't want to see win. And then kind of meditate on that because there's a value misalignment right there. That's going to tell you what you do value.

I found that when I came up with the transparency, agreement, accountability—that three step process for figuring out people problems—it was because (well, actually, technically all of my values, now that I think of them) I have been on the wrong side of someone who doesn't value those. And how stinging it is and how resentful I feel when I have to interact a lot with those types of businesses. So in a way, my values were very much a reaction to what I didn't want to be like so that I could define for myself that I didn't even want to be in business unless I'm in business *this* way, because this is the way work should get done around here.

And I am just going to plant the flag for that and also let clients know or prospects, know if we're not aligned. Sometimes it's a struggle to walk your talk because first of all I'm always trying to discern, am I or am I not? And if I cut a corner here, how much corner am I cutting? Then you're going to say no to folks who you maybe would have said yes to six months ago. That hurts a little. It really does come home to roost if you're going to walk your talk.

**TIFFANY:** Yeah, and it's so worth it, though, especially for so many women who struggle with boundaries. I love what you just said. It's like you're literally creating some boundaries using values about what you will and will not tolerate. The values just make those decisions easier for you. It allows you to see that, "okay, this person does XYZ, they're not a good fit." That may be some revenue, but then you'll probably see a lot more aligned clients coming to you as well, especially once you put those things on your website. Then it's literally a magnet for people that share the same values and then life gets so much easier.

**KAREN:** Yes.

**TIFFANY:** Awesome. So you know that I cannot talk on this podcast without asking about Legacy and I just love your work. I mean, I remember when we were working together and I didn't realize that you had been working with counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan. I thought, "Wow, this is so interesting."

You've done so much deep work in the world outside of the work that you're doing today. But like you said, it was always team oriented and looking at it in that way. I would love to hear the first thing that pops into your mind on what does legacy mean to you and why do you think it's important?

**KAREN:** I would define legacy as impact—not just what we do, but how we do it. How we go about making it very integral into this values discussion. How do we make our money, how do we serve our clients, how do we lead our team and businesses? And then I also want to expand the focus because it's

not just the people we intend to impact, because the impact of our actions are often much broader than we think. If our focus includes certain people, it means it's excluding other people. Are we good with that? How intentionally have we decided who we're focusing on and how we're going to do the work? And who are we leaving behind? And is that intentional? Is that something that we're okay with? Again, it has a back office and a systems approach, which is just how I move around in the world, but that's kind of how I think about legacy.

**TIFFANY:** Thank you for sharing that. I think it's brilliant. You and I are almost opposites. I'm the creative mind, and then you're the back office. That's why I was excited for you to talk about values too, because it brings a different perspective and it's so true. What and/or who are you excluding? I think that's so important to think about.

So the next question would be as a leader yourself—and I know you're very selective with who you work with—you're not out there selling courses to a million people. You're working with the people that you can really help and that you love working with. What have you been doing or what do you do in your business to think about leaving a legacy yourself or within those businesses?

**KAREN:** I've really stepped this up this last year. I'm in an equity centered leadership certification course with my mentor, Trudy LeBron, and I love what I'm learning. I learn every day, every week. But because I am in the back part of so many people's businesses, I would love to be able to not just give them good business practices, but equity centered business practices. I really think that's the best way to get business done. There isn't a better way. That's not equity centered is what I mean. But to be like a Johnny Apple seed of equity centered best practices, it just lights me up and allows me to have much more meaning about amplifying the businesses that are seeing the growth. It informs who I choose as clients and what operational best practices I'm putting into those businesses. I know that I'm impacting their impact, both with their clients and in their teams. And that just means the world to me.

**TIFFANY:** That is so good. I love the idea of the analogy of the Johnny Apple seed, like, literally the ripple effect spreading out. I think more and more people are thinking about equity, but they don't know how to approach it. To have somebody to help them bring in and actually implement those practices is so amazing. Thank you for sharing that.

Our last and final question today is what are you most excited and proud about creating or doing that will stand the test of time in your business? I think what you just said is applicable, but if you have anything else to share go ahead!

I think it's that, and I feel like that was a missing link for me for a good while. I knew that I was helping other people achieve their dreams, and I am perfectly fine with that, by the way. That is a meaningful mission to me, but also to implant equity centered business practices as well as helping people out, just is where it's at for me. It's the best.

**TIFFANY:** Amazing. I hope you enjoyed this discussion with Karen and getting a different perspective about values. Karen, I think it's so valuable to have your input since you have been behind the scenes with so many people and really do look at it from a different perspective. Thank you again for being here, Karen. Where can people connect with you? What's the best way to do that?

**KAREN:** They can go to my website, which is Karensergeant.com, or come find me on Instagram.

**TIFFANY:** All right, perfect. And we'll have that information in the show notes, as always. Remember, if you're not consciously building a legacy, you are simply building a brand unconsciously. If we all focus on making an impact together, the ripple effect we can have will truly make a difference.

We'll see you next time.

**OUTRO:** That's it for this episode. Thank you for listening to The Legacy Lounge Podcast. Connect with me on Instagram @tiffanyneumancreative I would also love to hear your feedback to see what resonates with you and what you'd like to hear in the future.

If you love this episode, please provide a review and we will be forever grateful. You can always find links and resources shared on the show by going to [yourlegacybrand.com](http://yourlegacybrand.com).

Remember what you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others. What are you doing today to pour into others and to leave your legacy?