

S2: E164: The Curse of Expertise (Why Smart Leaders Struggle to Explain Their Work)

Hey there and welcome back, or welcome to, if you're new here, the Make Your Message a Movement podcast. My name is Tiffany Neuman, I'm your host, and we're going to dive right in today and talk about why smart thought leaders still struggle to explain what they do.

If that title kind of irks you a little bit because you're like, "Yep, that might be me," or maybe you're like, "No, I'm pretty good at explaining what I do, but there are some times you kind of mumble your words out," this episode is for you. And speaking about mumbling words, so you know—if you're new here or you haven't heard me say this before—this episode is specifically not edited. So sometimes I do mumble my words and simply laugh it off.

I feel like the authenticity has been lost over time and all of the "ums" and "ands" and little mistakes we make have been edited out. Especially in the age of AI where anyone could technically create a podcast and have an AI-recorded—I don't even know what it's called—avatar, I suppose, make a podcast. One thing that I think is going to hold true is those of us—see, there we go, I just messed it up—those of us that show up and simply be who we are are the ones who are going to make it further and scale faster and more sustainably in this age of AI.

So, that was a little side note before we get started that I randomly just decided to throw in there. It wasn't one of my bullet points, and I've heard from so many of my listeners that they really appreciate that piece of the podcast. So, thank you. Thank you for being here. Thank you for allowing me to be myself and not be perfect because none of us are, right? That's the truth.

So, what I want to talk about is something that I see all the time. It's a little bit of a ranty episode today, but in a good way. Some of the smartest, most capable, most impactful coaches, speakers, and authors I know are also the ones sometimes that struggle the most clearly to explain what they do. Not because they lack clarity internally necessarily, although sometimes that is the case—we go through identity shifts and changes and things and we lose that sense of clarity—and not because they're new at all, not because they're confused most of the time, but because their work has depth.

If you've ever found yourself saying things like, "It depends," or "I do a lot of things," or "People get it once they work with me" or "Once they meet me in person," that's what we're talking about. And the thing is, it's not your fault. This problem exists because the more your evolved work becomes, the harder it can be to explain, right?

Now, of course, I'm going to talk also about how you can shift this and give it structure. But let's first clarify why this happens, because it's so common. Early in business, clarity is often simple. You have one problem, one audience, one solution. Now, I can also say if you are newer in business and you're like, "Well, no, it's still difficult for me to say what I'm doing," this also rings true. But I'm specifically today talking to people who've been in business for longer. They've been doing the work and maybe it used to be easier to explain it and now it's like, "Ooh, it's nuanced. It's weighty."

As you grow, your perspective expands, your work integrates multiple disciplines. I like to say we become more and more multidimensional. Your results become more and more transformational and not transactional. And suddenly, one day often, your message feels too big for a certain single sentence. It's not a branding or messaging failure; it's leadership growth. So we need to reframe this and think about it differently.

And what I like to say is depth without distillation—that's a hard word to pronounce—is the real bottleneck. True thought leaders don't struggle because they lack insight; they struggle because they haven't fully distilled their insight. They're carrying years of experience, pattern recognition, intuition, lived results. They just kind of show up and do what they do, and then they're like, "I don't know how I do what I do. It's literally years of experience."

But without a clear structure, all that brilliance can actually come across as vague, overly complex, or exhausting to explain or understand. And that's when people almost get it, but don't quite lean in, and you lose them. You've probably been told, "Just make it simpler," "You need a tighter niche," or "Just pick one thing." But "just simplify it" often feels wrong. Simplification without strategy can feel like self-erasure. You don't want to flatten your work; you want to focus it. True clarity doesn't remove depth; it organizes it.

So this is the shift from explaining to orienting. It's a subtle but powerful reframe. I've talked about this a little bit in the last few episodes, but I'm going to say it again because repetition is how our brains lock in—we want to make those neural pathways get stronger. Experts explain, and guides orient.

So, we talked about on the last episode—so if you haven't listened to that, I highly recommend it, of course—how we want to show up more as guides, not just as experts. But this is also where we can guide ourselves and how it's going to make it easier to explain our work. Explaining sounds like "let me tell you everything I do," right? Orienting and guiding sounds like "here's where you are, here's what's actually happening beneath the surface, here's where you're headed, and here's how I help you get there," right? You actually put a structure into what you're helping people with. So orientation builds trust way faster than explanation ever could.

And this is where everything starts to click. When this clicks for my clients, something fascinating happens. One of the first things they tell me is, "I finally stopped chasing shiny objects." They stop buying the next thing that promises to fix everything. Maybe it's the Chat GPT prompt that's supposed to magically solve their messaging, or the LinkedIn masterclass that claims instant authority, or the sales script that technically works but makes them feel slimy and disconnected.

The thing is, one tactic is never going to solve any foundational disconnect. No single platform, prompt, funnel, or script can fix a brand that isn't coherent at its core. But when you get clear on your entire brand ecosystem—your message, your positioning, your leadership role, the system underneath it all—you no longer grasp. You're choosing, you're guiding, and that's when you're able to fly with

whatever marketing or visibility strategy that fits you best. Clarity doesn't limit you; it finally gives you range.

Now, what I also wanted to talk about is why you can't do this alone and why this is totally normal. There's a phrase I'm known for saying, and it applies perfectly here: if you've been with me for any amount of time or you've worked with me, you've heard this before: "You can't see the label from inside the bottle."

This is one of the biggest reasons extraordinary leaders struggle to articulate their work. You're too close to it. It's so hard to have an objective view. When you've spent years honing your craft, what you do starts to feel obvious to you. But it's still invisible to others unless it's distilled clearly. It's incredibly difficult to zoom out, identify the through line or the golden thread as I like to call it, and translate the depth of your work into language that instantly lands, without outside perspective. And it's not a flaw; it's being human.

And I want to be real with you—I'm always real, but really real with you today. It genuinely makes me so sad to see true experts and thought leaders struggle to be seen while people who are simply good at marketing or performing take center stage. Oftentimes, they're not even delivering real results. Sometimes they're literal actors. And even worse, sometimes they're taking advantage of people only because they know how to sell.

Meanwhile, the men and women—mostly women that I see struggling with this, myself included—with the most credibility, the actual true leaders who care, the true experts who are delivering real results with their clients, who hold the deepest wisdom, the strongest ethics, are the ones often wrestling with imposter syndrome. I am over it.

This is exactly why I named—renamed—the podcast Make Your Message a Movement and why it matters so deeply to me. A movement, like I said in previous episodes, doesn't necessarily mean reaching millions, although it can. It doesn't mean you have to be everywhere, and it definitely doesn't mean becoming someone you're not. It might mean reaching a hundred people one-on-one whose lives are genuinely changed, a community that feels safe, supported, and guided, or a body of work that ripples outwards through your clients to millions.

My mission is to help true thought leaders rise, to articulate their depth, to own their leadership and their IP, and to build brands that actually reflect who they are, where they're going, and the massive impact that they're here to create in the world. Because when the real leaders rise, everyone benefits. And that's how messages become movements.

So, if this speaks to you and you're like, "I am so ready to rise and I'm ready to rise past the people who are taking advantage of others maybe," or you know, we've all been burned in some ways a lot of the time. And for a long time, I didn't even talk about this because I don't want to call other people out and

I'm never going to say actual names. But we've all seen the "bro" and the "Becky" marketers and, you know, the people pulling in thousands and thousands of clients and not delivering real results.

Now, I'm not saying there are people out there pulling in millions and millions of clients and giving results, so I'm not just saying like labeling all of these people the same way, right? But for those of us who are showing up daily with integrity, pouring into our clients, delivering real results, it's our time as we enter 2026.

And so before we close, as always, I want to leave you with some questions to sit with. And if you're feeling like you are ready to rise this year, this is especially for you.

Question number one: Do people understand my work before I even explain it? Is my message clear on my website, in my socials? Can I easily articulate it?

Does my brand reflect the leader I'm becoming, not just who I've been?

And am I still chasing tactics, or am I ready for an unshakable foundation?

You don't need a perfect answer. It's always progress over perfection with me. But just notice what comes up. And if you feel like "yes, I'm ready, I do need support in this area," this is the exact work that we do inside the Brand Clarity Workshop Series coming up at the end of this month. I want to help you distill your depth into a message that actually lands so your brand can finally work for you and not require constant reinvention.

All the details are in the show notes if you feel called to join us. I also want to offer you a 90% discount because you stuck with me today, you listened to some—sometimes uncomfortable truths today—and that means for just \$7, you can join us. Simply use the word "LEGACY," all caps, when you're checking out and that will take you from the normal \$97 investment down to just \$7.

And I really hope to see you there. And if you're like, "You know what, Tiffany, this was a powerful message, but I feel very clear, I don't really need support with this," send it to a friend that you see struggling.

And as always, wishing you a beautiful week to come and we'll see you next week as we go deeper talking about why your brand, your business, needs a system, not just another strategy. Take care until next time.