

## S2: E172: How to make your Authority Visible for Your Dream Stages, Book Deals and Opportunities

Hey there and welcome to, or welcome back to, the Make Your Message a Movement podcast. I'm Tiffany Neuman, your host, and today I want to talk about a phase in the life of almost every serious business owner that doesn't get much airtime.

So, if we haven't met before, I work with thought leaders specifically—speakers, authors, coaches, and consultants—to create a category-of-one brand and to make your message a movement. My background is as a brand strategist for over 20 years. I worked with brands like Burt's Bees, Adidas, Chase Bank, and so many more. And I also am a professor of design and branding. And the reason I share all of this with you is the main thing that I see time and time again after all this experience, especially in the past seven years that I've been working with online business owners and thought leaders, is this stage of business, this stage of authority where we oftentimes get stuck in the messy middle.

And it's not the early stage when you're trying to figure everything out because you're still excited and you're moving through it, and it's difficult, but you have so much excitement that you keep pushing through. And it's not the scrappy building season; it's not even the visible scaling season where momentum is happening. It's a lot quieter than that. It's this stretch of time where you know you've grown internally, intellectually, strategically, personally, and professionally in your business and in your life, but the external representation of your work hasn't quite caught up yet.

And there's a very specific kind of frustration that only these somewhat experienced thought leaders tend to feel. And this is where I get a lot of people coming to me at the stage where they're thinking, "I know I'm ready for my next big break." Maybe it's landing a TEDx talk, maybe it's launching a best-selling book, maybe it's working with higher-level clients and pivoting to do so.

This moment is what I call the authority gap. And it's important to define this carefully because it's easy to misdiagnose. The authority gap is not a lack of talent by any means. It's not a lack of credibility; it's not even necessarily a lack of visibility. Most of the people who experience it are already competent, somewhat respected or very respected, and already generating a decent amount of revenue.

The gap forms somewhere more structurally. It forms when your identity evolves faster than your infrastructure. So think about it this way: as your thinking sharpens, your standards rise, and your work matures. And your external representation—aka your brand, your messaging,

how you're perceived—often remains rooted in the season when it was first built. For instance, your website might reflect an earlier iteration of your positioning, your offers were structured for a previous level of your work, and/or your messaging captures what you used to emphasize but not what you want to lead with now.

And over time, this creates a compounding disconnect between who you've become, more importantly where you want to go, and how legible that authority is to the outside world. And legibility matters more than most people realize because the market does not experience your internal evolution—and we oftentimes forget this—it experiences your overall digital footprint, right?

And sometimes we're so caught up in our internal evolution and we know what's happening and what we're thinking and what we're planning and we just somehow magically think that's going to attract the people. And believe me, I'm all for manifestation and energetically we can attract, right? And that may start to happen, but when people start to do their research or look at us on social media or our website, that's where the disconnect comes in because they're like, "Okay, I might be able to follow this person, I might be able to work with this person," and then they're like, "Oh, but what I'm seeing here does not actually match where I first experienced them—maybe in person in a room during a mastermind or during an event," right?

So, what I want you to think about is the fact that a conference organizer deciding whether to place you on a larger stage isn't just evaluating your speaking ability; they're also evaluating whether your positioning signals category leadership. A publisher considering a book proposal isn't just looking at your idea; they actually are assessing whether your entire brand ecosystem communicates intellectual cohesion and long-term platform potential. And think about a strategic partner with a significant audience that might be able to promote your work. They're not just going to ask if you're brilliant or not; they're also evaluating whether your brand aligns with theirs, if it's stable, if it's clear, and if it matches their level of expertise.

And the thing is, even if you are the most brilliant at what you do in your work, it's the perception that people are going to judge you by. And believe me, I tell my daughter all the time, "don't judge a book by its cover," but unfortunately, we're human. And we have to make decisions—so many decisions daily. We're all dealing with decision fatigue, and so we're going to make quick judgments when we're evaluating. And this goes for all humans, especially this day and age.

So, when your authority isn't structurally reflected in your brand and online presence, those opportunities simply drift towards someone whose positioning feels cleaner and more coherent. And this is why the authority gap is so easy to tolerate. You can still be somewhat successful while experiencing it. You may still grow, and you can still receive some opportunities,

right? But you will not necessarily consistently access the full caliber of opportunities you are actually ready for.

So, I want to share how I believe this authority gap is formed so you can determine if you are in it and also understand how to move through it. So, if we zoom out to like a 5,000-foot or 3,000-foot level, the authority gap tends to form in really predictable places.

So first, identity expands internally, but positioning remains narrow. So you may now think and operate at a strategic or visionary level, yet your brand language still frames you as a service provider, an implementer, or at a lower tier than you have evolved into. So the market can only respond to what it can see clearly, and if your positioning hasn't expanded with you, it cannot fully reflect your authority.

Second, oftentimes your offers evolve, but that is not actually shown at a new aligned level, right? So your infrastructure, your offers become layered rather than integrated. New programs are introduced, old ones are retired, and the pricing shifts, but instead of restructuring the ecosystem, most people stack the changes on top of what already exists. And over time, the brand begins to feel heavier and slightly fragmented, even if each individual piece is strong.

And so you may have heard me—if you've listened to me for any time—I call this a Frankenstein brand. And I'll be fully transparent: one of the reasons I'm talking about this right now is because my brand has always been extremely consistent—I mean, that's what I do, right? And I'm in this funky little phase right now as I've introduced some of my new products with Brand OS Pro. My own website needs to be evolved a little bit. And the only reason it hasn't is because myself and my team are always serving clients, right? I did a podcast last week that talked about the cobbler's kids with no shoes, and that was actually where my messaging was a little bit off. So I'm saying this not only from experience with tons of clients coming to me at this moment and like, "Help! Like I'm so disorganized, it's so chaotic, I need this cohesion, I need this," but I'm actually saying this from a place of "I am moving through this right now."

Now, the beautiful thing is, I create what I call legacy brands for my clients, and so we look three, five, ten years into the future and reverse-engineer where you want to be so we can create a brand that you can grow and evolve into, right? And so I've had so many clients who we branded five years ago, and of course, they've evolved, they've grown, and they come back to me and we do a really minor refresh. So it's not like you'll never have to touch your brand again. But if you do this right, you set the foundation and the infrastructure the correct way as you evolve in the future. You will just have to do minor tweaks and iterations, which is what my team is doing right now. So I'm not reinventing the wheel; I'm just adding and shifting slightly.

And that's what I want for you, too. If it feels like you're constantly rebranding with every new offer and every new thing that you add on, there comes a time where you need to lock in and have a true brand operating system because otherwise, you're going to take one step forward and five steps back, and your trajectory of growth is going to be much slower than it could be.

So, the third piece is oftentimes your visibility increases without a system designed to compound it. So you might land a podcast feature, a keynote, a collaboration, yet there's no cohesive authority infrastructure behind it—what I call the brand operating system. And this brand operating system ensures that attention converts into sustained positioning and continued growth, right? When we have this, all of those exposures are going to lead to new and exciting opportunities unfolding for you. Oftentimes, we get these random one-off situations and they never compound and lead to your next level of opportunity and growth, right? Because we don't have a system to continually maintain that level of opportunity coming to us through our brand, through our offers, through our entire brand operating system.

And so when any of these three patterns come together, it creates—the best way I can describe it is like—leakage. And I know that's a weird word, but that's the truth, because it doesn't mean you're not getting the opportunities, but you have this like leakage of perceived authority, leakage of momentum, leakage of opportunity, which of course also leads to leakage of revenue and impact, right?

And so other smaller signs, I guess you could say, would be you may find yourself explaining your work more than you should have to. You might hesitate before sending someone your website link because maybe it's five years old and you're embarrassed or you've pivoted and you're like, "Well, this is the work I'm doing but don't go check it out because it's not updated yet," right? Or you may sense that you're capable of operating in higher-tier rooms, masterminds, levels of people and opportunities that could take you to your higher level, but your ecosystem does not quite support that leap.

So an example of this is one client I worked with had really built a solid business and was preparing to pursue significantly larger speaking engagements. In person, she was absolutely ready. She had incredible talks, her perspective had deepened, and her delivery had matured. But her digital presence still positioned her as a niche practitioner rather than a category-of-one voice. And she would pitch companies and she would pitch speaking opportunities and no one was biting. So when she came to me, we talked about this and I immediately saw that yes, her branding visually was outdated, but the shift we made was not just cosmetic. It was also architectural because her message and her positioning and overall brand had to be upleveled to align with her evolved authority. We really had to position her as that top thought leader and speaker, not just put a picture of her speaking on her website and a little bit of language and call

it good, which is what most people tend to do because they want to land those opportunities quickly. But actually, what it does is show the potential people that would book her that she didn't put her full effort into this new way of being, right? And it was really obvious as soon as I saw her website.

Another client of mine was stepping into early book discussions. Her ideas were strong, but her brand ecosystem read like a collection of services and random content rather than a cohesive body of thought. And so we focused less on more marketing and making her look credible, which is part of it, but really more on clarifying the intellectual throughline that anchored everything. What was her category of one? What could she be known for where a book agent or, you know, someone who would want to sign her for a book deal would immediately see the value and see the ideas and want to buy in? And that structural clarity strengthened the credibility of her next chapter and literally helped her land a really amazing book deal.

So in both cases, it was all about the alignment and the elevation of their overall brand. So if you're listening and sensing that you may be in this phase, I want you to go ahead and realize the starting point isn't about urgency, right? So oftentimes, people are like, "Oh my gosh, I have to shift, I gotta do this quickly. I'm in this authority gap." Now, typically people can't name what they're in, but they sense it... So I'm here to tell you today from my perspective, it's that authority gap, and it's really assessment that I want you to sit with right now.

And so I have a few questions that you can ask yourself to know where you're at and to be able to move through it faster. So ask yourself, if the next-level opportunity you say you wanted arrived tomorrow—so maybe a stage that you've been wanting to book, a book deal that you've been dreaming of, a high-level partnership—would your current brand ecosystem support that invitation without explanation? Would it reinforce your authority or would you need to compensate in conversation to bridge the gap?

Next up, evaluate your infrastructure, not just your messaging. Do your homepage, offers, and overall positioning communicate one coherent level of thinking or are they remnants of past iterations of your business layered together?

And finally, name your transition clearly. Are you stepping into something more visible, more strategic, more category-defining? Expansion without recalibration will just produce more friction, and that friction often shows up in your day-to-day results. So I want you to think about what actually is your goal and what that looks like.

And on the flip side, when your identity, positioning, and brand ecosystem align, authority becomes legible. You no longer have to assert it as strongly because your ecosystem and brand operating system carries it for you. Opportunities will feel proportional to your level, they'll

come faster, conversations will feel cleaner, and you'll start attracting opportunities rather than chasing them.

So if you ever want a structured evaluation of how your brand is holding up under the weight of your growth, that is the lens we use inside a Brand OS Pro demo and where I look at your brand and explain how we can elevate it to truly position you as the thought leader you've become. And for a limited time, I'm doing these one-on-one calls personally where I will review your current brand ecosystem and really discuss the gaps and the opportunities for growth so you can finally land that book deal, the next stage, or whatever next level that you've been gearing towards.

So you can find the link to book your personal session with me in the show notes. I'm just doing these for about a month while we launch my own new products and iterate—it's taking off really quickly. So pretty soon, the one-on-ones will be gone and I will be doing more of a group format. But we're still sort of tying up the end of the beta, and I'm really excited to serve you because this also serves as market research for myself, and it's really a win-win for us both.

And even if you simply use this episode as a calibration tool, I want to let it offer you this clarity: if the rooms, the stages, the opportunities have not scaled with you yet, it may not be about effort. In fact, it's probably not about your effort. It's probably about your structure and alignment in your brand. So give yourself that grace of realizing your efforts are not paying off because you're not trying hard enough or you're not good enough; it's literally most likely that your brand and your messaging has not caught up with where you're heading.

And structure, unlike talent or timing, is something you can absolutely intentionally build or rebuild. The beauty is that when your brand finally reflects your true level, you don't just grow, you expand into rooms and opportunities that have been waiting for you all along.

So I'll leave you with that today, sending you so much love on the journey. I'll see you back here next week where I'll be asking you the question all about if your audience doubled tomorrow, would you be ready? It's a juicy episode that you're not going to want to miss. I'll see you then. Take care for now.