

S2: E177: Secrets for a sustainable, hustle-free business

Tiffany Neuman: Hello and welcome back to the Make Your Message a Movement podcast. I'm your host, Tiffany Neuman, and I'm excited to be here with Gabe Cox today. Gabe is a goal-planning and business strategist and the founder of Red Hot Mindset. She helps entrepreneurs personalize and take action on a game plan that works with their capacity in different seasons so they don't have to sacrifice everything to hit their goals. She teaches how to market your business without relying on social media so you can ditch the hustle culture for good. Gabe, thank you so much for being here with us today.

Gabe Cox: Absolutely. It's an honor to be here with you, Tiffany.

Tiffany Neuman: Wonderful. I was super excited to invite you on for a few reasons. One is that I will be speaking at your upcoming conference soon, so we'll talk a little bit more about that toward the end of the show. Also, you and I are just so aligned in a lot of our beliefs, especially around being social media optional and not hustling in our businesses. I know my audience is all for both of those things, so I thought it would be perfect to talk about this and then invite people to your upcoming conference. I wanted to start with your background and hear how you became a business strategist, but also how you moved to being social media optional, because I think people love hearing those stories.

Gabe's Journey: From Author to Business Strategist

Gabe Cox: My journey is wild. Since I was little, I always wanted to write a book. I knew I'd be an author, so I thought I'd do it right out of high school, but my plans changed. It wasn't until my early thirties that I went on to write a personal development book about goals. It was based on the personal journey of me taking on the hard goal of qualifying for the Boston Marathon. I'm an avid runner, and after I ran my first marathon, I wanted to teach myself that I could do hard things again.

As I was working toward publishing the book, I was told I had to create a business out of it. I just wanted to be an author, but that is really how my online journey started. I created a program and a course from the book, then started coaching and found a passion for helping others through their goals and business strategy.

The Decision to Go Social Media Optional

Gabe Cox: When I started the online business in 2018 or 2019, I had no idea what I was doing. I listened to all the gurus about how to grow and drive traffic. I was told I had to be on social media, posting and engaging constantly. Around that time, it was still somewhat workable, but the trend was shifting. People go to social media to be entertained and connect; they don't go there to be sold to. I can count on one hand how many sales I made from social media, despite hours of grinding and creating content that disappeared within 24 hours.

I became frustrated because, during the 2020 era, everything I saw on social media was negative. Personally, I didn't want to be there. I love meaningful debate, but I prefer to do it in person, not in an attack-based environment online. I found myself leaving social media feeling more negative than when I arrived. It was a distraction that caused procrastination and a lack of focus. I didn't want that for my kids, my family, or my business.

In January 2023, I felt a nudge from the Lord to get off social media. I realized I was only there because I was told to be, not because it was working. I decided to take a 30-day fast from social media for both business and life. That 30 days changed everything. My business grew significantly. My podcast, which had been stalled, grew 400 percent. Over that year, I stayed off social media and focused on different marketing strategies. My email list grew from 350 people to 3,500. It wasn't just about leaving social media; it was about the obedience to do things differently in a way that worked for me. I took the time I used to spend scrolling and focused it on my projects and my podcast.

Refocusing on Connection and Clarity

Tiffany Neuman: Thank you for sharing that. I think there are so many nuggets of wisdom in there. I also started my business around 2018 and had a very similar journey. I'm also completely off social media now. I don't think people realize how much being on those platforms affects us—from the negativity to the comparison trap. It scrambles our brains and makes it hard to make decisions. Since moving away from it, I feel calmer and more open to new ideas and possibilities.

I also love your marathon story. I never tried to qualify for Boston, but I did run one marathon and realized I was never doing it again. However, it teaches you that you can do hard things. Business is a marathon in its own sense. Let's talk about sustainable marketing systems that can replace social media. For someone who is afraid to pull the plug, what are some of your favorite methods?

Sustainable Marketing and Collaboration Strategies

Gabe Cox: If you're not finding traction on social media, just try taking 30 days off and test other things. You need to figure out the type of marketing that energizes you and is sustainable. Even for an online business, you can market locally, which might drive more traffic initially if you're a service-based business. Consider whether you are service-based or if you sell digital products, and then think about where your target customer realistically spends their time. For example, your customers might be on LinkedIn for networking, or on Pinterest if your business is visual, like art, health, or homeschooling. Pinterest is evergreen; people can find your pins for years.

I transitioned from creating fleeting social media content to focusing on intentional, long-form content for my podcast. I also leaned into collaborative marketing. Business shouldn't be lonely. I love connecting with other business owners to help each other out. This includes events, guesting on podcasts, and sharing resources with each other's email lists. I also love doing webinars and workshops for other people's audiences. This is a great way to grow fast, even if you don't have a large audience of your own yet.

Tiffany Neuman: Collaboration is definitely more fun and effective because you're talking to a warm audience. People usually only bring guests onto their podcasts if they share similar values, so there is already a level of trust. I also want to mention Substack, which is becoming a popular place for long-form content. It's a great way to share deeper content and lead people back to a podcast.

Gabe Cox: I totally agree. I'm thinking about starting a Substack this summer. I don't currently do show notes on my website because of SEO capacity, but Substack could be a great place to focus on podcast-related writing. We'll test it out and let everyone know how it goes.

Building a Business that Supports Your Capacity

Tiffany Neuman: Next, I want to cover building a business that supports your life and season. We often see people on social media traveling and making money, but behind the scenes, they are working 80-hour weeks. That is not a sustainable lifestyle for everyone, especially those with children or health concerns.

Gabe Cox: I am an achiever and very Type A, so I used to sacrifice everything to hit a goal. When I was qualifying for the Boston Marathon, I sacrificed sleep and quality time with my kids. I eventually realized that giving 100 percent to a business goal leaves nothing for anything else. I went through seasons of burnout so severe I thought I would end up in the hospital. Nothing is worth your health or your peace.

Now, when I help people strategize, the first thing we look at is their values. These change over time. After my burnout, I realized my values had shifted from achievement and accolades to peace, family, and fun. We look at a person's capacity and how much time they can realistically give to their business while maintaining balance. You can't have impact and flexibility if you're running yourself ragged.

Integrating Faith into Branding

Tiffany Neuman: One thing I noticed about your business is that you are very faith-forward. For people who are afraid that sharing their faith will turn others off, how did you make the decision to integrate that into your brand?

Gabe Cox: My business was not outright faith-forward when I started; I was just helping moms with goals. However, as a Christian, my faith isn't separate from my life. Eventually, I felt a nudge to move toward helping entrepreneurs and realized I loved talking about how to allow God to lead our businesses. I believe everything is interconnected—faith, family, and business. I wanted to show that you can have a faith-filled business and be a light in the world. My podcast is called Pursuing Goals God's Way. While that is my niche, I still work with people from all backgrounds because authenticity attracts people. Whether you're in a nine-to-five or running a business, you can do it for the glory of God.

The Grow Your Biz Without Social Conference

Tiffany Neuman: Authenticity in your brand is key. Let's talk about the conference now, which is called the Grow Your Biz Without Social conference. I'm excited to be a speaker there. Gabe, can you tell us more about it?

Gabe Cox: The whole point is to help entrepreneurs make social media marketing optional. It's about creating a marketing plan that works for your real life so you don't feel stressed or drained. You'll hear a variety of strategies on collaboration, networking, and long-form SEO content.

This year, registration also includes a ticket to Implementation Week. We have the conference, take a week off, and then have a week of coaching and support to help you actually implement what you learned. I want people to come away with a specific plan rather than just analysis paralysis. The conference runs from May 4th through the 8th. We have speakers who are

completely off social media, some who use it with a team, and some who just don't rely on it. There are plenty of us with thriving businesses who have found a different way.

Tiffany Neuman: That is so timely. The link will be in the show notes for anyone who wants to check it out. Gabe, do you have any final words of wisdom?

Gabe Cox: Don't put yourself in a box or think you have to do things a certain way to grow. Be willing to test different methods. When things get hard, just keep swimming and focus on the one next thing you can do. Consistency will make the difference.

Tiffany Neuman: So powerful. Thank you all for listening. Have a beautiful rest of your day, and we'll see you on the next episode. Make sure to grab your ticket to the conference below!