

S2: E190: From "One of Many" to "Unmistakable."

Hey there and welcome to Make Your Message a Movement podcast. This is your host Tiffany Neuman, and today we are talking about loneliness. Now, if you know me, you know I like to keep things very positive, and so that sounds kind of like a downer to start the episode, but hear me out. First of all, I think oftentimes as entrepreneurs and business owners, speakers, authors, We can be quite lonely only because we typically work on our own in our offices, at our homes. Well, that's such a blessing.

It can also kind of put us in a silo and make us a little bit lonely, which is why we need community. However, the loneliness I'm talking about today is a little bit different. It's the loneliness that comes with seeing something before other people can see it. And I'm convinced, after years of working specifically with high-level entrepreneurs and game changers, we just have a different brain and a different way of looking at things or perceiving things. And so earlier in my career, part of my work involved trend prediction.

I was asked to look beyond what was already happening and identify what might be coming next as part of branding and marketing and as a creative director. So what would people want, how culture was shifting, and where a brand might need to move before there was enough data to make that decision feel completely safe. So that sounds exciting when you describe it after the fact, and it was exciting, but also in the moment during that time, it was deeply uncomfortable. Because when you bring an emerging idea into a room before there's case studies, competitors, or obvious proof points, the response is not always immediate enthusiasm. Sometimes it's silence, sometimes it's skepticism, sometimes people just stare at you as they attempt to connect what you're saying to something they already understand.

And sometimes someone asks whether you can make the idea feel a little more familiar, a little bit safer, like something that already exists. And that is the strange reality of being early. From the outside, being first looks bold and visionary, but from the inside, it can feel as though you failed to explain yourself. So we celebrate the people who saw something coming after the rest of the world has caught up. We point to the entrepreneur who created a category, the author who changed a conversation, or the thought leader who gave language to an idea that's now everywhere, right?

And this is very common. And by the time we're praising them, their insight looks really obvious, right? So, you know, think about when people were first talking about cell phones or computers or the internet. There was people saying like, well, I will never use that. Now we're seeing it with AI.

And maybe some people won't, but over time the majority ends up adopting it. It becomes second nature, and eventually it's like, how did we ever live with this? With— without this before, right? And so there was a period when those people had to carry the idea without widespread validation. They had to keep speaking about something other people could not quite see yet, and using language that sounded somewhat unfamiliar because the familiar language was not capable of holding the new idea.

And so I don't think we talk enough about this concept in general, because I think so many of us as entrepreneurs are these people, but also we don't talk enough about what this asks of a person. Being ahead of the market can feel remarkably similar to being wrong. There's no applause. There's no evidence. You cannot point to 10 competitors doing the same thing. Because no one is doing it is precisely why you see the opportunity, but it can also make you question yourself. Am I truly seeing something that others have not recognized yet, or am I making this far more complicated than it needs to be? Is the idea ahead of its time, or am I simply failing to communicate it clearly? Should I keep developing this, or should I let it go and give people something they already understand? So if you're nodding your head in understanding this idea, these are not small questions when your livelihood, reputation, and body of work are tied to the answer.

And I want to bring up one of my favorite books, *Big Magic*, by Elizabeth Gilbert here, because she offers the idea that inspiration is not entirely something we manufacture inside of our own minds. If you're like me, I wake up at like 3 AM and get downloads all the time, especially for my clients. I'll get a tagline or a visual, and I'd rather sleep and get that during the day, but just how it happens sometimes, right? So what I love about Elizabeth's concept is she imagines ideas as energetic forms looking for human collaborators, ideas that want to enter the world and need a person willing to work with them. Now, this sounds a little far-fetched, but if you think about it, where do ideas come from?

So I like to believe it's true. But if the person does not respond, nurture the idea, or bring it forward, The idea may eventually move on to find someone else who will. So again, you do not have to take this super literally to have it feel true in some sense. And I've certainly had ideas that arrived with a kind of energy and urgency that felt different from ordinary thoughts. They kept returning while I was driving, walking, or trying to sleep.

And they begin connecting themselves to other ideas, stories, or experiences until it became clear that they were asking for more than a note in my phone. So maybe you felt this way before, and I've also experienced the other side of it. You place an idea on the shelf because

you're too busy, uncertain, or maybe even afraid to develop it. Then you watch someone else begin talking about something remarkably similar. There's this immediate reaction of, wait, that was my idea.

And maybe it was, but perhaps it was also in the ether looking for someone willing to go all in. And I find that both comforting and challenging. It's comforting because it reminds us that we are often sensing a broader cultural shift. We are ahead of the time. When similar ideas begin appearing in different places, it may be because many people are responding to a truth whose time has come.

But it's challenging because receiving an idea is not the same as building it. The idea may arrive as a gift, But stewardship is what we do next. So the question is not always, who thought of this first? A more meaningful question would be, who is willing to develop it deeply enough, communicate it clearly enough, and stay with it for long enough for other people to understand why it matters? And that is the part we often skipped when when we, I guess we could say, romanticize originality.

So being first is rarely about having a completely isolated thought that has never entered another human mind. And honestly, I look at it at the point of like, oh, if I get this idea, I better act fairly quickly or else it's going to be gone. That's me though. So it may mean you're the first person in your particular industry to connect several ideas in a new way, maybe the first person to name a pattern your clients have been experiencing but you haven't had language to articulate it, or you might be seeing how several cultural shifts are converging before most people recognize the connection. So the originality in my belief system does not only live in the raw idea, it actually lives in your lens of the world.

It lives in the experiences that taught you to see the pattern, the language you create to describe it, and the method you develop to help others navigate it. Also, the courage you demonstrate by continuing to speak about it before people are on the same page. And that is what begins turning an interesting thought into a body of work. And we can see this more clearly when we look back at professions and categories that feel completely normal today. So I'm going to use the example of life coaching, right?

20 or so years ago, life coaching was not really a thing. Maybe it's a little bit further now because time has moved so quickly. But anyway, now coaching is a widely recognized industry. I think we can all agree on that. Most people have at least some understanding of what a coach does, even if their interpretation varies.

Now, if you're listening to this podcast, you're in the online space, you definitely know there are life coaches, executive coaches, leadership coaches, health coaches, relationship coaches, book coaches, speaking coaches, right? And today The challenge for many coaches is differentiation. When there are thousands of people using a similar title, how do you help the market understand why your perspective, process, and body of work are different? How do you avoid blending into a sea of promises that sound the same? And that is some of the work I love doing with clients.

I love someone who is one of many and helping them become unmistakable in a crowded category. We uncover what they see differently, their values, identify the deeper idea driving their work, codify their intellectual property, make sure it's also protected, and build a position that allows people to understand why this coach is not interchangeable with every other coach. But now I want you to imagine being among the first people to call yourself a life coach. And I've actually worked with a few of these people, um, because, you know, they evolve and change, and then we need to rebrand. Today the title feels almost too familiar, but at the time it was unfamiliar enough that you first had to explain the category before you could explain why someone should hire you.

People may have asked, so are you a therapist? No. Are you a consultant? Not exactly. Are you a mentor? Sometimes, but that's not the whole picture. So what are you exactly coaching me to do? So before an early coach could sell their individual approach, they had to help people understand what this kind of support was, why it existed at all. That was an incredible opportunity because the category was open. There were fewer competitors, fewer assumptions, and a chance to shape how people understood the profession.

But it was also difficult because the market was not already searching for language it did not know, and people didn't wake up saying, "I need a coach." Right? So the market cannot ask for something it does not yet have the words to name. That's the paradox in all of this. So when you enter an established category, people understand the general idea but may not understand why you're different. When you are creating something new, people may understand that you are different but not understand what you're offering.

So the thing is, is both of these require positioning, but they require different kinds of positioning. And this is where I see so many people getting stuck because they often get these angles confused or they're going about it the wrong way. The person entering a crowded category needs differentiation. We need to sharpen the position, reveal the unique perspective, and make the distinction visible, obvious. The person birthing something new needs translation.

We need to create a bridge between what the audience already understands and what this new idea makes possible. And personally, I love both forms of work. I love helping coaches, authors, speakers, consultants become unmistakable in a category full of similar people, but I also love sitting across from someone who's attempting to bring something entirely new into the world. So basically, when an idea begins asking more of you, it can be attempting to retreat towards something easier to explain. Because the moment you begin introducing a genuinely new idea, three temptations tend to appear. So the first temptation when you are bringing something new into the world is to dilute it. Now, this may not be consciously— it's often subconsciously— but you begin with something distinct but people do not immediately understand it. So you gradually replace the unusual language or the new idea with familiar industry phrases, which removes the tension.

It softens the belief behind it. And in a sense, you keep— like, I guess a good way to explain it is sanding down the edges until the idea finally fits neatly inside a category the market already recognizes. People may understand it's faster, but they're no longer hearing the idea that you set out to share. There's an important difference between translating an idea and diluting it. Translation builds a bridge, but dilution is actually removing the destination, removing the novelty.

So a good bridge begins with something familiar and leads people towards a new way of seeing. And that's where we want to begin when we're bringing a new idea into the world, is making sure you have a good bridge. The second temptation or tendency is to overexplain. This is probably honestly the most common. Because the idea is unfamiliar, you assume you need more words.

You might add more frameworks or more disclaimers or more background or more terminology or proof or what have you, and you attempt to answer every possible objection before the person even has had time to absorb the central thought. And soon your idea is buried beneath the explanation designed to protect it. I really see this frequently in people with deep multi-dimensional expertise. If you've heard me or listened to me for any amount of time, I think the more our expertise deepens, the more multi-dimensional we get, which is beautiful. That's the way that we can serve our clients in a deeper way.

But this is where a lot of ideas are formed too, because we're finally at the level of being able to capably hold a new concept or idea or see those patterns, right? And so you know the nuance, the exceptions, the history, the interconnected layers, but you try to communicate it all at once. So the first job of a new idea is not to explain everything. It's actually to create recognition. The

listener needs one clear doorway into the conversation, otherwise they're going to get overwhelmed and they'll turn back towards something they already are familiar with.

They need to see the pattern, recognize themselves inside of it, and become curious enough to take the next step. Not have a fire hose of information. So clarity does not require making the idea smaller. It requires choosing where the audience should enter in. So I'll repeat that again. Clarity does not require making the idea smaller at all. We actually need to choose where the audience should enter. What's the entry point and then guide them from there. And then the third and final temptation is to abandon the idea too soon. So maybe you introduce it once or twice, it doesn't receive the response you had hoped for, so you decide the market is not interested.

Sometimes though, the idea isn't failing, it's just the audience hasn't caught up yet. So this is really difficult, I've seen, for people who are accustomed to being competent. When you have years of expertise and a history of producing results, returning to the beginning of a new conversation can be— I guess the best way to label it would be disorienting, because you're used to people understanding your value, and now you're watching them attempt to understand you, right? So if you're pivoting from one something into a brand new idea, that can feel really like you're on shaky ground. And you might assume the discomfort means you chose the wrong idea, or the idea is not going to work, when it may simply mean you're at the beginning of the process.

New ideas need that repetition. They need stories. They need evidence. They need time to move from unfamiliar to intriguing And then from intriguing to understandable, and then understandable to something people can repeat and carry for themselves. So my tagline, as you may know, is Make Your Message a Movement, same as the podcast.

And what I want to pull in here is the fact that you do not create a movement by announcing an idea once. Or having an idea. Now, this sounds obvious. However, people don't give themselves enough grace, or the idea enough grace. Sometimes you create a movement by giving people the language, the evidence, and also by showing up with courage to begin carrying it. Now, there's an important question that I don't want to leave out that's underneath all of this, because there is a time when maybe ideas aren't good, right? Or maybe you're not actually ahead of the market. So how do you know whether you're truly ahead of the market or early, or if you're simply unclear and it's not the best idea? Because being misunderstood is not automatic proof that idea is brilliant. Like we said, sometimes people don't understand because the idea isn't coherent yet.

But I want you to look for a few signs, okay? So for you to know that the idea is worth fighting for or sticking around for is the pattern keeps appearing. Okay, so this is not an idea based on one emotional reaction or passing frustration. You keep seeing it across clients, conversations, industries, or experiences. Maybe different people describe symptoms that appear unrelated, but you see the common thread underneath them.

You begin to recognize that you are not inventing a problem for the purpose of selling a solution, you are naming something that's already happening. You're seeing the pattern, right? If you're seeing the pattern over and over, then you have something really good to work with. The second sign is recognition. When the right person finally understands the idea, something changes in them or their expression.

They might say, that's exactly what I've been experiencing, or I've never heard anyone explain it that way, but now I cannot unsee it. They're not really admiring the cleverness of the idea, they are recognizing a truth inside it. Okay, so when that turning point happens and there's recognition and people are really starting to come alongside your idea That's when you know you've hit the gold. And then the third sign is that the work produces outcomes. The category may be new, the language is still developing, but when people experience the process or whatever you're bringing into the world, it changes something. Maybe they gain clarity or make a different decision or achieve a result or see their situation in a way that allows them to move forward.

So a new idea or offer that comes out of an idea doesn't need decades of evidence before you're allowed to share it, but it should help someone do, understand, or become something they could not access before. So that's the main thing. An idea is best when it actually produces outcomes. And then I would add more— one more sign. After years of getting these ideas and downloads myself and supporting clients through the process, and then really creating a category of one brand around it, the last sign I would add would be the idea will not leave you alone.

You may try to set it aside, but it keeps returning. It begins organizing your other ideas around it. Maybe past experiences suddenly make more sense through its lens, or you find yourself talking about it in conversations without even intending it to. At some point, you have to decide whether you're going to keep treating this idea like an interesting thought or accept the responsibility of turning it into something for other people and the greater good. And I believe that responsibility is where thought leadership actually begins, because thought leadership isn't simply saying something different.

It's seeing something true early enough and clearly enough to help other people recognize it too. So if you're carrying an emerging idea Your job is not only to protect it from being diluted, it's also to build the bridge that helps other people reach it. This means naming the problem in a language they can understand, creating stories to make the idea tangible, developing frameworks that makes it usable, and gathering examples that show what changes when someone sees the world through this new lens. And it also unfortunately means repeating yourself longer than feels comfortable. I always say a good message is like a broken record, and most likely you will become tired of your own language long before the market has heard it enough to remember it.

You may feel as though you've been talking about the ideal constantly while most of your audience has encountered it just once or not at all, because that's the world we're living in of oversaturation of information, right?

So what I love to say is repetition is not a sign that you have nothing new to say. It's often how an idea becomes strong enough to travel without you, because in the beginning you're the one carrying the idea. You explain it, refine it, give it language. But eventually, if you have done it well, the idea will begin to carry itself. You'll see other people start to use the language. They start to share your frameworks. They'll tell a friend, reference it in a meeting, or apply it to a situation you were not even there to explain. The idea is no longer only something you believe. It has become something other people can believe in too. And perhaps that is what it means to take an idea from the ether and bring it into the world.

Not to claim it that no one else could ever receive it, not to plant a flag and insist that every related thought belongs to you, but to accept your role in stewarding the version that came through you. And someone else may be sensing a similar shift. They may create something related because that tends to happen, but they cannot birth it exactly as you will. So your responsibility is not to be the only person with the idea, it's to become the person willing to go all in on your expression of it. Because every category that now feels obvious once sounded unfamiliar, maybe even crazy.

And every profession people now recognize had a period when someone needed to explain why it should exist. And every movement began before there was a crowd. So in this moment, if you're carrying an idea that feels difficult to explain, do not assume the difficulty means you should abandon it. Start looking for the patterns, noticing whether people experience recognition when the idea lands, gather the evidence and build that bridge. And also be willing to remain in the space between seeing something and helping other people see it too.



And like I said, as we started today, as we begin to wrap up, That space can feel lonely, but it may be where your most important work begins. So if you are carrying an idea that the market doesn't quite have language for yet, I would genuinely love to hear about it. Reach out and connect with me on LinkedIn. Tell me what you're seeing that other people may not see yet. And if you need help turning an idea into clear positioning, ownable language, intellectual property, and a brand people can understand and truly carry forward, you can go ahead and book a call with me, and you can do that in the link in the show notes.

Because the world doesn't need more ideas, it needs people willing to recognize the idea that has chosen them and be brave enough to bring it into the world. I hope you have an amazing rest of your week, and we'll see you next week on the Make Your Message a Movement podcast.