

S2: E202: Why Niching may be Keeping Your Brand Stuck (and how to fix it)

Hey there, and welcome back, or welcome to the *Make Your Message a Movement* podcast.

If you're listening, I'm guessing that you spent years, maybe 5, 10, 15, or 20 years developing your expertise. You've worked with tons of clients, refined your process, maybe created frameworks, definitely seen patterns, and you know things now that you could have possibly not known when you first started. And yet, when someone asks you what you do, you might still be describing yourself by one small piece of that experience. It's a little like writing a 300-page book and naming the entire thing after just chapter 3.

Chapter 3 might be great. It might be even the chapter that got people's attention, but it is not the whole book. And I think a lot of established experts these days are doing exactly this with their brands. They've built an entire body of work, but they're still branding themselves around one service, one audience, one problem, or one thing they became known for maybe 5 years ago. And then they wonder why they feel constrained or maybe why they're bored.

Or they keep having ideas, but they don't quite fit in, so they push them off.

The other thing that can often happen is people will come to them for one thing when they can do so much more, or they don't even want to do that work anymore. So today I want to talk about something I have dubbed reverse niching, because there comes a point when narrowing further is not the answer. Sometimes you actually need to widen the frame. We've been taught to niche, niche, niche. If you've been online for any amount of time in the business world, you've probably heard some version of this advice, right?

Get more specific or choose one audience or only solve one problem. The riches are in the niches or niches, however you want to say it. And there is reason that advice exists, especially because early in business, specificity is incredibly helpful. It does make it easier for people to understand what you do. It makes your marketing easier, and it gives something people to remember.

So you do often need to narrow before you expand, but somewhere along the way, we turn niching into this permanent rule, as if the narrower you get, the more successful you become. And I don't believe that is true for an established expert, because after 10, 15, 20 years, your expertise is not getting smaller. It's becoming more nuanced or more connected or layered. And at some point, continuing to niche down can mean cutting off pieces of the very experience that

makes you exceptional. This is why I think beginners need to narrow the audience and authorities need to widen the idea.

That does not mean becoming everyone to everything or everything to everyone or becoming vague. It does not mean that you stop defining your value by one thing, but really start asking what is the bigger idea underneath everything I'm doing. One of my favorite examples is a client of mine named Philippe. He had become known for challenges, running online challenges. He taught it, he helped people do them, he had this specific formula that worked, and he was really good at it.

People loved him for it, and he built a reputation around it. So in a sense, niching worked beautifully. The problem was eventually Philippe was completely burnt out on challenges and he didn't want to spend the rest of his career being the challenge guy. He had far more marketing experience than that. He understood strategy, campaigns, customer journeys, how all the pieces fit together, but the market didn't know that.

They only knew that he was good at challenges. So when he tried to sell something else, it never really quite landed, not because he wasn't qualified or the offer wasn't good, but because his brand had trained people to put him into one very specific box. And there was another issue. His warm audience had already heard the challenge message over and over. A lot of people who wanted that solution had already bought it or already moved on.

So the market itself was starting to change. And he had this strange situation where the thing he had sex— successfully— can't say that word— successfully become known for was now limiting both his enthusiasm, like he was getting sick of it, to be honest, and his growth. So when we worked together, We didn't throw away challenges. That would have been ridiculous because he really was good at them and it was part of his expertise. But we simply stopped making that chapter 3 the title of the entire book.

We expanded his positioning so people could see him as the broader marketing strategist he already was. Challenges still fit inside the ecosystem, but they didn't carry the entire business. Today, after rebranding and re-strategizing, he runs a successful full-service marketing agency. And that is what I call reverse niching. Another example is my client Danielle.

Danielle is a copywriter, one of the very best out there, and she still loves writing copy. So this wasn't the case of, again, abandoning the work. But AI came along, and I think this has affected so many copywriters and certain people in our industry, right? So the market for copywriting

started changing. There was a period when she simply wasn't as busy because people who once would have hired a copywriter were experimenting with writing using AI.

Now, Danielle could have responded by doubling down and saying, I just need to market my copywriting harder. But the interesting thing was copywriting had never really been the full scope of what she was doing behind the scenes. She was always helping her clients plan their launches, helping them sometimes map out courses, thinking strategically about what they should create, how they should sell it. So her clients were already getting the benefit of a strategist. But her brand, when she first started— and this was probably 6 years ago we originally did her brand, it worked great for 5 or 6 years— we were calling her a copywriter.

Again, that became chapter 3, so we didn't have to completely rebrand. There was so many foundations in what I call a legacy brand— her vision, her values, her voice, All of that stayed the same. We simply started widening the positioning. Copywriting is still one of her core competencies, and it's still part of what makes her work excellent, but it now lives inside a bigger story about marketing and launch strategy. That distinction is so important because reverse engineering is not about discarding your expertise that built your business.

You're not throwing away the chapter. You're finally showing people the rest of the book. Now, I have another client we are working with right now who came in largely for helping people get books ready for publication. She had decades of experience in publishing. She knows that world inside and out, and she can absolutely still help someone with a book.

But as we dug deeper into her work, it became obvious that publishing wasn't actually the most interesting thing about what she did, and she was ready to switch gears. What she is brilliant at helping established thought leaders figure out is what should come next. They may already have years of experience. They may already have a business, clients, content, all the things. But now they're looking at it thinking, okay, what's next?

Is it a book? Is it a podcast? A new offer? What am I missing? Because when you're standing inside your own business every day, it can be incredibly difficult to see the next evolution objectively.

But this is where she's brilliant. She can look across someone's experience, ideas, and assets and help them see what could be codified, developed, or created next. Kind of similar to what I do, but slightly different as far as she's not building brands. So this is a much bigger idea than I help people prepare books for publication, and it's much closer to what I call legacy work. So

the publishing experience became evidence, and one of the reasons she is uniquely equipped to do the bigger work.

A lot of people assume evolving your positioning means abandoning everything you did before, but really your past work simply becomes the foundation rather than the headline. So how do you know if this is happening to you and if you need to start to reverse niche? There's a few signs that I tell my clients to look for. So perhaps your expertise has become broader than the label you use to describe yourself. Maybe if you're saying something like, well, technically I'm a blank, but I also do this and this and this and this, that's a definite clue.

Maybe people only hire you for one specific service, even though, you know, you could help them with a much larger problem. Or maybe you're getting bored or burnt out by the thing you're known best for. You're ready to move forward, but it just scares you because you're so pigeonholed into the work. Oftentimes, and especially lately, it might just be the market has changed and demand for that specific solution is not once what it was. And we have to face this and pivot.

Because what I've seen is when people just hold tight and hope that things are going to get better, sometimes it doesn't. So we have to be the advocate for our own business and shift when the market shifts. And maybe you find yourself turning away interesting opportunities because they don't fit the niche you've created. And here's one question I especially want you to ask after our last episode about future vision last week. If the biggest version of my vision came true, would this niche still make sense 3 or 5 years from now?

Because if you want to write bestselling books, speak on bigger stages, advise incredible companies, or create a new body of intellectual property, does your current positioning have enough room for that?

Or have you spent years getting really, really good at marketing just chapter 3?

And reverse niching isn't about becoming broader. It's actually about going deeper. This is where people tend to get a little bit nervous when I talk about this idea because they think, but Tiffany, if I broaden my niche, won't I become generic? Because we've had all these gurus speaking the niche language into our brains for years. Now the answer is potentially.

If you don't do it right or you do it badly, you could definitely ruin your reputation and have people go, what does she do, or what does he do, because you go too broad. So for instance, if my client Philippe had gone from I help people run challenges to I help businesses grow, that

really wouldn't have solved anything, right? It's not reverse niching, it's just vague positioning. So the answer is not to become broader and blurrier, it's about moving one level deeper and finding that golden thread that connects all of your body of work. What has actually been underneath all these different things?

What problem have you actually been solving? What patterns keep showing up? What transformation connects different clients, offers, or audiences that might seem unrelated on the surface? So again, for Danielle, copy was one expression of a larger strategic skill. For Philippe, challenges were one marketing mechanism inside a much broader ability to create marketing strategy.

And for my publishing client, books were one vehicle for something bigger, helping experts codify their thinking and decide what to create next. So you simply do not widen the audience, right? It's, it's not about getting wider. You strengthen the organizing idea, and that's why I say the goal is not to abandon specificity. It's to stop confusing specificity with smallness.

And I really want to say one last thing that I think matters emotionally here. I don't want you to look back at your old positioning thinking it was wrong. It was what got you here. Maybe that niche built your first \$100,000, million. Maybe it gave you your reputation.

Maybe it brought you the clients who ultimately taught you what your real body of work was. Maybe you needed to become known for that chapter 3 before you could understand what the whole book was really about. And there's absolutely nothing wrong with that. The danger is when we cling to an identity simply because it once worked. And sometimes success itself becomes the cage.

Because if something has made you money, gotten you referrals, and built you a reputation, it can feel incredibly risky to change it. Even when you know deep down that you've outgrown it. You might start thinking, what if I confuse people? What if I lose my audience? What if nobody understands the new thing?

What if I should just be grateful that this did work? And then suddenly the brand you built to create opportunity becomes the thing preventing you from exploring the next opportunity. That is why this is not just a messaging decision. There's often, and I would say always, an identity shift involved. You have to allow yourself to become bigger than what people currently know you for.

And the truth is, I've helped a lot of clients through this process, and you probably will lose some of your following. You probably will have people that aren't interested in the services anymore. But that's not a bad thing. It's because you've evolved and outgrown that current ideal client. And so if you're ready to step into bigger stages, bigger offers, and a different ecosystem, some people will definitely keep moving along with you, but you have to bless and release the rest for all of the new opportunities to be able to come through.

So as we wrap up today, I want to give you an exercise.

If you have one, take out a piece of paper and I want you to imagine that your entire career is a book.

Not just your current business alone, but your full career, Your experiences, your clients, your wins, your mistakes, maybe weird detours that turned out to teach you something important, your beliefs, the work you do for clients that is technically outside the scope, but you're good at. Those are all chapters. Maybe your frameworks, ideas that have been bugging you, but you're not sure how to fit them into your business and brand. Write them all down and then look at them as a table of contents and ask, what is this book actually about? What connects these chapters?

Is there a bigger transformation? Is there an idea sitting above the thing I currently sell? And most importantly, am I branding myself around the whole book Or have I accidentally made chapter 3 my entire identity?

This is also why I talk so much about building brands for where you're going. Your positioning should be specific enough that people understand you now, but expansive enough to allow your work to evolve. Because we know for a fact that your offers will change. Technology will change, markets will change, you will change, your interests will shift. And if your entire brand is attached to one tactic, one platform, one offer, or one narrow application of your expertise, eventually something will move.

So the strongest authority brands have a bigger center of gravity, a transformation, a methodology, a body of work, something strong enough that different offers and opportunities can orbit around it without making the brand feel scattered. And that's what I want you to start looking for today. Not how do I add more things, but what is the bigger idea that makes everything I already do make sense?

So if you've been feeling like your positioning isn't quite right, maybe you're bored with the thing people keep hiring you for, you're ready for different ideal clients, you have new ideas that never seem to fit, maybe you think you need to niche down even further— especially that one, if somebody told you niche down even further and it just doesn't feel right to you— I want you to consider the possibility that it's not a smaller box, it's actually a bigger idea that you need. And the next evolution of your authority is not becoming more specific about your expertise. It's finally stepping back far enough to see the body of work you've actually created. And if you're realizing that's exactly where you are, this is the kind of work we're going to dig inside in my upcoming Authority Positioning Workshop coming up at the end of the month. We'll look at what you should actually be known for, how to position the depth of your expertise without being vague, and how to build a brand that can grow with the opportunities you want next.

Because again, your experience should not be something you have to squeeze into a smaller niche. It should be the foundation for the something bigger that's on its way to you. So I'll see you next week on the episode. Sending you so much love and have a beautiful week.