

There's no right way for growing an online business. And honestly, me and my guests are more than fine with that.

I'm Hailey Thomas. And this is the podcast that lets you be a fly on the wall for candid conversations and many lessons through a variety of online entrepreneurs who are growing their businesses based on their own visions. We're on a mission to normalize and laugh about the behind the scenes truth of achieving a new level of success in your business. This is one year from now.

Hello, friends, welcome to the podcast. We are getting in it today because we are talking about the insidious question, the insidious thought, why isn't my business working? Why isn't it working? This comes up a lot, especially when you're in year one, or two. And you are learning how to manage a business or learning how to sell, you're learning how to market, you're learning how to deliver the service, you're learning the service itself, like the craft, the thing you offer, and you're learning how to think like a CEO. So we're gonna break apart some myths, I'm going to tell you some things I'm going to walk you through my first year in business, both in my VA business, my first year coaching, my goal here is to like redirect, re correct, your thinking around, my business isn't working, it's not working. Overall, if you don't listen to the rest of the episode, The moral of the story here is that it probably is working, that's the too long didn't read version of this is it probably is working, what's more likely happening is that you have on checked expectations about the stage you're at, and what your business should and should not be doing at this stage. That's probably what's happening, your business is probably working just fine. But we're going to get into it. So I want you to think of this process a little bit like the diet industry, and the idea of like losing weight or significantly changing your physique. So the diet industry, when they're selling you their products, they make it sound very simple and straightforward. And like all you have to do, it's exactly what we say. And then you will get this physique, right, there's always some model. And we know that a good percentage of that is photoshopped. But even the pictures of images, they afters that are not photoshopped. Like I want to remind you in real life, and this comes from someone who is an athlete and has trained people, and, you know, physically trained for many, many years herself, there is a such thing as just having really, quote unquote, good. I don't like the word good, because it then means there's a bad to it. And I don't think there's a such thing as bad genes. But really, there are people that have genes, like their individual makeup, makes it so that they can more quickly realize, whatever result this diet or workout or wellness thing is trying to sell you. Like there are some people that are just predisposed to being shaped that way. So for instance, there's a trade in my family all the time in my family, we get cut. And by that, I mean like you can start seeing muscle definition, we get cut. I mean, a couple weeks after working out with any consistency, it's right, like we immediately start seeing definition and our arms and our thighs and our legs. It's almost instantaneous. It is not because we do literally anything different or better in any way, training more, we're not eating better, we're not sleeping more, we are genetically set up to have this outcome. I remember when I was playing volleyball, and I had people in my position. Right, so other middle blockers we are eating similarly, we keep about the same schedule. So I know their stress load and I know their sleep load playing the same position. And they were nowhere near as cut as I was we're doing the same training with the same amount of stress the same amount of

sleep. Same schedule. Right. Why? Because our bodies just weren't genetically set up to do that just as strong as I was, if not stronger, to be super honest there. But just the way that I was genetically set up was that I just look jacked all the time. I'm saying all this to say in online business, especially there's a whole sector of business that is about selling you on the idea of being self employed and of having a business. Right so they will share stories that are photoshopped, ie someone's not telling the whole story about what happened or all the details of what happened. And sometimes you'll find people who genuinely, they took off out of what quote unquote, no error took off out of nowhere, for reasons that are not repeatable reasons that other people can't achieve. And not might be some level of privilege, or it might just be like, they're coming into business coming out of being a VP of a large company. Yeah, they know how to run a business, they know how to manage people, if they're coming out of a sales role they know how to sell. So their growth path and the speed of it might seem like, oh, if they can do it, I can do it too. And like part of being sold, you know, the way people sell is like, if they can, so can you. And in general, I like that idea as in, like, if they can do it, I can do it too,

when I'm talking to myself, but you have to keep that in mind the same way that we keep in mind, after pictures in the diet, industry and culture when they're trying to sell you something. They're not real, they don't tell the whole story. That's what I'll say they don't tell the whole story. Similarly, in online business, when you see people going, what seems like really, really quickly, it's not the entire story. So that's what I wanted to preface this with, to kind of accompany the thought your business is probably working just fine. What needs to happen is we need to read correct, rewrite your relationship with the stager businesses in and your expectations for this stage. So I want to tell you a little bit about my story. First I'm gonna tell you about when I started my virtual assistant business in 2017. And then when I started offering coaching in 2020. For this reason, one, you'll notice a very similar pattern between the two, even though I think I went a little faster in 2020, because I've been running a business and online business for three years already, and 2018 2019. And then still partly in 2020. So like, there are many things that I was bringing into this process already, if you're coming from corporate into being an online business owner, guess what you're not coming into it with somebody who is maybe changing their niche or offering something different. Secondly, when you are offering a new offering, you have to remember it is almost like starting a new business. So I say that for entrepreneurs that have a main offering. And they're going to add an offering to their business. In my other business podcast production school, we have a membership, and a digital course to sell, we're going to add an offering to it. And it's probably going to take a similar route. Because each offer has its own marketing its own cell cycle, its own way to deliver it its own type of clients that would be most successful with it. So like this is just what it actually is like starting a new thing. And I think it's important that we line that up. So backstory in 2018, I left my corporate job of HR in December of 20, excuse me, 2016 left my corporate job in HR, we moved. And my job my quote unquote job was to figure out how to like start paying bills as soon as possible. We had some cash from the house sale. And like we sold our house for like 14k more than asking. And so we had some cash, but that cash was dwindling. As we were buying a new place. We bought a mobile home with cash. And then we had like living expenses. So my husband got a job and I need to figure something out because I we have a small child at home and one car so I can't like go work anywhere. So

that's when I happened upon virtual assisting. So in January of 2017, I got my first VA clients from reading everything I could on the internet. My first virtual assistant clients were my sister, who has a real tea business and my dad who was starting a cleaning business. Yes, we are that family. I don't remember how much I tried to go and look what the invoices I sent them were for. But in January, I made less than \$500 between the two of them. That was like my how much I made working for them was less than 500 bucks. But I had found someone on the internet that I loved who I now work with on other projects, talking about being a virtual assistant, and she was sharing blogs. And so I was just like consuming everything that I could and not being passively consuming. But as I was at a stage, I would take in some information and then go act and take in some information and then go act. And so that netted me about 500 bucks in January. And then February and March, I use the cache that I had created those 500 bucks. And I bought a course on how to become a virtual assistant. And I went through the course in about day 20 I had an interview with someone who became my first client, and that ended up being a \$6,000 contract that lasted me I think we did work eight or 12 weeks. So that's let's say march through June or July of 2017.

Right so at this point I had made, let's say \$6,500 In six months, so that was a project that ended in July, I got my first ongoing virtual assistant client, and that client was \$1,000 a month. And then in August of 2017, that client doubled the amount of time we were working together. So instead of 10 hours, or 20 hours, and that was 2k a month. So from July through December, it was doing 2k a month, every month with this client, which was great for me at that time, because we needed to fill that gap in our income, because the money we'd gotten from wholesale was dwindling base over expenses. And there was still a gap between when my husband was making and what expenses were. So I think in that time, I brought on one or two, like small project things again, but I ended year one of my business at \$20,000, for the whole year 20k. And I think that's significant. Because even though again, we're in the space of online business, and so it seems like here, one, I should at least be doing 50k. And then the next year will be 100k. And the next year 150k. Like a It doesn't work like that and be I would consider this a very successful year. Right? I really only worked with when I count 12345. So maybe like I really only worked with five or six clients the entire year, and it was mainly one at a time. So I went on a 2018 and 2019 kind of growing my virtual assistant business Year One was that 20k a year to was I think I did like 78k because I learned how to do what I was doing faster. And I was learning how to sell and I was learning how to talk about it. And we're going to talk about some of the thoughts that I had about myself. But one of the big ones was that, like, I can sell anyone anything. That is a belief I have about myself. And I think that about I can sell people ideas, I can sell projects I can sell. I mean even as little as like, Hey, friend, we should get ice cream this afternoon, I know you want to and here's how it like a thing I believe about myself is that I can sell anyone anything. That is an optional thought I can just as easily not think that because up until my business, I wasn't in sales, I was an HR. So I had no reason to believe that other than one time a manager told me that. And I took that thought because I liked it. And one of my managers basically said, Wow, Haley, you could get anyone to do just about anything. So I took that and kind of adapted it to I could sell anything to anyone like I can sell, I had no real reason to believe that because I hadn't sold anything up until then. And that's one of the things I want to talk about is you can just decide to start talking about yourself,

like you're good at selling and marketing. That's the thing you can choose. And the thought my business isn't working is an optional thought. that's optional, you get to choose to keep that thought or not. One of the other things I thought often I took my notes before this, and one of the things I thought about often was that belief that I can sell, and that I'm good at selling, but I never thought at that point, my business wasn't working. I never thought it wasn't working, which I find fascinating. I'm not sure what I was thinking, besides, I'm going to figure it out. And what Haven't I tried yet? Those were my primary thoughts. But I never thought it's not working. It's not going well. And I think now that I'm saying this out loud recording this podcast, I was not ingrained in the online business space. So I didn't have really anything to like, measure against. I started towards the end of that year really heavily reading the end of that year, early the next year, the following year. So it was like in the online business space. So seeing more and more examples of I was looking for women and for black women and for stay at home mom's examples of them succeeding and making money. And I just like kept looking for those examples. And so I was just like, yeah, I can figure it out. What haven't I tried yet? And I just assumed it was working. Now flash forward to 2020. So we'll start actually December of 2019. That's when I decided to move into coaching. So if you hadn't heard the story, the brief rundown is I had VA clients, who were saying like, hey, you're pretty good VA.

And you're a pretty good project manager. But man, you know, what's most helpful is these like coaching hours that I would give them every single week. They love them. It was so good. I was starting to do writing about whitespace and how leaders think. And so in December of 2019, I bought a course about coaching by my mentor Stacy bayman, a course about selling coaching. And I sold my first I called it a coaching project management setup. I called it a work treat. And I was really excited about it very proud of it. It was \$1,000 project, basically where I would fly to my clients hometown. And we would go through their inbox and work on projects and talk about whitespace and design their calendar. In my mind, I was still really struggling with fully stepping into coaching and not offering project management and virtual assistant work which is what I was known for. And I say no one for right the internet's a giant place. But that's what I knew myself as. And I really struggled to step into just coaching and just offering that. So I sold those hybrid packages that were really not profitable, because it costs that much for me to fly myself and one of my teammates out to my client, and then feed us and then put us in a house and then have the space and then set up the space for my client, I would buy flowers and snacks and that like, it ended up being so expensive doing those things. It was like in the paying one of my team members super not profitable, which is why I love talking about profitability now and creating offers that are not that are over delivering but not over caretaking. Because that offer was straight up over caretaking because I felt so afraid to just offer coaching, even though multiple past clients that said that was what was most valuable

to them.

So in December, I sold one of those packages, I would like to report that in January and February of 2020, I think I pitched like five or six more sold zero. But I did sell that one in December, we actually went to the event in January. So at that point, in January and February, I made a total of coaching dollars, right. So I

still had virtual assistant clients, but a total of coaching dollars of 4500 bucks. Because I did payment plans for everything at that point. It was not in my psyche and my brain that people would just like, be able to pay up front business owners would be able to pay up front or individuals would just be able to pay any amount. But that's what I sold in January. And again, because my brain was just thinking, I'm gonna figure it out, I'm gonna figure it out. What haven't I tried yet? Oh, I should try something else. So in February, and in March, I coached a bunch of people for free. So I had one friend who was going through a job transition and I coached him for about eight weeks for free. I mean, anybody who would get on call with me, I just be like, Hey, we're gonna do a marketing or some sort of strategy session with you. I didn't have like proper marketing in place. I didn't know what I was calling myself or what I was calling my coaching is a strategy. Is it coaching? am I helping them come up with a business plan or marketing plan? I had no idea. The thoughts I did have where I'm going to figure it out. What haven't I tried yet. So I did a bunch of one off free coaching sessions with literally whoever I could get on the phone. And it was people I met at a conference, I was really looking for people who didn't know me as a virtual assistant, because I had a whole pool of people who knew me as a virtual assistant and a virtual Product Manager. So I was having to create new relationships that had people and had me seeing myself as a coach, or business strategist, because I was too afraid to call myself just a coach at that point. So that was February. In April, I got my first purely coaching clients. So I want you to notice December, I decided it was going to be a thing, I sold an \$8,000 package, which was still 92% project management, okay, so I don't even really count that as coaching. So it was a wildly unprofitable and be not even remotely like it just it wasn't it wasn't coaching, actually, it was just somebody who was a really excellent virtual assistant and project manager. So went from December, all the way through the very end of April, or excuse me, the very beginning of April, not selling a thing that's December, January, February, March, that's almost five months, calling myself a coach, selling myself as a coach doing free stuff, whatever I could before I sold coaching, mind you, at that point, I still had some virtual assistant clients. And after I had sold at least one coaching thing, I started to roll off my clients as a virtual assistant or my project management clients rolled those people off. So in April, I had my first I think I sold two coaching clients, I think they were I don't know, one was like \$1,000, maybe one was like 750, maybe 650. But I made \$1,650 in April from purely coaching in May again, so I kept doing all the things that I was doing, talking about who I was, I was talking about who I helped, I was asking myself quality questions. And I was just assuming that it was working. And in May I signed three clients, one person paid in full, what I sold, the other two were laser coaching offers. So this was something I had to experiment with. Now what I coach my clients on is just have one offer. I suggest that after having the experience of I think I did 10 consults for laser coaching, got two people to sign up and then finished my laser coaching, which was six weeks instead of the six months that I now offer. And we get to the end, and I'm like, oh, there's like six more things we need to coach on. I think I did one person on third person for like a month, I was doing these little packages, and it was never enough. And it was annoying because the client was like, Well, I didn't get to my outcome. So coaching doesn't work, obviously. And I'm like,

No, it's not that we just need more time. But I didn't properly set their expectations for how long their transformation was going to take. Because I needed

for me to experiment with a shorter package that costs less money, because I was just like, let me just figure I just need to sell something. Let's just get in and start selling. I don't regret what I did. And Now that I know more, I'd make a different decision, which is what I coach my clients on now. So anyway, May was a 6k, month \$6,168, to be exact, I had some small coaching agreements in there and one of what I really wanted to sell, so I sold some little packages, and I had one of what I really wanted to sell. At the time, my coaching package for six months was \$4,500. In June, I sold two clients on that six month package on payment plans. July, I sold one August, I sold another two, I also in July, I think I did another set of free sessions, because I was just wanting to coach more. So I think what I want you to take from that or notice is like, again, we are now let's say in August, and in September, I sold another client. So let's say we're in September. Now, I technically started with the intention to be coaching in December. It's now September, right? Again, the whole time, I think my revenue was all there was at 6k a month. And then we've got a 2k a month, a three and a half k a month, a four and a half k a month, I had stopped doing virtual assistant services. But that's about the time towards the end of, I don't know, September, September ish, that's when my brain did start freaking out. Because again, I'd been in the online business space for a while and I was like, Oh my gosh, it's been nine whole months. And I haven't made \$100,000. Mind you, I'm gonna end it this year, at this year, I'm looking at right now at about 70k. But my brain was assuming I was failing. Because at that point, I had been so ingrained ated in the online business world that like this is year three of me being an online business. So I should just be able to make 100,000 if not more money, if I was trying hard enough, my expectations were not matching, where the majority of my business and this offer, this coaching offer was this coaching offered only been alive for nine months. And this is going perfectly. Okay. Yeah, sometimes people go faster. And sometimes they go slower. It takes as long as it takes. But the longer I'm in business in general, the more businesses that I coach on, and not just in the virtual assistant space or coaching other coaches, but I've got clients who are in tech, I've got clients who are in designers, I've got clients who are marketers, this is what it takes to launch a new offering. It takes as long as it takes. So we're at September of 2020. At this point, I probably have like, I don't know, half a dozen people on my roster. And November, I sold zero clients. So I spent most months doing two clients, one client to client, one client, three clients, and then zero goose egg, I freaked out. At this point, if I'm looking back at my coaching journey, I can see my freakout was directly in proportion, or my zero months were directly in proportion to my thought, this isn't working. That's just about the only time in my online business or my business career, that I was thinking that it's not working. At this point, I had hired my coach who I love so much. And I've been working with her for several months. And I want to know, for you too. I made that investment was doing what she was saying, working my business. I had even in July and August on a challenge where I posted three times a day every day mainly to help me with my writing. And to help me with my confidence. And my brain was going oh my gosh, it's not working, it was working fine. I just was ready for instantaneous results. And when I started to freak out about it not working goose egg, goose egg months. So in October, November, I sold more virtual assistant services, because we still had to eat and got coached hard by my coach. But my expectations about my belief in myself and some other questions that I'm gonna ask you here towards the end higher quality questions and why isn't this working. And in December, I sold five clients signed five new clients, three of which were at the

level that I wanted to be at, in terms of what their investment was and who I wanted to coach and for how long. One of them was going to do like every other week payments. So that's the other thing I want you to note. It's never like a and not never sometimes it is and I would highly suggest to make a few exceptions as possible. But

even then at December, I've been doing coaching for a full year. And I was like I like this person and I want to get her in. So this is what she can do. Great. Well coach every other week. And then I had some payment plans. And then the five new folks that I signed. And then December was a 14k month and I had virtual assistant services in there that I was still being paid for. So December was a 14k month. What I want you to take away from this example or these walkthroughs is again now that I have space from last year to like look back and reflect and space. To look back and reflect at 2017. And I've coached a bunch of people, and was a virtual assistant and a product manager and a bunch of different companies. The only thing that was ever wrong with either of my year ones was anytime that I was thinking it's it's not working, it should be going faster. Why haven't I figured this out? Because this is what your one of a new offering just looks like. Sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes it goes faster. Some people are coming into it genetically engineered like we're talking about the workout situation earlier, genetically engineered to go faster, sooner, and that's fine. And by genetically engineered, I mean, they're coming in with other tools and things in their belt that are super helpful. And some aren't and still go fat. Like there's so many variables to it. But I wanted to give you an overview of what this has looked like for me, and what I now know are very normal year ones of a new offering. So this is what I want to say. While this is very true, and that you get to choose your thoughts deliberately, like the thoughts I had, I can sell anything. What haven't I tried yet, I will figure it out. You get to choose your thoughts deliberately. But I also don't want to skate over the emotion. Right? There are many ups and downs emotionally during this process for me, both of those year ones for me. And I want to say that your feelings are valid, and you need to be able to allow yourself to have those feelings without shutting down or without trying to turn your attention. Right, I think I probably wasted some time and energy, reverting back to virtual assistant services when I was feeling stressed out or feeling like it's not working. Instead of asking these higher quality questions that I'll share with you in a little bit. But feel your feelings, they are valid, but they're not indicative of what the truth is. Feelings just tell us how we feel about what's happening, not what's actually happening. Okay, so experience your feelings. When you're in year one, you will have bouts days, weeks, where you just are feeling so much emotion and feeling maybe tired or fatigued of the process. Or just like sad that it hasn't magically happened yet, or tired. Or you get a bunch of rejections or a bunch of nose. Like there have been multiple places where like when I offered laser coaching, I had 10 conversations about laser coaching and got like seven nose in a row and then one yes, and then a no. And then another Yes, that felt terrible. Feelings are valid, but they're also not the truth. Feelings are valid, and you need to be with yourself and your feelings. But they are not the whole story. So experience your feelings without shutting down or diverting your attention. And then you get to get curious. Okay, so you want to ask high quality questions? Why isn't this working is not a high quality question. That is a very low quality question. What platform should I be on? Like what social media platform should I be on? Do I need to fix my website? Why don't my clients want to buy this?

Like those are low quality? Although the last one could be a high quality question. I'll tell you why in a second. Those are low quality questions. You want questions that get you into research mode and get curious? And are kind of the sister questions of what Haven't I tried yet? Okay, so like, Why don't people want to buy this is actually a high quality question because it helps us to start getting into several options, like it opens up options for you to research and to look at and to be a kind of compassionate scientists to think about, I don't know, why wouldn't someone buy this? high quality questions might be what is working? What is working for me? Why? What is not working? Why? Why do my clients think this isn't gonna work? Why aren't my clients prioritizing getting on the phone with me? What haven't I said yet? What haven't I said that they're waiting to hear? What goal? Are my clients trying to achieve? Or get to? What's the next milestone? And how do I help them get to that very next milestone? What's missing? Now, as you ask yourself, these high quality questions, first of all, this is all excellent fodder for your marketing. But secondly, like, these are the questions you have to keep asking,

and there's loads more. These are the questions you have to keep asking. You want questions that get you to think and get curious, versus questions that can have answers that just like shut things down. Fun fact for you, it is almost never about your pricing. Lord knows I have messed with pricing, up and down sideways payment plans, trying to get round numbers if they're doing a monthly plan. But then the whole number that I have to say on the phone is like \$4,272. Like, it's never the price. Pick a price that helps you and them thrive. Pick a price in a timeline that actually gets them to the result that they want. If it's higher than what you're comfortable with. That's your shit to deal with. And you're shit to reconcile If the result that you're promising to help them get to takes that much time and that much money to get to, it just takes that much time and money to get to, you never go faster by lowering the price, it doesn't really work that way. And all you're doing in year one is figuring out what you're selling, who you're selling to, and how they need to be sold to. That's it. That's really what you're trying to figure out in year one. Which is why I think the things that I did, right, and my year one was really, both of my year ones, I will say was really not worry about my branding, and my website, like those are secondary, like second tier things, the things you have to figure out, which is what has made me successful is what am i selling? To whom, what do they need it for? And how do they need to hear me talk about it. That's really what your year one is figuring out how to sell. So that's whether you already have a business and a main offering. And you're adding this offering year one is just figuring those things out for this new offering. Okay, if you're starting a new business with a new offering, that's your one. And anything that doesn't help you do those things are not necessary. And then there's the assumption, you also have to have the assumption or these intentional thoughts, that that is what's happening, that you are learning that it is working, you're feeling a lot of rejection and having to practice patience along the way, but it is working. Alright. Patients, by the way, feels passive but it's actually quite active. By being patient, it means you're staying curious, you're asking those questions. You're asking why five layered steep, like you're really trying to understand that it's an active patients. So the last thing I'm gonna leave you with in this episode, is some intentional thoughts to practice, because it's not working, it's taking too long, might feel like the truth, but it's probably not. And those are optional thoughts. If you continue to think them, it's a choice, you're picking to think those thoughts, you

can choose to try on some of these thoughts, they're going to feel foreign. At first, if this isn't actually current things you're thinking, but your job is to continue to feed them to yourself, feed them to your brain, just repeat them, you don't even have to believe them as you're repeating them. And at some point, they're going to start to click and be true. And more often than not, they're going to move you into action that's helpful and not action that's going to divert your attentions, or turn your attentions to make this process take longer. So some intentional thoughts for you. Impatience makes it take longer. It takes as long as it takes, and it can happen fast. I trust myself. And my process. And my timing completely. All delays proved beneficial. Nothing has gone wrong. I'm here to help. I'm good at selling. I can figure this out. What haven't I tried yet? I want to give a shout out to my coach Serena who really got me on board with practicing intentional thoughts. We call it pit training for practice intentional thoughts. And again, it's not about like, trying to brainwash yourself, all you're doing is kind of giving yourself a lifeline, something to cling on to, for those moments when you really feel like no, no, no, but it's really not working, Haley, the whole thing is not working. It is working. And you're going to continue to use these words as be sentences, these thoughts as lifelines to continue to get curious and continue to move through the process that you need to move through in year one. So I hope this episode was helpful. Please let me know what questions you have if you think I'm full of baloney. But I've seen over and over again that this is just what happens in your one. And your job is to practice and active patients, active patients and continuing to move forward. So hit me up on Instagram I'm at brainspace optimized you can send me an email and let me know where you are in this process. Thank you for spending this time with me and I will see you on the next episode. Thank you for listening to this episode of one year from now you can find the show notes and all the links we mentioned at brain space optimized comm slash podcast if you want to chat me up about all things entrepreneurship, then head to brain space

optimized comm and join my email list. This is where we have rich conversations about the experience of business ownership is thoughtful. It's funny, I like getting responses and chatting with you all it's a good time. Lastly, you can find me on Instagram at brainspace optimized we'll see you in the next episode.