

Systems That Transform Your Teacher Business

Introduction:

Welcome to the School of Sellers podcast, a teacher business show that is short on time but big on action. Full-time, part-time or just getting started? No matter where you are in your teacher seller journey, there's something here for everyone, making your online teacher business feel doable every step of the way. Here's your host, Erin Waters.

Erin Waters:

Just a quick note about today's episode. In the spirit of working smarter and not harder, I've repurposed several of my Facebook lives into podcast episodes. You'll experience a slightly different sound with the exact same actionable content. All right. Here we go. Hello. So, nice to see you all again. Today we're talking about systems and I'll officially get started here in about maybe a minute or two. But I'm going to give people maybe a minute or two to hop on and get settled. I don't know about you guys but we have a lot of snow here in the Cleveland area. So, it's kind of nice watching it fall outside my window but it's just it's a mess on the roads. So, I'm happy to be home for the night. Today we're going to keep this short and sweet. I know it's Valentine's Day Eve so we have parties and all sorts of festivities planned for tomorrow. So, I won't keep you long tonight.

So, let's go ahead and get started. Today we are talking about all things systems and when I say systems, I'll explain more about what I mean about that here in a minute. But if you didn't catch it, this week my podcast was all about a very special tool that I use to keep myself organized and I consider it one of my best systems in terms of having everything all in one place especially for content creation and social media posting. So, if you didn't get a chance to check that out, you can check it out on any listening platform or go to ErinMWaters.com/Hub and you can find all the information there as well. So, like I said, today is going to be much shorter than usual. I'm talking 10, maybe 15 minutes hopefully. I know Valentine's Day is tomorrow. It's been a busy week. So, we're going to keep it short and sweet this week and then we're actually going to continue this discussion next week for part two of all things systems. So, I'm excited for that. I could talk about systems until I'm blue in the face. I just love them and I think they're the number one most helpful thing we can do for ourselves in this business. So, let's go ahead and get started with the actual content. Last time, I did a Facebook live I wasn't seeing all the comments showing up live for some reason. So, obviously, I still would love for you guys to comment because I am able to see them once I stop the live. But if for some reason I don't respond to you, I'm not ignoring you. I'm just not seeing it. So, like I can see people joining. Like hi, Julie and Barbara. But last time it wasn't showing me any comments. So, it's not you. It's Facebook. Hopefully, they show them this time. I guess we'll just have to wait and see.

So, when you hear the word systems, it's kind of like a broad term and I wanted to narrow down exactly what I mean about systems and how it—hi, Barbara. Okay, good. I can see this. Great. That's awesome. So, I specifically want to talk about systems as they pertain to you as a Teachers Pay Teachers author because I know we get like flooded with all of this business advice and all this stuff all the time and while it's helpful, it's not always exactly what the TPT community needs for our specific business because it is a very specific way of doing things and not all the advice applies. So, when I'm thinking about systems for the TPT community, systems can be any sort of processes you use in your business to make things easier for yourself. Maybe you have a formula or a framework that you use for creating certain things along the way in your business or even templates. If you have templates that you use to create creatives or products or anything like that, all those fall under the term system. So, system really encompasses a lot of just the way we simplify things for ourselves. And really the word simple is just as important as system because I think a system is made to make your life more simple. So, if it's not doing that, it's either not a system or it's not a very good one. So, we want to keep that in mind. Simple is the name of the game.

So, let's talk about why we use systems in our business. One of the cool things—sometimes it's cool—one of the cool things about the TPT world is that a lot of what we do are recurring tasks. So, just because we do something once doesn't mean we're never going to do it again and a lot of times we do the same tasks weekly, monthly, sometimes even daily. So, the fact that we're doing the same thing again and again and again makes even more sense about why we need systems for them because there's no sense in recreating the wheel. And I'll give you an example here. When I first started out, I was the worst Facebook ads person ever. I'm still not great but I'm learning and it was like every time I hopped on that ads platform, it was like I had to re-teach myself all the bells and whistles of the ads platform. And after a while, it just got to be ridiculous. So, I had to come up with some systems in a way for me to make that process easier for myself. So, because we have so many tasks we do again and again and again, systems make sense because if we're going to keep doing it, we might as well make it as easy as possible so that every time we do it, it takes less and less time.

I think systems are great for improving your workflow. I mean whether you have eight hours a day to work on TPT or even an hour or even 30 minutes, if you have a system in place and everything is set to go and exactly what you need to do and how you need to do it, you're going to save so much time even if it's something little like the five minutes you take to search for that one photo of a product or searching for that stupid folder on your desktop that you put somewhere and you can't find it. I mean those things add up and something as simple as a system for organizing your files can go a long way in saving you time. I think it also helps for us to be working with intention because I've said this before and I'll say it a million more times. But it doesn't matter if you are a full-time TPT-er. It doesn't matter if you are a teacher who TPT's. It literally doesn't matter who you are. Time is just not something we have a whole lot of. So, and I'll be the first to tell you, I TPT full-time now and I still, every day, I'm like oh my gosh, where did the time go? There's never enough time. So, there's no sense in wasting that precious time on stupid things like finding files. Yes, Barbara. Right. It's a joke. I mean it's crazy how much time we waste doing stupid things like that and I'm saying stupid because I mean that's me. I'm not calling you stupid but I'm just saying like it's just dumb. Like we don't have much time. We need to be using it more wisely. So, that's where systems come into play in a huge way. Oh, clipart's another one too. Finding clipart. I mean I could go on and on.

So, I know that systems aren't a brand new thing. Like this isn't anything earth shattering. But I do think that there is a smart way of using systems in your teacher seller business and maybe some mistakes that teacher sellers make when it comes to systems. And everything I talk to you guys about stems directly from mistakes that I've made in this business. So, if I'm talking about them today, it's because that they're ones I made. So, it's not to make anyone feel bad if you're like oh, wait a minute, I do that. It's just how we learn, right? We try things out, we realize they don't work and in the long run, we're better for it. So, I think one of the main mistakes we make with systems and let's do an example for this. Like let's say we're talking about a system for organizing your content, like all your stuff that goes on your blog, right? Whether it's how you write your blogs or whether it's the actual process of storing all that information, like links and all that stuff, let's use that as an example as we go through the list of mistakes.

So, I think one of the major mistakes is trying to get too fancy and that's not really our fault. I mean we have so many tools at our disposal and they're all so high tech now, I mean I feel like a kid in a candy shop sometimes when I'm looking at some of these things online because I'm like oh, that looks really pretty, that looks awesome. But a lot of times really simple is best. It's very tempting to choose the stuff that looks really pretty and really fancy and complicated but there's really no reason to make things harder than it has to be. It's kind of like the whole chasing the shiny object thing. Like I feel like there's a new spreadsheet program that comes out every single day. Like everywhere I look, there's a new program. And while it's tempting to want to switch over, if what you're doing works, you need to put your blinders on and go with it. I think it's interesting because I am, not so much anymore, but in the past I was a total system switcher because I would get distracted by all of these things that looked better than what I was doing and I lost sight of the fact that what I was doing was working. So, we go through this process when we develop a system for something or a plan, like I love the planning part and I love the organization of it all but when it comes to actually putting it into practice, after a couple weeks, I'm like well, shit, this is getting boring. Like it's probably still working but I'm getting bored with it. So, we need to be very purposeful about whether or not we want to switch because our system, we're just getting sick of it and like just it's not fun and new and exciting anymore or if it might honestly be a better option for us. So, that's something to keep in mind.

Let's see here. I think another thing too is I know how it feels to get in that like excited planning mode where you're like oh, I'm going to overhaul everything, right? You just want to change all the things. I get it. That's part of being a human being. But I think it's really important especially when we're talking about our business systems is to do it one at a time. I don't think it's healthy or feasible to tackle like all these new plans and systems at the same time. I think we should start with one, see how it goes and then move on to the next or else things will just get super crazy. So, when I create systems for my business, I just have a few ground rules and I don't actually call them ground rules but when I was planning out what I was going to talk to you guys about tonight, I was like oh, those are kind of ground rules. So, like I said, I think it's important to choose something and stick to it at least for a while. If you really hate it after like six months, there's no reason why you can't change. But I think you should stick to it. I think you should avoid jumping on those trends, all the pretty little sites that we see every time we log on to social media. If what you have works, keep it going. It doesn't have to be pretty.

And I think a big thing too is that when you are creating any system for your business or using any system, think about if someone else who is new to your business could come in and use that same system. Is it understandable? Is it simple enough that someone who is not even a part of your business could understand it and could use it? And there's a reason for that. One, even if you're not someone who hires out right now, maybe that's going to be you in five years, right? So, keep in mind that the systems you use now could very well be used by other people down the road. Now I barely hire out for anything so I'm very much a DIY person with my business. So, I don't really need people to access my systems currently. But it makes sense to be smart about it now so that way if you do have to teach someone or introduce someone to it in the future, the work is already done, it's simple and you know that it's going to flow well with your business even if someone else is involved.

I think that a good system should be sustainable. If it looks pretty and you like looking at it on the screen but it's completely overwhelming and it takes up way too much of your time, then I don't think that's a sustainable system because after a while, you're going to be exhausted by it. So, it should make your life feel easier and it should be something that you envision like using for a very long time. Barbara said I want to hire out someone to make my systems. Okay. So, I mean that's not a terrible idea. Barbara, I'm happy to share my systems with you. I'm going to be talking about mine. So, hopefully, you can get some helpful gems because honestly, it's simple. I promise. And we're actually going to move right into that. So, let's talk about creating your own systems and like I said before, I know that all of you already have systems in place. So, it's not like we're just starting our business from scratch right now. That's not what I'm talking about. But if you have systems but you're like well, I haven't really like given them much thought, like I know I do things a certain way but I haven't really like made it a formal thing, right? So, you could do something really simple.

One of the things you can do is to make a list of tasks that you do in your business and you don't even have to make a list. You know what you have to do for your business. However, if you like seeing things on paper, if you're a visual learner, make a list of your tasks. It doesn't have to be all of them. Maybe let's say like five. And next time, you go to do that task in real life, like it just organically comes up in your schedule, maybe you have to write a blog post, I want you to take some time. I like having a Google document open in my other tab opposite of wherever I'm working. So, let's say I'm in WordPress. Open up a Google Doc, plain and simple and make notes as you go along. Write down the steps that you take, write down any links that you might need to use, write down any steps that you use. I mean really just go from start to finish and just make notes to yourself. That is it. That is the very base of creating and designing a system and actually keeping track of it. Now you can go more in depth and I'll talk about that here in a second. But simply just having the steps and the links and everything you do within a process written out makes a huge, huge difference.

Now let's say you want to go a little more in depth and honestly, this is the type of person I am. I don't think I could just sit down and write a list because I can be a little extra like that sometimes. But here's what I'm going to share with you guys. I am doing this, I've been really focused on systems this month and I love the idea of having a page that describes each of my systems so that I can compile it. Sorry, guys. I just realized I had a Valentine sticker on my hand. That's life with a two and a half year old. I like the idea of having like a manual, right? That's all my systems combined and it's just a series of lists, a collection of lists of what you do, how you do it and why you do it that way. So, that's kind of what I'm working towards. So, once you have your list of steps within a certain process, take a look at it and make sure that you've put them in the right order. Is it actually the order that you do things? Think about how your workflow was during that process. Like if you're writing a blog post and you're like oh my gosh, I spent a lot of time searching for those images or I spent a lot of time switching between Canva and WordPress, like I was wasting a lot of time doing that, make note of that and figure out a way that you can save yourself time. Maybe you want to do all your work in Canva first and then move to WordPress. You'll figure it out but keep in mind the workflow and how it's going and how it's affecting your time because little changes can make a huge, huge difference down the road.

And last but not least, it's super important when you do this to track all the things that you need. Like when you write a blog post, for example, you need product links, you need certain images like a certain size, you need keywords. Make sure you have all of those things listed in your little checklist that you made for yourself because that's just as important as the steps. And a lot of times, that's what derails us, right? Like we're all set up in work mode and all of a sudden we're like oh, crap, I need to go make bitly links for all those things. So, writing those things down and really being aware of the steps you're taking is going to be huge. And next week I'm going to talk about like specific systems, like email systems, blog content systems, things like that. So, if you have any specific questions, please, please, please drop them in the comments. So, I'm going to do things a little differently tonight. I don't know how much time we're at right now. 16 minutes. Okay. I thought this was going to be maybe 10 to 15 minutes. We're actually getting ready to wrap it up soon but I wanted to ask you guys a favor and this is something different that I've never done before. But like I said, next week we're going to be doing part two of systems and I kind of came up with a list of systems that pertain specifically to the TPT audience. So, I'm going to list those things in the comment section on this video. I'm going to make each one a separate comment. So, if it's something that you want to hear about next week when we talk about systems, I want you just to give that a like and that way I know that's a vote for that specific topic because I can talk about all of them but it'll take a while. So, if there are some that you guys are like oh my gosh, yes, I need to hear about that, then please either like it or if there's something I don't list that you want to hear about system wise, go ahead and drop it in the comments and I will add it to my list.

If you are a member of the School of Sellers Facebook group, I'm going to put a poll in that group as well that lists all of the options. So, you can vote in there if you prefer. If you are not in the School of Sellers group, please join. It's so much fun. It's such a good group of sellers. I'm just really enjoying it. So, I'm going to start typing in the comments now and again these are types of systems to use in your TPT business. So, for example, a way to organize your files. I think I'm going to do vote for your favorites. Okay. So, I'm going to—I don't know if I can reply to my own comment actually. Oh, yeah. There I can. Okay. So, for example, organizing files. If you want to hear about how I organize my files, my system, that is so boring but it's something we have to do, then you would give that a like and I would count that as a vote. Email organization and creation. So, I'm going to go ahead and keep typing these in guys. So, I'll be live for like the next minute but that's all I've got today. I kind of wanted just to go over the foundations and the whys of why we do systems and how they're going to help you and next week we will dive into the details.

So, again if you have anything specific that you want to hear about next week or any questions you want answered, please let me know in the comments or send me a DM or post in School of Sellers Facebook group and I will be sure to add it to my list. Thank you so much. I'm going to be here typing for about another minute or two. So, feel free to—I'm monitoring the comments as I'm typing. So, don't mind me. I'm just going to be looking down and typing all of these things. So, we have and you're free to hang out if you want to hear me talk about these things. Checking analytics. There's a system for that. Product creation. There's a lot of moving parts to the product creation process so lots to keep track of. Content creation, of course, and this would be more like for blog content creation, for social media. That's a big one. Promotional materials. So, things like how you organize your ads or schedule your ads, things like that. Just daily tasks, those day-to-day little guys that we have to do. Graphic design, not my favorite but I have a system for it. Writing copy, that's always a big one. Business plans. Organizing your photos and taking photos. Okay.

So, that's the quick list I jotted down. I'm sure there are more that I will add I've forgotten but those are just the ones that came to mind. So, I can't wait to see what you guys are thinking that you would be interested in. You can go ahead and you can add any of your ideas on that same exact thread. So, curious to see what you guys got. All right. Well, good luck with Valentine's Day tomorrow. I'm about to go put all this dollar spot junk on our kitchen table for my kids to find in the morning. So, yay. If you are teaching tomorrow, best of luck. Thoughts and prayers. It's going to be great. At least, it's a Friday. And thanks for tuning in. I love you guys. See you later.

Welcome to the School of Sellers

What is the School of Sellers?

We are a group that is committed to helping teacher sellers in all stages of their business. We like to provide tips, tools, and resources that aid in building your business while making it feel doable every step of the way.

Connect with the School of Sellers!



Join our community of new TpT sellers to learn more about creating a successful teacher business from day one.



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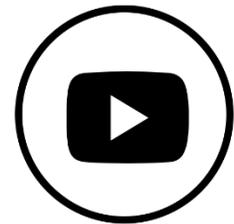
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