

Overcome the Project Plateau with 3 Techniques

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:

Hello there and welcome to School of Sellers. I am Erin Waters and I am your host today. And we are going to be exploring a very common but very fixable problem that happens in the teacher seller community. And I think one thing that ties us all together is that as a group, we are pretty darn creative. There is no lack of ideas or creative energy in the world of teacher sellers. And while that is a huge blessing because obviously it results in these incredible products that we share with teachers all over the world, it's also a curse sometimes because if you're anything like me, it's a lot more fun to start a project than it is to finish it. So, we are going to talk about what happens when we get stuck in that project plateau as I like to refer to it. You're kind of like all geared up, you're really pumped and then all of a sudden after a few days or a week or two of working on it, you're like ugh, God, I can't wait for this to be done and you start looking for other things to do instead and you start getting distracted by other things that excite you and then the process starts all over again.

So, to avoid having piles of unfinished projects around our house or taking up space on our computers which I'm definitely guilty of, we can talk about some ways to get through that plateau and push forward to the end. And here's the thing, I want to tell you that a couple years ago at the Teachers Pay Teachers Conference, I was listening to a presenter speak. I believe it was Jen Bengal but don't quote me on that. However, whatever this presenter said really struck home with me and is something that I've never forgotten. And she said unfortunately, the project that you least enjoy or the project that's the hardest to make or the most time consuming to make or the one that's your biggest just like ugh, I have to work on this, it's probably one that needs made the most because if you're feeling that way, other sellers are going to feel that way and it's not something that many people are going to attempt to tackle from beginning to end and it's certainly not something that teachers have already created for themselves. So, I'm telling you that because that really is a good mindset to get into. That way when you're feeling extra frustrated and fed up with a project, just know in the back of your head that it's worth it and that people need it. The world needs it.

So, just thinking that way kind of gave me permission to feel okay about being annoyed with the project but also gave me the motivation I needed to move forward and get to the end. Now there can be tons of reasons for not finishing a project. Maybe you simply don't have time in your schedule and that's a pretty legitimate reason for not finishing a project. But more often than not, if you are filled with creative energy and endless ideas, chances are when you reach that project plateau, you are simply losing interest. That beginning of the project excitement starts to subside and you're left with actual work and you're like oh, gosh, I actually have to do things. And it comes down to just going through the steps of your project, crossing off to-do lists and all of that creative energy that got you started originally is fading. So, it's not gone. You just have to learn how to harness it, bring it back and use it for momentum to get you through to the end of the project.

So, in addition to changing your mindset, another thing you can do to get through the project plateau is to create deadlines and not just big deadlines like when your project's going to be finished but also mini deadlines. And these are things, maybe smaller steps in between that can hold you accountable even more than just your standard deadline. Because I mean anyone can put a date on a calendar but that doesn't get us from start to finish. That only tells us when it needs to be done. So, I find that sprinkling in many deadlines in between helps out a lot. I've talked about in the Spring when I wrote my math workbook and while it was a generally not enjoyable experience, I did take one major win from it and it was their use of milestones. So, what they would do is they gave me at the beginning of the project. they said okay. here's your timeline for when we want the book to be done. We want it all to be done by this date. But here are your deadlines for each chapter and they would give me a different deadline for each chapter. And then within each chapter, there would be other little milestones and things I had to complete by a certain time and date as well. So, for me, it helped seeing the big picture but also being able to see to the next accomplishment because even though the work was tedious and it was hard, I could see myself finishing because I was taking baby steps. So, creating milestones as well as your deadlines is a great way to get that project completed. It also helps you see tiny bits of progress that you might not normally see in the general flow of a project.

In addition to giving yourself deadlines and milestones, another thing that I find useful when I am creating a project is to also have some sort of side project going on at the same time and this is usually one of two things. It's usually something that is totally not TPT related at all. I do a lot of like arts and crafts and home decor and DIY stuff. So, a lot of times it's maybe like a new cricket project or something like that or if it is TPT related, it's something that's purely enjoyable and fun for me to work on. And to be honest, a lot of times it's not even something that ends up seeing the light of day. It's kind of just like a just for fun project to kind of not have to think. Usually it's something more mindless, more design oriented because that's my happy place and it gives me a break from the monotony of the big, big, big project that I'm working on. So, that's another helpful little hint for keeping your mind and your eyes on the prize.

When I am having days or moments when the thought of working on this project like brings me almost to actual pain and I'm just like oh my gosh, this is the worst thing I could possibly have to do right now and it makes me almost miserable, you know the feeling, it doesn't happen often but when I'm feeling that bad about a project and I'm feeling that frustrated, sometimes I will just take the day off and do absolutely nothing work related. But one of the time use hacks that I have found to be super helpful in this situation is to attack my work in 20 minute increments or whatever amount of minutes you want to spend at a time. I talked about this technique in the podcast episode where we talked about getting our focus back and this goes hand in hand with this situation. So, a lot of times just breaking your work into smaller amounts of time is just what you need to chip away at your project until you either a) get that creative energy back or b) you get close enough to the finish line where you are just propelled completely by that end of project adrenaline.

Now those are some things you can do to get through the project plateau but here's something that you absolutely should not do. When you are in the middle of a project and you feel that excitement start to slip and it no longer feels fun, it just feels like work and that project fatigue sets in and your eyes are no longer on the prize but on your couch, maybe where you're thinking about crashing for a nap or even worse, your eyes are on other projects and other ideas that you have come across in the meantime. Because here's what's going to happen. If you bounce from your project to another new idea, that same process is going to start over again and continue and repeat itself again and again and again and soon you're going to have a closet or a computer filled with skeletons of these amazing ideas that you just abandoned in favor for the beginning of the project excitement. Trust me, I get it. This is me because I mean I'm saying these things because I have done these things. So, I know it is tempting but as business people, we need to be grateful for our creativity but we also need to keep in mind that we actually need to follow through with our projects and we actually need to finish these projects in order to have anything to sell.

I also wanted to point out that the project plateau happens most often for me when it's a larger, more intense, more time-consuming project. If you are experiencing all of these feelings of frustration and lack of interest for every single project that you do for TPT, then I think then it's a good time to kind of re-look at what you're doing and maybe see if you need to change your plan or change what you're working on. Because obviously while these feelings are common, it's not a sustainable way to live if you are dreading like every single time you have to work on something. So, that's a different issue. But I wanted just to point out that feeling this way in the middle of a big project is totally normal and it's something we all go through and it's no reflection on you as a seller. It's simply a human reaction to work because a lot of what we do takes a lot of brain power, a lot of creative energy, a lot of physical energy and it can really, really, really drain you mentally and emotionally. So, it's important to have some tricks up our sleeve when that time comes.

So, I hope that helps. I would love to hear from you about how you get through your project plateaus. If you are not already a member of our School of Seller community on Facebook, I urge you to please, please, please join today. It is a great place to hang out online and you get to meet sellers that are just like you who are so supportive and so genuine and helpful and funny and it's just a great little online space. So, we have two groups. School of Sellers 101 is for you if you are just beginning your Teachers Pay Teachers journey or you've had your store for less than a year. School of Sellers is for more established sellers who have been doing this for several years, have a pretty good handle on the product creation side of things and are scaling their business through marketing and other business techniques. So, we'd love to have you. Go on over and tell us how you are getting through that project plateau. Thank you so, much for listening and I can't wait to talk to you next week.

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!



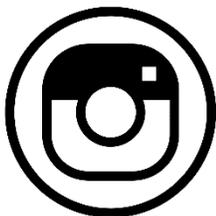
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