

Getting Ahead of Your Business in 2021

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:

Well, hi there, seller friends. Welcome to the School of Sellers podcast. I am Erin Waters and I am your host of this podcast that is now officially one year old. So happy birthday, School of Sellers, and Happy New Year to you all who are turning in for our very first episode of the new year. My New Year's Eve celebration was nothing to write home about. In fact, I think I was in bed by ten o'clock that night. But I did want to share something way more exciting than my New Year's Eve plans with you, and that is the amazing workshop that we had for our School of Sellers community back in December. And really, the main thing that I loved about the workshop was that we got so ahead of the game that I was actually able to enjoy my New Year's Eve as uneventful as it was and able to lay my head on my pillow that night knowing that when the clock struck midnight, I had all my plans laid out, ready to go and I was set or at least somewhat set for the new year.

And it's really funny because as a person, I'm very much naturally wired to do things at the last minute. I'm naturally a procrastinator, and I really have to force myself to do things ahead of schedule. So if you are someone who hears the idea of getting a head start on your year in December, on December 1st to be exact, you might be thinking ah, that's not for me. Trust me, I get it. My brain works so much better under pressure, and that's always been my crutch or my excuse for waiting until the last minute to do every single thing. But as it turns out, I never gave any other of my options a fair shake. The actual spirit of the workshop was to get ahead of the game and do everything way ahead of schedule so that way we are prepared for the new year. And that's not always how I've been as a person. I'm very much naturally wired to wait until the last minute to do things. And I've never really had a reason for that other than the fact that I claim that my brain works better under pressure. I always get things done in time, but it's always at like the final hour which does sometimes lead to being late with deadlines and expectations.

So as it turns out, waiting till the last minute is not the best thing you can do for your business. That isn't exactly earth shattering knowledge for most of you listening. So if you are someone who is still saying, there's absolutely no way I will ever be someone who works ahead of schedule, just remember all of the lovely surprises that 2020 brought our way and remember that as much as you think you work well up till the last minute, it's not always the best plan because things can change at the drop of a hat, especially in business. So it's that work ahead spirit and getting ahead of the game that I hope to bring into the new year with me. Of course, there are tons of things I'd like to leave behind in 2020. But that is one of the main focuses I am going to take into my business and my personal life this new year.

Which brings me to our upcoming podcast series that I am so excited about. The next few episodes are going to be focused on this whole idea of getting ahead of your year and getting ahead of your business. And if you were a member of our jump start workshop and you enjoyed that aspect of getting ahead, then this podcast series that I've cooked up for you for the next weeks is going to be right up your teacher-seller alley. So I hope you'll follow along the next four weeks I think as I share some really easy ways to get ahead of your business all year long, not just in the new year. Specifically, we are going to be talking about changes coming to TPT, the platform and how to prepare your business now so that you're not scrambling later. These are things like the addition of the pixel tracking, TPT's giving us VA access this year which is hugely exciting and things like that. Following that episode, I'm also going to be sharing a super embarrassing secret that I've never told anyone ever, literally only my husband. And actually, I just spilled the beans to my team yesterday about this. So there are currently three to five on this earth who know this story. So you will be lucky enough to hear that in episode, I believe that's two weeks from today. And this embarrassing story is something that led to the discovery of certain business practices that I will never not do again. So I can't wait for that one. I can, but I can't.

And then we are also going to be pulling back the curtains on my own business, and I'm going to give you a little peak into before and after, what my business looked like. Because it hasn't always been pretty, and it still isn't some days. Let's be honest. But there are definitely some things that you can do that will revolutionize the way that you do business, and they aren't as hard as you think. And then perhaps what I'm most excited about is we are going to be ending this podcast series on February 8th with some very special guests. And in fact, it will be the first time ever that we have had guests on this show. So that's something you can look forward to in the next several weeks. We are just starting this year with a bang, my friends. So that's the lineup. To play it safe, you can subscribe to the show so you don't miss a single episode. So if you're listening on Apple or Spotify, go ahead and click that subscribe button. At least, I mean that's what I think you should do but totally your decision.

All right. Let's get started on today's tips for getting ahead of your business and your year. And I want you to know that today's collection is kind of like a little grab bag of pearls of wisdom that I have discovered throughout my business, that I have learned from other people and just little practices that I think are quick and easy to implement that can have a huge impact. I am all about little energy and huge output and huge impact. So hopefully, these are going to accomplish just that for your business today. And then remember to tune in the next several weeks to get even more ways that you can just take this year by the horns and never look back.

Tip number one is that when you sit down with your planner whether it's at the beginning of the year, the beginning of a month or the beginning of a week, always, always, always, always pencil in the dates that are set in stone. Things that are going to happen no matter what. These can be recurring appointments or meetings. For example, my mastermind group and I meet every other Monday. This can be things like doctor's appointments that you have scheduled or school events if you have kids. Literally, anything that's already scheduled or you know is for sure going to happen. That way you're not surprised when it rolls around and you get those dates in first before you start scheduling your blog posts and your emails and everything like that. I know that sounds like a no-brainer, but sometimes I think we just kind of assume that we're going to remember all of these dates and that we know all of these dates in our heads. But it's amazing the difference it makes to see them actually written down on a calendar and filling up your time from a visual standpoint. So make sure you always do that first. This is something I do every month. Even though we planned our whole year in advance, I always sit down at the beginning of a week and the beginning of a month to make sure that I didn't let anything slip through the cracks and checking for for-sure, set-in-stone dates is always my first step.

My second tip for you for getting ahead of the year is to try blocking off time on your schedule instead of specific tasks. So this really probably depends on the way that you work best. But in the past, I've tried to fill my schedule with exact specific tasks that I have to do every single day and that can work for some things, but in general, I found a lot of success in the last several months blocking off time. So instead of saying, I need to do this, this, this, this, and this, I say, I'm going to use these two hours for blog related tasks. And if I'm organized, I have that list of tasks already in my possession. So rather than bogging myself down with specific to-do's, I give myself a block of time to focus on a larger piece of my business. So that can help too and kind of set your brain at ease knowing that you have given yourself time in your schedule for the important parts of your business. So for example, now I have I need to plan my homeschool every Thursday morning or I need to, every Monday morning is when I sit down and organize all of my information for my VAs. Okay? So I have like a VA block, I have a homeschool block, I have a blog block. It's just a really nice, comfortable way of scheduling.

My third tip for you is to make sure that you're scheduling in breaks. And I mean breaks in the sense of breaks that are pre-determined for you. If you are in the classroom, obviously, you're going to pencil in those spring breaks and winter breaks. They were probably actually the first thing that you put in your planner. But I'm mostly talking about breaks that you give yourself. So if you are someone especially for my full-time TPTers, this is really important. When we have all this time in the world to work on our business, it can feel like it's the only thing that we're supposed to be doing, and you know, if you been listening and you've been a School of Sellers person for the last year, you know that I love work. Like there's usually nothing I would rather do than work. But sometimes I have to force my brain to turn off, and that's why I've started to be better about scheduling in breaks whether that's a Friday afternoon that I decide not to work. These are times when I literally just am not letting myself do anything work related. And if it sounds undesirable, I get it. I truly never really look forward to breaks, but I'm always happy after the fact because I come back to work refreshed and ready to go. And it can be like a two-hour break. It doesn't have to be like a vacation or anything like that. I'm just talking about giving yourself time, scheduled time that you have blocked out for things that are not work related.

My fourth tip for you, and this is like my favorite thing ever. You've heard me say it a million times. But if you don't already have a brain dump document on your computer—I use Google Docs—you should have one. This is a great catch-all for all of those thoughts that pop up in your brain all day long or, if you're lucky like me, right when you're trying to fall asleep. So it's a really amazing place to have one spot where all of those thoughts go to live until they are put to a more purposeful use. Okay? So I strongly recommend just making a Google Doc right this minute, calling it brain dump and making sure that it lives on your bookmark bar so that it's easily accessible. And if you really want to get fancy, set your internet settings so that it opens up automatically every time you open your browser.

Now, in the brain dump vein, another thing that I love doing to get ahead of my year is brain dumping all of the undesirable tasks and appointments and things that I need to do. And for me, a lot of times this is things like making all of the doctor's appointments and dentist's appointments and things for the upcoming year. So I like to have a whole list of those tasks whether it's paying a bill or scheduling appointments and trying to do all of those things in one sitting versus trying to remember to do all of them throughout the year on different days. So for example, just the other day, I was able to call my kids' dentist and doctors and allergist, all those fun people they get to see every few months and get all of their appointments on the book so I don't even have to worry about it. Now I can just write it down and go the appointment. And making the appointment is no longer on my to-do list. It kind of goes back to putting in all of the dates that are set in stone. If you have tasks that need to be done no matter what, it makes more sense just to get them done now so that they're not hanging over your head.

My next tip for you as you get ahead of your year is to know your zones. Now when I say zones, I mean the way that you think and the different zones that your brain enters any given day. Right? So for me, I have a creative zone, and my creative zone is the settings that my brain needs to be on in order to do anything creative like write blog posts, write copy for social media posts, anything that requires me to be creative. And I know that I work best creatively first thing in the morning. So I have shifted my schedule so that I am working predominantly in the mornings and then I do homeschool in the afternoons. Before we were doing homeschool in the morning which made sense because you wake up and go to school. But I was finding that in the afternoons, I was getting nothing done with work because my brain was pretty much done by that point. So if you get really familiar with your zones of thinking and the way that you work best and you're honest with yourself and you schedule your work and your time accordingly, you're going to get so much more done than you would otherwise. And I've done an episode about this in the past. So if you are curious about hearing more about this, you can actually go to ErinMWaters.com/WorkSmarter, and there's an Airtable spreadsheet that you can grab there where you can brain dump all of your tasks and sort them and rate them by what type of energy you might need to use for those tasks. Are they creative tasks? Are they mindless tasks? Things you can do while you watch TV at night. You know, different measures that way. So you can go ahead, ErinMWaters.com/WorkSmarter, and you can grab that. And you can also relisten to that episode if you want a little refresher.

All right. The next few things are very much organizational tips that all of you have heard before, but it's worth repeating. One of the best ways to get ahead of your year is to clean off your poor computer. If it's anything like mine, it is probably like weeping by now with the amount of things that I have put on the desktop in the last month. So now is as good a time as any to clear that desktop off, clear your downloads folder, clear your trash can. And I'm sure you can relate when I say that my downloads folder is filled with complete junk that I no longer need. So how many times have we downloaded a zip file of Clip Art or a zip file from our TPT store? Because sometimes that's just the fastest way of getting the product that I need. And then it just sits there in the download section taking up space. Precious, precious space on your computer. So something I like to do every month—but it's especially important at the beginning of the year—is to do a quick cleanup. I do have Clean My Mac which is an app for Mac Books or Mac computers. But another thing that I do manually is I just will go into my downloads, and I will search for dot zip. And I get all of my zip folders or can you search by file format if you want, and I just can delete tons of zipped files in one fell swoop because most of those are going to be Clip Art zip files that I no longer need.

And then I also search Clip Art, the term Clip Art. I will search Whimsy Clips because that is my favorite artist. So I know that if a lot of things turn up with those results, I've already saved the actual Clip Art where it belongs on my computer, and I can get rid of all of the extra files and pieces that come along with it. Also, if you're downloading the same files again and again and again, the file name turns to one, two, three, four and so on. So if you search parenthesis with certain numbers in between, you're able to get rid of a lot of duplicate files this way as well. So if you do have something like Clean My Mac, that can do the same exact thing. But those are some easy manual ways for just clearing up a little bit of space on your computer even if you're not ready for a full clean off.

In the same spirit of things, clearing your text messages off your phone if you are a text hoarder is a great way to make sure that your phone's always photo ready. There is literally nothing worse—I shouldn't say literally; there are a lot of worse things—but there's nothing worse than having the perfect photo opportunity in the classroom or at home, and you're like oh my gosh, this is going to make a great social media post or whatever or blog post. And then you can't take the freaking picture because your camera roll or your iPhone memory is full. That is the worst, and I am constantly suffering from that. My business might be organized, but my email and my phone are a different story. So for me, this means I need to be better about backing up my phone and my computer. So if you are someone who is a photo hoarder or a text hoarder, go ahead and delete those huge threads, back up your computer, back up your photos. I especially love Google photos for this. I think it's hard in today's age because there's so much photo sharing and video sharing. Like my sister and I will text things back and forth all day long, but then it takes up all of this memory on my phone and I'm stuck with do I delete all of the conversations with my sister or do I never take another photo ever again? Right?

So okay, I could go on and on and on. But hopefully, you can use at least one of these small tips from today and put it into action immediately so that you can get started on getting ahead of this year. I'd love to hear if you are listening to this podcast. So if you are listening right now, will you hop on Instagram and tag @School.of.Sellers and tell us that you are listening? And tell us too the number one thing that you are going to take away from this today and put into action again on Instagram. We're @School.of.Sellers. All righty, my seller friends. Thank you so much for tuning in. I can't wait for the podcast series to continue next week. Make sure you're tuning in and make sure you're subscribing so that you can get all of the fun little details and plans and tips and surprises that School of Sellers has in store for you this year. All right. 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!



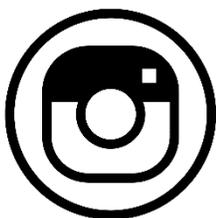
Join our community of new TpT sellers to learn more about creating a successful teacher business from day one.



Join our community of teacher sellers who are looking to grow their business. This is the perfect place for collaboration, marketing advice, inspiration, and support.



Listen to the podcast. Each episode is full of actionable tips that make your teacher seller business feel doable.



Follow us on Instagram. Learn more about us and find quick tips to help with your business!



Follow us on TikTok. A great place for mini tutorials and some fun sprinkled it.



Join us on YouTube. Watch podcast episodes, tutorials, and more!