

The Epiphany That Changed the Way I Work

Hello there and welcome to another week of School of Sellers. Now before we get into today's episode, I just have to be totally honest with you. If you could see where I'm recording right now, you would be laughing because I am currently holed up in my little walk-in closet in my master bedroom because my son who is usually in preschool around this time and my little one is normally napping, my son has a stomach bug today. So, he is home and he's also five years old and if you know anything about five-year-olds, you know that they are loud. Like he literally never stops talking. So, my husband—God bless him—is doing his best to keep them quiet. So, if you hear any suspect noises in the background, it's my kids. But you know what? It's fine. I know if there's anyone who can relate to that, it's you because you're either a teacher or were a teacher and you know how much noise kids make or maybe you're a parent and in that case, you know exactly what I'm talking about. So, I just had to get that out of the way because that is the current state of things right now.

So, today is one of my favorite episodes to date because it is something that is personally important to me and also something that I think can change the way that you do your business and we're just going to jump right in. Today we are talking about the epiphany that changed the way I do my business and I am not exaggerating when I say that. It is the single most important message that I could share with a teacher seller community at this point in time. I'm not sure there's anything else that I've learned along the way that has changed more in my business than this one single thought. And before I get into it, I just have to tell you that this is going to freak some of you out especially my fellow type A friends. You're going to have a little bit of a hard time with this one at first. I can already tell you that because I know that we teachers set very high expectations for ourselves and we tend to be perfectionists.

Now, of course, this doesn't apply to everybody but those teachers who love going the extra mile to make things look nice and make sure everything looks perfect and polished to the naked eye, this is going to be a hard pill for you to swallow. And I'm just going to tell you right now, the golden rule in the teacher seller world that has changed the way that I do things in my own business is simple: lower your expectations. Now I wish I could hand all of you a paper bag to breathe into right now because I know this is a very foreign concept to most people who are teachers at heart because we have high expectations for ourselves and for our students. But I mean it. You have to lower your expectations. We can no longer hold on to the idea of doing things perfectly. We can no longer hold on to the idea of finding just the right font or just the right piece of clipart because in reality that is wasting so much valuable time that we could spend doing things that actually matter and I'm going to give you a personal example to start out.

I was creating a product. I can't even tell you what product it was now because this was over a year ago and I shared this little story in Austin but it really rings so true that it bears repeating. I was creating a product and for whatever reason, I was looking on my computer for a clipart image of a zebra and I kid you not, probably 10 minutes went by before I just sat and looked at my screen and said oh my gosh, Erin, you have been spending 10 minutes looking for a freaking zebra

Like just pick the damn zebra. Is it that important to have the perfect image of a zebra? No. And if you know what I'm talking about, then this rule of lowering your expectations will serve you well. So, no more falling down the clipart and font rabbit hole, my friends. It is time to think about how we use our time and focus on spending it wisely and I can tell you right now that looking 10 minutes for a clipart zebra is not time wisely spent.

Now it was shortly after this realization that I was listening to one of my favorite podcasts, The Life Coach School by Brooke Castillo. She has a wealth of knowledge about how you live your life, how it pertains to your business, your family, your health. So, if you are into any of that stuff, I highly recommend checking out her podcast, The Life Coach School. And as I was driving in my car one day, I was listening to Brooke's podcast and she has this episode that is all about B minus work and I kid you not, this was like cosmic intervention. I don't really believe in that. But seriously, it was like the universe was like Erin needs to hear this episode and I'm still so excited about this that I have to share it with you. Brooke Castillo says that B minus work is not the level of work that we are used to shooting for but it's the type of work that we have to work towards in order to get things done in our business. Spending a life where you are constantly shooting for that A plus standard that so many of us shoot for day after day after day is not feasible and it's not sustainable. And worst of all, shooting for A+ work often results in us getting nothing done at all. Right? Because we get so hung up on all the teeny tiny details that actually don't matter that we lose sight of the big picture. Right? And the big picture is getting our work done and moving onto the next big thing in our business.

Now I warned you that this is going to be a hard pill to swallow because we are perfectionists—a lot of us—we do want to do the best work possible. But setting high standards day after day is only going to exhaust us and discourage us and result in a lot of half-done projects. So, here's the deal. We are going to start today lowering our expectations, being okay with less-than-perfect because there is a huge difference between the work that is done and the work that is not. Work that is never completed, a product that is never published, a blog post that is never quite finished being written because you just couldn't bring yourself to press that publish button is going to make zero difference in the lives of the people that we serve. Now on the other hand, a product that is maybe 90% done the way we want it, maybe it doesn't have the exact right colors or the exact right images or a blog post that is almost great but maybe you could have spent a couple more minutes on the SEO, maybe you could have spent another minute or two with the wording in the third paragraph, a blog post that is published is going to make a bigger difference than one that never sees the light of day on the Internet. Our readers don't care about perfect. They care about our message and they care about the ways that we can help them and we don't have to be perfect in order for us to do either of those things.

Now this adherence to B minus work and telling yourself that you're going to lower your expectations is certainly not a mindset shift that you can experience overnight. It takes a long time to make this feel comfortable, make this feel natural and actually have this be a part of your daily routine and habits. But luckily for you, there are two big ideas that you can tell yourself in order to make this process a little easier and these are the two cornerstone thoughts when it comes to B minus work. One is the simple idea that done is better than perfect and I'm going to say that again. Done is better than perfect.

That is one of my favorite cards on my inspiration wall because I return to it literally every day. Done is better than perfect. You don't have to have the perfect zebra, you don't have to have just the right font pairing, you just need to be done and move on. So, that's one. Done is better than perfect. Things that are not done won't sell because they're not even out there to buy in the first place and things that are not done are not going to make a difference in the lives of the people you serve and they will not help your customers. So, done is way better than perfect.

Two is the idea that once something is done, you can always go back and make it better later. This thought is crucial because it gives your brain and your heart permission to move on even when you have that nagging feeling in the back of your brain that says oh, but I could do this and I could change this little part and that color doesn't look right. You tell yourself self, you can always go back and make this better later and it instantly makes you feel better. And I'm going to tell you the truth; I've been telling myself this for almost a year now and I almost never go back and make it better later. I'm going to be totally honest. But telling yourself that in that moment is a huge, huge deal because it makes a shift in your mind that you can move on and be done, call it a day because you really can go back and make it better later. Now whether or not you actually do that is one thing. But guess what? If you don't go back and make it better later, that tells you that you probably didn't need to make it better to begin with. It was probably just fine the way it was.

The idea of B minus work is going to change the way you approach almost every single task in your business and maybe even in your personal life. The philosophy has been so liberating and eye-opening for me and I hope that you take this to heart today as you continue your very important work as a teacher seller because so many of the tasks we do are little tasks and not ones that we have to get hung up on and that's important to remember. But I do want to point out that the concept of B minus work doesn't apply to literally every single thing you do in your business. Right? Because there are a couple things that you do have to get pretty darn close to perfect before you put those ideas and resources out into the universe and out into the TPT marketplace. Right?

There are a couple of things that you don't want to rush and there are a couple things you want to keep those high standards for and those are things like proofreading your products. Right? I think there's a saying like every time a resource gets published on TPT that has so many typos in it, Amy loses some of her sparkle. Right? Is that—no, okay. That's just something I made up. But for real, don't rush your proofreading because there's no worse look than a product that is riddled with errors. It just is yuck, gross. Another thing we don't want to rush, we want to make sure that our products are culturally responsive, we want to make sure that we are inclusive of all the students that our product is going to reach. So, that's something we don't want to take lightly either. So, those big ideas and what's truly, truly, truly important at the heart of it all is not something you can ever hold to a B minus standard. So, that's really important to call out right now and also remember.

Now things that are perfectly acceptable for holding to a B minus standards are things like those day-to-day decisions, what font to use, what clipart to use. Choosing the right zebra is not an earth-shattering decision. Right? Just choose it and move on.

Anything that is detail-oriented or image-oriented or appearance-oriented, you have to just accept that and go on. You can't get held up on that because we don't have a lot of time to begin with so to waste precious moments thinking about menial things like that is not doing anyone a favor especially yourself and your work. Okay. Now there are other things that have infinite possibilities, things like SEO or writing your copy for a Facebook ad. Sure you want to put some time into it and certainly you want to put effort into it but you could literally keep going. That sort of work is never done. It's not like a starting line in a finish line with certain processes like that and you have to reach a point where you're just okay with it and you're saying I'm done and I'm moving on. Okay. So, anything that is detail-oriented or that doesn't have a finite finish line are things you want to use the B minus expectation on.

Another thing too that you want to keep in mind is the social media aspect of our work because we can spend days and days and days on social media if we let ourselves. But when it comes to making posts or scheduling posts on Facebook or Instagram, you want to just schedule it, post it and move on because if we don't, we start thinking way too much about what other people think about us, we start thinking way too much about what other people are doing and we all know that social media is a terrible, terrible black hole to fall into when we have such important things to do instead. Today your homework is simple. B minus work. I want you to keep repeating these three things to yourself over and over and over at least once a day. B minus work, done is better than perfect and you can always go back and make it better later. And if you feel like it, pick the damn zebra. I had so many people tell me after Austin that they just say that to themselves all the time. Pick the damn zebra. So, if that works for you, that's great too.

And I really truly do love all of these thoughts so much that if I could, I would get them tattooed on my body. I suppose I could but of course, I wouldn't do that. But the next best thing is to have some quote cards that you can print out and hang around your office or wherever you work at home to remind ourselves of these very important cornerstones of a healthy working mindset. So, if you go to www.ErinMWaters.com/BMinusWork, you can get an updated gallery of quote cards that include everything and anything about B minus work so that you too can be freed from the high expectations that stop you from succeeding even more than you already do today. You will be changed I promise. Thank you so much for tuning in today. I can't wait to see you next week here at School of Sellers. If you not yet joined our Facebook group, I would love to see you in our Facebook community, School of Sellers. You can search it on Facebook and join and we have a lot of productive conversations and share tips and resources and I have some behind the scenes tutorials, you name it, that will make this TPT business feel doable. Till next time, friends.

I'm going to share with you my exact spreadsheet and you can make a copy and save it for yourself, you can add to it, you can take things away but you can get it at erinmwaters.com/worksmarter and you can access the work smarter spreadsheet so that you can start planning your time so it works best for you. There's nothing that feels better than working and working wisely. That is all for today. Thank you so much for tuning in at School of Sellers. I will be doing a video tutorial of how to filter out your Airtable tasks over at our School of Sellers Facebook group. So, if you haven't yet joined us in our group, I highly recommend going over and joining. Thank you again. It has been a pleasure and I will 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.

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