

Transcripts from the Revolutionary Strategies from 2020 for Making a Digital Impact in 2021 episode:

To say that in December of 2019, when this show began, we were thinking about what 2020 would look like and the world in general, the world writ large in a different way would be a huge understatement. So we wanted to take some time to come and talk to you about the lessons we learned realigning our business strategies in 2020 to meet the moment.

And what from those lessons we're taking into the new year, into 2021. If you're listening to this in real time, that means it's early December of 2020, and we are probably knee deep in strategic planning and setting our strategic intentions for the new year. And it's really got me thinking a lot about how things are different now than they were at this time last year.

Because at this time last year, we were in one of the biggest, most successful economic moments in America that we've had in a really long time. Now I know that that wasn't distributed equally, but there was a lot going on. There was a lot of optimism, economically for many people. There were lots of people starting businesses. The housing market was picking up, right?

And we were just starting to hear maybe a couple of weeks after you were listening to this in 2019, we were just starting to hear about this COVID thing in China, and this podcast kicked off. We dropped our first episode on December 19th of 2019. And this moment is so different than I expected it to be one year later. And we have made as a team, so many changes. So I wanted to share with you a little bit about what that's looked like for us, what I have learned this year that I think may be important to you too, and what things from 2020, I really believe need to go into 2021 with us.

Because we've talked a lot over the episodes this year about what things are unique to this moment and what are things that go with us into the future. So I wanna recap some of that for you, but first let's take a moment to take a look back. When the first episode of this show launched, we were talking specifically to Local Rock Stars. I had in my mind that local business was the direction that we would be heading, versus working with influencers and online brands. And I had that in my head because there's such a need in that arena.

But early in 2020, not even yet into March, when stuff started to happen with COVID, shutdown started to happen with COVID, but early on in 2020, we kind of got hit

sideways with an understanding that I was not expecting about how I could scale this vision I had of Do Better Digital, faster and more effectively by working with people who were also doing transformational work in the world. And that took me a while to come to, and I resisted it pretty hard.

And that's why when this show started, it was focused on local businesses and you've seen over season four, how we've shifted that focus a little bit. I wanna be super clear that local business is still very important to us and we want to support local businesses. But when I look at what resources we have to make the world a kinder place, which is what I believe I am here to do, I feel like right now, using my resources with other businesses that are also trying to transform the world, is a better way to use them.

So in episode one of the show, we talked about community-based businesses and what that means. And we still work with community-based businesses every day. But what community-based means to us, has evolved beyond the local in-person community to larger community, well, not always larger, to communities that could be in lots of different locations. Because some of our small, I don't wanna say small businesses, some of our local businesses, were and have been an are larger, more successful in terms of traditional success companies than some of the online businesses that we work with.

They have big audiences and continue to have big audiences. The difference has not been so much in the size of companies we work with, as in what the intention of the company's mission is. And that's been a pretty cool thing to articulate, it's been an interesting shift for us, and it really aligns with what we said in like the second or third episode of the show last year, which is weird playing for purpose, not points. I am here to make a difference in the world over the longterm.

And yes, it's very important that we make money doing it, because money equals more opportunity to make the world a better place. And, in this moment, I believe that the best way for me to show up and serve a movement towards a kinder, more equitable, more liberated world, is to help visionary women and women identifying folks, who are leading businesses, doing transformational work, to spread their message wider. And so since about February, we've been seeing that shift happen in our business.

Now you might have noticed if you've checked out one of our websites, that our websites have not caught up. But we've been working over the last couple of months and have a new website that's coming out for you just in a few weeks, that really articulate this vision. And that brings me to the point of explaining all of this to

you, is one of the things that we learned in 2020, is that when you take away what is easy and make it not as available, sometimes what is left is what's right.

Working with local businesses, getting clients that we're in the local business realm, was always super easy for me. I had more people wanting to work with me than I had spots to put them in. That's a great place to be. Making the shift to working with a different type of person, requires me to expand, it requires our team to expand, it requires me to ask people to work with us. Which is something that believe it or not, I haven't done in years, but it's also kind of exciting.

It's exciting to be able to look at someone and say, "I can help you expand your mission. I believe what you believe." When you take away what is easy, sometimes you're left with what is right. That's one of the most important things that I'm taking from 2020 into 2021. And with that in mind, I've been thinking a lot about Adrienne Maree Brown's conversation in Emergent Strategy about strategic intentions versus strategic plans. Now you'll hear me talk a lot about strategic planning, because that's the business term that people know and understand.

But this year, has really proven and home to me how important it is that we use our focus time whether we're doing it at the end of the year or some other time, that we use our focus planning time to think about the intentions, about what we want to bring into the world, or do more better or different in our businesses, not making really concrete plans. Because if 2020 has taught us anything, it's that concrete plans sometimes fall apart in really painful ways. Whereas intentions are flexible and fluid. And I'm not saying that we shouldn't plan at all, please do not mistake me, y'all know probably at this point how much I love planning.

But there are three areas where this idea of intentions instead of plans, has really played out beautifully for me this year and it's why this topic has really been on my mind as we come into the end of the year. The first one is understanding at the end of last year, that we were here to go deep instead of wide. Now the way that this looks has ended up very different. At the end of 2019, when we did our strategic planning, my intention was to get 20,000 people on my email list and sell a bunch of people to go through the Local Rock Star program and do a whole bunch of speaking in 2020.

I wanted to travel all over the country, because my kids were finally starting to get old enough that it made travel a possibility to me again, and I wanted to be on big stages. But I knew that the purpose, the intention of doing this, was to go deep about this Do Better Digital way of being, not going wide to everyone who possibly wanted to do digital marketing. I thought that Local Rock Star and speaking, were going to be the way that I was going to spread this message, and they were going to

be the way that this weird way of doing marketing that I have been developing, was going to get out into the world in a bigger way.

And instead, 2020 said no, and we had lock-downs and canceled events all over the place and everybody and their brother and their mother and their sister started selling online courses about digital marketing, and I did not. First, speaking was canceled, we've talked about that in previous episodes, and speaking went online and it changed. And then I didn't feel right trying get local businesses that were stressed all over the place, engaged in a online training program that was really about long-term sustainable strategies, especially when there was so much noise out in the industry, I just didn't want to jump into that.

So we pulled Local Rock Star altogether and did not run a series of Local Rock Star at all last year, actually. We just finished up the one that we started in 2019, but we did not start a new one. What we did do, because of the strategic intention of going deep with our audience around this message of Do Better Digital, is we started getting really intentional about connection with the people who were in our audiences and, or we knew we could serve in new ways. And I did that in several ways. I got really involved with Dear Grown-ass Women, which is Cindy Spiegel's online community for women over 35.

That is not specifically a business endeavor, but it has led to business connections that are right in alignment with how we work. And it's also brought some beautiful people into my work for support systems. I got involved with a mastermind with two of my now friends, and sometimes off and on, we are all clients of each others, where we worked together all year long in a really consistent way, pretty much every other Friday, all year long. We worked together on how we were going to grow our businesses and evolve our businesses in ways that felt good to us.

We supported each other's marketing efforts. We made introductions for each other. We connected each other with new support systems. We connected each other with new clients. We laughed and cried with each other. We screamed a few times with each other and we leaned into what it looks like to have peer support, where all of us were there because we wanted to be there together, no money or contracts required. And I also leaned in to the understanding that my business, as personal as it is, will always do better when I have strong friendships and strong support networks around me.

Because my business and my life are not separate. So the people who refer me business and the people who I am friends with, are also often not separate. Sometimes they are, but a lot of times it's all messy and meshed together. This year, instead of fighting that, I just leaned into it. I got close and, not physically close,

because we're not doing that, but like emotionally and intellectually closer and more curious than I've ever been before with several of my friends. This year, we went really deep with our relationships and we backed further and further away from the big wide audiences. You may have noticed that we are barely posted on Facebook. You may have noticed that I've pretty much disappeared from Instagram.

Those things were not originally meant to happen, in fact, I thought I might expand the time I spent there, but instead when I focused on this intention of going deep, I was much more drawn to one-on-one conversations in small groups, forsaking the large scale environments that we are so often taught in this world that we have to bow down to. And what that has done for me in 2020, has been transformational. Our business has grown in a way that feels amazing.

We have a strong team and beautiful partnerships with people that I am proud to both promote and represent and align with. The other thing that we did at the end of 2019, was we got really clear about what our primary offers were. Again, we thought it was going to be Local Rock Star and digital strategy partnerships would be a premium thing that we kept for an elite group, but our purpose was to do away with work I have done for many years as a business coach.

I flirted with this off and on over the years, for y'all that have been around for a long time, you've probably heard me talk about this before, but our business originally started the first version of it back in 2008, as a business coaching company. And, I flirted very much over the years with whether or not this was a part of our business and how that worked. But at the end of 2019, we got really clear that it wasn't what we wanted to be doing anymore.

And so this year, we've been in the process of migrating and evolving our coaching clients, helping them to both thrive and find new coaches and finish up their projects and things like that. And that has been, I'm not gonna lie to y'all, that has been a frustrating thing. And I feel like I have both taken steps forward and slid backwards several times on getting out of the business coaching world. And the formal announcement that we will no longer work with coaching clients, both alumnus and new clients, has yet to be made.

So I'm sort of making it here, I guess. But that is our intention going into 2021, we will no longer be doing business coaching, we will only be doing digital strategy work, which does include strategy coaching, but it's a little bit different thing. We're not gonna dive into your books and stuff like that anymore. We are also, and my team doesn't even know this yet as I'm recording this, although they will know before this goes out live, we are sun-setting our strategic planning intensives.

We will no longer be offering them in 2021, for the same reason. It's not the place where we believe we can have the most impact. I have had the pleasure in 2020, of getting to know really closely, some incredible coaches, some people who are transforming the world with their business coaching like Trudy LeBron, for example. And so I no longer feel the need to be in that space. See before, I didn't have any business coaches in my network that I felt really, really good about sending people to.

And so I kept taking it on thinking, "Well, if I don't know anybody, then it has to be me." And that's not necessarily the most healthy or the right way to do things, right? So, now I do. Now I know people who can help. And so in 2021, one of the lessons from 2020 that we're taking into the new year, is to only do the thing that I believe we are uniquely situated in the world to do. So for us, that means digital strategy.

And strategic planning, as much as I love it and as much as I have helped so many people and as like close to my heart as it is, strategic planning takes so much of my time and attention away from our primary work twice a year, that it isn't fair to my team at this point and it isn't fair to the people who we could potentially serve, to keep getting distracted by that. So in the future, I will probably have some episodes or at least some resources on our website about where you can that support from people that I really trust.

So, that has opened the door for me, as I'm a little nervous about saying that I have to say, that has opened the door for me to think about how we can grow the core of our business, the digital strategy work, even more next year, because I'm taking my eyes and putting them both on the same thing. And I share this with you because, I think, no, I know, that sometimes I come across as having it all together and not being scattered and being really focused, and I like coming across that way. It makes me feel safe.

But for at least five years now, I've been really torn of this two directions that we've been breaking in. And if you've been around for a while, you know I've gone back and forth about my thinkings on this. But the truth is, this year we got really clear. Again, going back to that original lesson, as we took a way what was easy, we started to see what was right for us. And taking away business coaching, allows us to focus more on what is right for us.

So although it scares me a little bit, I'm also really excited about it. Then, I think the other thing about this is that it is really about doing only what I love to do and getting to the point where my team can do only what they love to do. See, I think I kept getting back, pulled back into business coaching, because people kept telling

me how much it impacted them and how much it helped them. But it takes a whole lot out of me, and because of that, it kind of short changes my team.

Coaching is something that I feel good about doing, but I really don't love. I love the impact it has at the end of the day, but being in sessions with people day after day after day after day, quickly drains me. I am an extreme introvert, you all. I wanna take my time with people in less regular doses. And that allows me to show up in my relationships in a stronger way. I also struggle a lot with boundaries when it comes to one-on-one coaching.

And yes, I know are a million coaches I could work with, and there are a million things out in the world that I could do to get support around that, if I wanted to. But for me, the right thing is not to try to set better boundaries around my coaching, the right thing for me is to just not do coaching, because I have no problem setting good boundaries around our digital strategy work. We don't have a scope creep problem in our digital strategy work, I don't allow it.

And that helps my team feel safe. It impacts our bottom line and means that our profit is safer, and it feels good to do. So sometimes, what I want you to take as a lesson out of this, is sometimes when you are looking at a problem that you have, it may not be that you need to fix the problem, it may be that you need to let go of the thing that is creating the problem. And in 2020, again, as we have taken away so many things, it's a lot easier or has been a lot easier for me to see that.

So taking away coaching, just makes complete sense for us. Now, we will have here in a couple of weeks, with the new website, an epic resource page that has resources for business coaches that I do love and trust, so if you're looking for that help, we will have it available to you from people that I love, trust and am confident can help you. Now, there are a couple other lessons that I wanna share with you that I learned in 2020, and one of them has nothing to do with pandemics or social justice movements or elections at all.

One of them is one that I probably should have learned years ago, but on this thing, I was spending too much time bought into what I guess we may call, the myth of the entrepreneur or like the digital lifestyle brand. And it's this one, and this one comes from Mike Michalowicz, of Profit First and Clockwork fame. Mike Michalowicz said in a workshop that I was in this year and made me perk up, and you ever had one of those that just instantly transforms your thinking? He said, that the sacred duty of the entrepreneur is to create jobs.

See everybody else, non-entrepreneurial folks, are the normal people, in air quotes. Those of us who start companies, who build businesses, we're the weirdos. And the

thing that we can do that no one else can do, is create opportunity for other people, create jobs for other people. And in America today, and this one came from Rand Fishkin by the way, not from Mike, but in America today, we are seeing fewer and fewer entrepreneurs than ever before. And that surprised me.

As I was looking into this to confirm it, as I was thinking about what Mike said, it's surprised me, because I live in this bubble where I'm working with entrepreneurs every day. I work with small and micro businesses in the B2B space, so I'm working with owners all the time. And I had forgotten how rare this entrepreneurship thing actually is. So we have a problem in the digital business space of creating this myth of the entrepreneur as a person who creates a lifestyle brand that only serves themselves.

Whether it's a digital marketer or a coach or an online training, they create this aura around themselves as creating a brand that is all about them, all the time, and them going to the beach and hanging out by the ocean or traveling all over the world or driving the Ferrari or whatever the case may be. And it's created this trickle down effect of contractors working for ridiculously small amounts of money. Of nothing but part-time jobs.

Because our goal as digital entrepreneurs is to make as much money as possible with as few resources as possible. And that is fucking bullshit! Mike Michalowicz was right, the sacred promise of the entrepreneur is to create jobs and not shitty, transactional, contractor jobs y'all, real jobs, jobs that people can feed their families from, jobs that help people have a better life, jobs that allow people to work in kinder and more human environments.

And in 2020, probably the biggest thing that I have done in my work, is full on accepted that my sacred responsibility is to create jobs and opportunities for other people. And that means that it's not about me. That means that it's not "Reina" the brand. I am not the brand. I have been talking to my team about this constantly this year. Because we all come from this digital idea that like build your personal brand, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

This isn't my business anymore, it's our business, me and the team. And yes, I am its leader, but it's not about me. Everything that we do, is about creating more opportunities for the people around us. It's about creating another job. It's about helping another family thrive by creating a good, kind, fair, equitable job, not some shitty part-time contractor bullshit. All right. So if that is what my sacred duty is, there are a few other things that I have to give up.

One of them, which surprises me a whole lot, when I look at this year versus last year, is that one of those things is social media, specifically Facebook and Instagram, 'cause I never really done much on it Twitter, and yeah, like for real. Y'all we talked a couple of weeks ago on my birthday. I guests will be a couple months ago when this comes out in real time, that my theme for 2021 is trust and receiving. And this walking away from social media, from a person who pretty much built her business on Facebook, this is an exercise in trust, that scares the shit out of me frankly, but we're doing it.

Because of the same reason that I stopped shopping at Walmart 15 years ago. The state of social media has become so damaging, the state of social media has become so dangerous for the world, that I don't feel like I can be a part of it and remain in integrity in our work at this time. I'm not sure tell you that this is gonna last forever, I'm not gonna tell you that my thinking won't change, but at this moment, we have to take an exercise in trust and walk away from this thing that is not in alignment with our values and that is sucking up time, resources and intention that could be better used serving in more creative ways.

We are very committed as a team here at Genevieve Digital, to walking our talk. And so season five, which will be coming to you, season five of this show, which will be coming to you in February, is going to be all about how we as a digital business made that evolution. And y'all, I'm telling you right now, I don't know what all those episodes are gonna be about yet. I know some of them, but a lot of it, we've gotta be figuring out over the next couple of months.

Because one of the things that we have always done, is created relationships with people through Facebook and Instagram. I have never had a huge following, you can go look at my accounts, they will remain there, I am not going to be monitoring them. I have deleted all the apps and logged out of all the things, but they do remain there. And you can go and look at our accounts and my accounts, and you will notice that there are not thousands and thousands or millions of followers.

But what we have always been really good at, what I have always been really good at, is creating the right relationships and developing them over time in meaningful ways. And I did this before social media was a thing in my life and in my work, and I believe that it is time to get back to it. I also believe very much, as we talked about two or three weeks ago on the show, in using search engine optimization and search engine marketing, instead of social media as your digital growth strategy.

So we're going to walk our walk. Now to be super clear, we'll talk more about this in season five, I am not putting YouTube in the social media bucket, I am putting it in the SEO bucket. So you will find our podcast on YouTube and you'll probably see in

2021, many more videos from us on that platform. By doing this, we are creating space to show up in 2021 in some areas that we weren't showing up as much as I wanted to before.

Those are team development on our own website and look for our new website and just a couple of weeks, in marketing strategy leadership, with more build-out of the Do Better Digital framework, because let's get real, I know what I'm doing here, and I know how to do it, but I need to get this down on paper and on video and in instructional how tos, for other people to do it, both for my own team and for things we wanna share with the general public.

And in order for us to work on those things, we must open up space, which means letting go of things that are not for us or not making feel good. And those two things for us this year, are social media and business coaching. The final thing that we are doing in 2021 that we're actually already well on the path for, is we're embracing what I'm thinking of as slow strategies. And I'm thinking of them that way because of my conversation with Naomi Hattaway, where she was talking about a slow campaign.

I am embracing that the pace that feels good to me and my team, is like 20 steps slower than the pace that most digital agencies want to go. And that works for us, it works for our clients, it helps us to feel good and be better in our lives, but it is very counter-culture. So, one of these trust and receiving strategies that I am thinking of in 2021, as we turn our attention more and more to developing our team, developing our own websites out in big and exciting ways, and to our Do Better Digital strategies, is how can we do those fun, cool things that light us all up, while also creating more space for ease and joy and relaxation.

Because the world is tough right now y'all, and I don't see it getting less tough. I think that if 2020 is a moment in time, we also may look back in the future and realize that it was beginning of a time. I don't wanna say a tough time, but a beginning of a different time at least for us here in America. And so I want to continue to create strategies for our clients and our team and our community, that honor ease and joy and space in the midst of difficult times.

That's where I'm at. And I gotta tell you, despite it all this year, it feels pretty awesome. So I'd love to know where you're at, what your strategic intentions are for 2021. And I just gotta put it out there because I'm excited about it right now, if you want to work with us in 2021, we are accepting applications for three digital partnerships in the first half of the year. We have space for only a few of those types of partnerships each year, and we've decided as a team that we'll be taking on three in the first six months of 2021. So if you're interested in that, take a look at the show

notes and fill out the application, and someone from our team will book you a call. All right, y'all, I hope you enjoy your holiday season and we'll see you next week.