

## The Modern Editor Podcast – Episode 5: Working ON Your Business vs. Working IN Your Business

**Tara Whitaker:** [0:03] Welcome to *The Modern Editor Podcast*, where we talk about all things editing and what it's like to run an editorial business in today's world. I'm your host, Tara Whitaker. Let's get to it.

**Tara Whitaker:** [0:18] Hi, there. Welcome to today's episode. We are going to be chatting about working on your business versus working in your business. And I know that's not a big difference—there's literally one letter difference between that. But the concepts are very different. And there's something that is not talked about a lot in our industry, and I want to make sure that you know about these concepts no matter what stage of your business you're in. And if you're thinking, *Oh, yeah! I totally know what you're talking about*. That's amazing. Hold tight—I've got some tips for you that I think will be super helpful. And if you have no clue what I'm talking about right now, even better. Hold tight—we're going to dig into this; it's going to be super helpful for you in your business. And the reason—or one of the many reasons—why it is so important is because as freelancers, as entrepreneurs, we oftentimes wear all the hats in our business, right? We do all the things. And doing all the things, as I'm sure you know, can lead to burnout, which we don't want. We want to avoid that. So, we're going to talk about what those differences are between working on versus working in your business, why each of them is important for your business, and then I'm going to finish up with those tips about how I manage doing these things in my own business. And I've learned this over the years. So, I've got, you know, 10 years almost of experience that now I know how this works in my own business. And hopefully, those tips will help you in your own business. So, let's dive in and talk about those differences.

**Tara Whitaker:** [02:05] So, what they each are first: working in your business. And I remember this by thinking “in-ployee,” which, I know, is not how you pronounce or spell *employee*. But it's close enough that that helps my mind remember. Working in your business is like being an employee. It's the day-to-day things that you do in your business that make it run. If you are an editor and you have an editing business, your day-to-day would most likely be editing, right? If you are a book author, your day-to-day is going to be writing, so on and so forth. And it's also including all of those other things that we have to do as business owners, you know, social media and marketing and networking and making sure our taxes are paid on time and updating our website and just those day-to-day things that kind of are associated with a job, so to speak. Which is why I say it's an employee type of thing. Now, working on your business is the flipside of that. That's more of the big picture thinking; that's putting on your CEO hat, or your owner hat or your president hat—whatever you want to call it—and going above the business and thinking big picture. So, you're doing a lot of planning; you're setting goals; you're doing some strategic thinking about what do you want to do in the next three months, six months, six years—however far you want to go—and not those day-to-day tasks. So, as you can see, both are very important. And both need to be done.

**Tara Whitaker:** [03:46] Now, if you're first starting out in your business, or you're just now thinking about getting started, you're going to be in your business a lot. And that's totally okay. That's completely normal. In your business, is how you make money, right? It's short-term money. Long-term money is where [working] on your business comes into play. So, if you're at a stage in your business where you are cranking out the editing tasks or the writing tasks—or what have you—and you don't have a lot of time at the moment to do that big picture thinking, or your mind can't even grasp big picture thinking right now because you're like, *I need money, I need to put food on the table, I need to pay my bills*. That's okay. Just make sure that this is just a little seed in your mind. And keep it in the back of your mind. Because as we're going to talk about, like I just said with the short-term, working in your business is what makes you money. However, working in your business 100% of the time is an excellent way of leading to burnout, and it's not going to provide you with the long-term income and the long-term success. And that's because we get so in the weeds working in our businesses that we don't stop to analyze or look at what's working and what's not. Or see what processes that we have in place that need to be tweaked, or do we need to implement processes in the first place? We don't know what skills we should be looking at to learn to make things easier. Are there things that we're doing that we can outsource? All of those things need to be done in working on your business, but you don't have the mental capacity to do that if you're so far in the weeds working in your business.

**Tara Whitaker:** [05:40] So like I said, if you're first starting out or your mind can't grasp spending time working on your business, I really encourage you to set aside just a little bit of time—five minutes, if that's all you've got. That's better than nothing. And think about what things you could be doing to help you be more efficient, work more effectively, earn some of your time back, you know—again—the strategic, long-term thinking that's going to set you up for success in the long run. Because I'm telling you right now, burnout is not fun; it is not where we want to be. It happens frequently, no matter how long we've been in business. And one of the ways to try and avoid it is by doing this long-term thinking, which is honestly kind of weird to think about. I don't think I ever realized that when I started out. You know, I was so busy thinking, *Oh, my gosh, I gotta get all this set up. I've got to find clients. I've got to make money*. If you had said, "Hey, Tara. You should be thinking about what you want to do in a year," I would have laughed, like—*Yeah. Okay. That's great. I don't know what I'm doing tomorrow, let alone a year from now*. But had I taken that little bit of time to think about where I wanted to go, it would have helped me so much. I would have avoided the burnout that I had; it would have avoided a lot of stress. And, you know, mental health, if I had just taken a few minutes to set myself up for long-term success. So, there's my challenge for you, if you take nothing else from this episode, set aside five minutes of time and just let yourself dream and think about what you want to do in the future, with your business. That's it. That's the homework. Easy, right? If you—if it's five minutes, great. If it's one minute, I'll take it. Anything is better than nothing.

**Tara Whitaker:** [07:36] And I do want to say with giving you that time, let go of any, any idea of perfection with this, or having this perfect balance between working in your business and working on your business. It's not going to happen. The only perfect balance that exists is the perfect balance that is right for you in your business. There are

going to be periods of time where you are going to be hardcore in your business, especially in big growth spurts. You know—are you launching a podcast? Are you redoing your website? Are you adding a new service? You know, of course, you're going to be in your business. However, those things came to fruition because of the working on your business. Those are big picture things—adding a service, learning a new skill, totally redoing your website. Those are things that are setting you up for long-term success. So, you might be in a period of growth where you're working in your business 95% of the time, and you don't have a ton of time to work on your business. That's okay. Because it's going to flip. Then you're going to get into a period of *oh, now I've gotten this website updated, let's, let's do some more dreaming, let's do some more long-term goal setting and planning and see what's next.*

**Tara Whitaker:** [08:59] Now, by saying that, it just occurred to me—I want to make sure that—you don't get confused here about me thinking—or, me saying, you know, launch a podcast and then hurry up and go do something else big. That's not what I'm saying at all because that's also going to lead to burnout. But the point is, is that there will be ebbs and flows. And try not to get caught up in this perfect balance, just like the whole concept of work-life balance. It's not 50/50; it's not a balance—it ebbs and flows. It's going to change by the hour, by the day, by the week. So, let go of any, any of that right away. It's not going to happen. All right.

**Tara Whitaker:** [09:42] Okay, so my tips for you now. And this is coming, again, from years of a lot of trial and even more error. This is how I timeblock. Now, I'm not saying you need to timeblock. That only works if it works for you, of course. But I have different “days” in my business. Now, I say “days” because that's an easy period of time. But it could be hours, it could be half-days, it could be full days, whatever. But I have three of them; they are called my “CEO days,” my “employee days,” and my “crumb days.” And I will get into what each of these means. So, the first two, I think, are pretty obvious, my CEO days and my employee days. CEO days, I work on my business. Now, for me to be able to do this, I cannot be sitting at my desk. Me sitting at my desk signals to my brain that I need to work, that I need to be in my business. Clearly, that's not where I want to be. So, I have to get away from my desk. Sometimes I get out of the house, go to a coffee shop, the park, sit in my car, whatever. I have to get away from my desk. I also don't use my laptop. I sometimes will use a tablet or my phone, but I try and use a notebook and pen again because I'm on my computer all stinking day. Getting out of that mindset of work, it—that's like—that's the biggest obstacle I have. So, I have to do everything I can to get away from that, which is why I use a good old notebook and pen or sticky notes. I know, if you're listening and you're an editor, or in the publishing industry or an author, I know you have enough pens and pencils and paper and notebooks to use. So, grab one of those and get to work. Then, I have to have headphones. I have to have headphones, and I have to have some sort of background music. Usually something like an energizing—not, not word songs. I don't know what that's called, you know, background music, like, not white noise, but more techno upbeat music. I really am not doing a good job of explaining that, but hopefully, you get what I mean. Just enough to get me out of my head.

**Tara Whitaker:** [12:05] And then I just let myself dream. I let myself think whichever way my brain wants to go. And let's be honest, your brain can go in a million different directions. Go with it, wherever it goes, and dream big. And write out everything that comes to mind. Even if it seems just bananas to you at the moment. Write it down. Do you want to add a new service? Do you want to learn a completely new skillset? And add it to your business? Do you want to start hiring employees? Do you want to switch to an agency model? Do you want to work with a totally different type of client? Do you want to still edit, but maybe you want to add something else on, like coaching or teaching courses or starting a podcast. I mean, the sky's the limit. And just write down everything that comes to mind. And that's what's going to help you with your long-term success. I know it might not seem "productive" because, let's be honest, I think a lot of us have that mindset of I gotta be go, go go—doing things, doing things, doing things—in order to feel productive. But I assure you that letting yourself dream and think about these things is productive. It is. Because it's going to help with that long-term success because you're going to set yourself up to achieve those goals now. It's going to be small steps most likely—which, you know, it should be—but you have to have that end goal in mind.

**Tara Whitaker:** [13:42] So, if you want a goal set for next week, great. Next month, great. Next year, amazing. Like, go as far as you want to go, and as far as your brain wants to take you—just go with the flow. And I will admit, this took me a long time to learn. It felt weird and uncomfortable and awkward. And like, you know, *this isn't helpful. I'm never going to do that*. You know—your mind—your mind wants to work against you when you're dreaming big things and getting out of your comfort zone. It's just trying to protect you. But you can say, "Hey, Brain. Shut up. I'm doing this." So, those are my CEO days. Now, I usually do try and take a day. Where I'm at in my business right now, that's feasible. And oftentimes, it happens on a Friday just because Mondays are just bleh! They don't work. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, I try to do a lot of editing work. And then Fridays, my brain is just kind of tired. But experiment and see what works best for you. Maybe it's early mornings, late evenings, a whole day, a half a day, what have you. Try it out and see what's best for you and your business. So, that's a CEO day for me.

**Tara Whitaker:** [14:56] Now, an employee day is very self-explanatory. I'm doing the dang thing. I'm working in my business. I'm editing. I'm posting to social media. I'm talking to people. I'm networking. I'm inside the Freelance Editors Club, you know. I'm in my business; I'm working. That's usually a full day for me. I usually can't split up CEO days and employee days. That's just a totally different mindset for me. So, employee days are usually full days for me, self-explanatory.

**Tara Whitaker:** [15:29] And then a crumb day is a day—usually a half a day, honestly—that I sit down and get all of those little tasks that have accumulated over however long it's been that I just need to clean up. And all the credit to this name goes to my fantastic accountability partner, Kim. We were trying to figure out a way to say we're just cleaning up like, you know, the stuff that's on your list that's been there for, you know—we won't admit how long it's been there, but—a while. And there's just little things that build up. And so, we called it a crumb day, which I think is my new favorite

term because it perfectly encompasses what it is. And, like I said, usually that's a half a day. And that's something that I can combine with either a CEO half-day or an employee half-day. But I do have to set aside specific time for that because doing those things one-off or piecemeal is not productive for me. My brain is too much all over the place; I need to focus on one thing at a time. And that one thing can be a whole bunch of crumbs.

**Tara Whitaker:** [16:35] So that's how I roughly timeblock my schedule to make sure that I'm not only getting things done on a day-to-day basis in my business, but I'm also keeping the long-term strategy in mind and making sure that my business is set up for long-term success. And that I'm taking care of myself because without me, without you, our businesses don't work. We are the most important pieces of our business puzzle. And knowing when things are working, when things are not working, can be a little hard to figure out when it's just you in the business. You know, we don't have a boss watching over us seeing if we're doing things most efficiently or if we need to be doing something differently. That's on us. And so that's where accountability partners come in. That's where support comes in. But also knowing ourselves and knowing how we work, how we want our businesses to run is so stinking important. All right.

**Tara Whitaker:** [17:43] And there you have it. Now you know what the differences are between working on your business and in your business. Yes, they are definitely different things, as you now know. We need both. And then, we need to know how to "balance" those in our business to have both short-term and long-term success. And if you decide to implement these types of days in your business—you know, the "CEO day," the "employee day," the "crumb day,"—I would love to hear it, and I'd love to hear if you come up with a different name—that—I just find so much joy in that. Please let me know. Send me a DM on Instagram @tarawhitaker and let me know. I would love to hear it. And in the meantime, I am always available to chat. Check out my website at [tarawhitaker.com](http://tarawhitaker.com). You can schedule a call with me; you can talk to me about, you know, CEO days or crumb days. We can talk about the Freelance Editors Club. Whatever the case may be. So, until next time, keep learning, keep growing, and know that you've got this!

**Tara Whitaker:** [18:46] Thank you so much for tuning into today's episode. If you enjoy *The Modern Editor Podcast*, I would be so grateful if you left us a review over on iTunes. And as always, you can head to [tarawhitaker.com](http://tarawhitaker.com) to connect with me and stay in touch. We'll chat again soon.