

## The Modern Editor Podcast – Episode 13: 10 Things I've Learned After 10 Years in 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] Hello, and welcome to today's episode. We are on our last episode in this ten-year business anniversary celebration, and I'm so excited you're here tuning in. So, in Episode 11, we talked about the best and worst things I found about freelance editing. And then, in Episode 12, we talked about five things that I wish I had known when I started my editing business. So today, we're going to wrap up the series, and we are going to talk about ten things that I have learned during my ten years in business.

**Tara Whitaker** [1:18] So, for me, I am a go, go, go, go, go, go kind of gal. I am constantly moving and doing the next thing—moving on to the next thing. And I have to remind myself very frequently to slow down and analyze and assess and check things out to see what's working and not working and tweak. And so, this episode was a great exercise for me to sit back and look over the past ten years, which is wild—that's a long time. It's a very long time. And you're going to get a little bonus lesson here, too, so technically, we're going to talk about eleven things. But I encourage you to also set aside time at some regular interval to assess how things are going in your business and/or in life. Don't wait ten years. But there are some natural timeframes, you know, like at the end of the month, or at the end of the quarter or every year. And don't wait until the first of something, you know, the first of the month, the first of the quarter—there is no perfect time. But just do it. Just check in with yourself on some sort of regular basis so you can check in and see how things are going and, you know, come up for air a little bit, so to speak, if you're anything like me. So, there's your bonus lesson. But then we're just going to dive right in. And these are in no particular order. So, they're not of most important to least important or anything like that. They're just what came to mind in my head.

**Tara Whitaker** [2:28] So, number one is that having confidence in myself and my abilities will come with practice and experience. And I know I have the benefit of hindsight now, but I really need to remember this moving forward when I'm doing new things. Because I have a tendency to procrastinate-learn (maybe you do, too?), where we think we have to take all the courses and read all the books and do all the things before we can truly attempt something. When in reality, we really just need to learn the essentials and then trust ourselves that the actual doing is where the true learning takes place. And it's taken me a very long time to come to that realization—longer than ten years, let's be honest. But I do know now that the only way that I can truly excel at something is by actually doing it. I could read all the editing books and take all the editing courses, but I'm never going to actually learn how to edit without actually editing. And the same goes for anything else.

**Tara Whitaker** [3:34] And to go along with that is my second thing that I know now that I am capable of learning new things. And just because something doesn't come super naturally to me, doesn't mean that I can't learn it or work around it. So, what I mean by that is when I started this business, and while I was running the business at first, I had a very fixed mindset when it came to my own abilities and intelligence. So, if something didn't come easily to me, I just gave up. And it wasn't worth trying harder. I figured I was born with what I could handle, and that was that. And, you know, I was a good student in school—that comes easily to me. I can read a book or read something and take a test and rock it. However, that is not how real life works. So, when I was faced with issues or problems or situations as a business owner where it didn't come so easily, I thought, *Well, I can't do this. There's no way I can do this.* And it took me a long time to figure out I could, and I can. I wish I had done that deep thoughtwork earlier, but I didn't even know it was a thing or that I had a fixed mindset. So, I know I can learn new things. But that has been a huge lesson for me.

**Tara Whitaker** [5:00] And speaking of thoughtwork, we're gonna go to number three. Learning how to manage my thoughts and emotions has elevated my business more than anything else. And that's a pretty big statement and perhaps a little on the woo-woo side. But it's absolutely true. More than any editing skills, courses, or business webinars or anything else that I've done business-wise, it's been thoughtwork that has made the biggest difference. When I was introduced to this whole concept of mindset and thoughtwork and cognitive behavioral psychology, my entire world changed for the better. Not just my business, but I also became a better human being, a better partner, a better parent—when that, you know, I've only been a parent for four years—but a better person, and in turn, a better business owner. And it's why I focus so much on thoughtwork and mindset in my coaching, in the Freelance Editors Club, on social media, and in this podcast, because I know firsthand how much it can make a difference. So, yeah, I love me some thoughtwork.

**Tara Whitaker** [6:08] Number four: sticking to my values will always lead me down the right path. We all know that some choices are more difficult than others, some aren't as clear-cut. But when I finally established my true mission and vision and core values for my business—and wrote them down, didn't just have them, you know, floating around in my brain, I had it written down—it became so much easier to protect my boundaries and to take care of myself, and to stay in alignment with those core values. You know, when we're first starting out, it's very easy to just take whatever comes—I'll take any editing project, I'll do anything, I'll do what it takes, I'll stay up 24/7 to get this project done, I will bend over backwards for these clients. And we all know that leads to burnout and just a whole host of other problems. So, I wish I could remember where I got this quote, and if someone knows it, please let me know so I can properly attribute it, but I live now by “If it's not a hell yes, it's a hell no.” That's it.

**Tara Whitaker** [7:15] Number five: excuses and fear, and perceived detriments held me back more than I realized. And instead of embracing my uniqueness, I didn't; I hid my true personality. I didn't want to be judged or criticized. And that really goes more for like my online presence, like social media and emails, and such. You know, I just was scared. And that only led to me being inauthentic and not growing into my full potential.

You know, the goal isn't to change ourselves or fit into a certain mold. The goal is to embrace ourselves, our attributes, our personalities and learn to work with what we have, so to speak. There's a big difference between an explanation and an excuse, which I think might have to be a future podcast episode. And the older I get, and the longer I'm in business, the less I'm able to tolerate that in myself. I can tell now when I'm making an excuse and not just explaining why something can't happen or why I can't do something. So, we'll dive into that a little bit more later. Stay tuned.

**Tara Whitaker [8:28]** Number six: not having the same background or experience or way of doing things is not a bad thing, and it doesn't make me any less of an editor. For the longest time—probably, if we're going to take ten years of business, I would say the first seven, at least, I felt like an absolute fraud as an editor. And here's why. I don't enjoy most of the classics that I've read. I have zero desire to write fiction. I might write a nonfiction one day, more along the lines of, like, a personal development book or something. But fiction—no thanks. I didn't study English lit in college. I will never remember lay versus lie. I have to mouth or say Wed-nes-day every single time I spell it (even though I know exactly how to spell it). And so many other things. And I honestly thought that those made me not a “real editor,” which is a total bunch of BS, right? We are all different. We all have different backgrounds. We have different quirks. We like and dislike different things. We all have grammar hangups. We're all valid. Hard stop. None of that actually matters when it comes to putting yourself forward as a professional editor. It's just not, at least in my opinion. There might be other editors that don't agree and think that you have to love the classics or that you should know the difference between lay vs lie, even though you've looked it up eleventy billion times, but I am not that editor. And if you are, too, that's okay. That's great. Welcome to the club.

**Tara Whitaker [10:22]** All right, number seven, chugging right along. Things will rarely ever go to plan, according to plan. And I have learned that my success lies—lies? Lays? Nope, that's lies. See? Why did I—I should have prepped that beforehand. Nope. This is real life. These aren't scripted. But we're gonna go with lies. My success lies in how I pivot, not how perfectly I plan. Much to my chagrin. Pivot over planning. And if you know me, I am a planner. I have to-do lists and Trello, and my Best Today Guide, and sticky notes. And I am a list-maker. I am a planner. Things will go exactly as I expect them to, right? Wrong. In the entrepreneurial world—ew—in the business world (let's go with that), that's just not going to happen. Things are not going to go to plan. And when you're the sole person in your business, it's completely on us to pivot and adjust, right. So, once I came to terms with that, it was easier to let things go a little bit. Not 100%. I will probably always have to be working on this because I'm such a planner. But it's how we pivot, not how we plan.

**Tara Whitaker [11:48]** Number eight: finding my people was crucial to elevating my editing business. I went a really long time in the beginning going at it alone. I've talked about this on previous episodes. You know, I'm an introvert, I didn't want to people a lot, and it completely bit me in the butt. And it doesn't matter how introverted we are or shy we are; we still need human connection in some form. And it's so much simpler now with the internet to be able to do that virtually. But having at least just one colleague friend can make a difference. You know, it does not have to be something super formal

or something that you pay for; you can just meet other editors. And that makes a difference just doing that. Now, of course, if you want something more formal, those options are out there. There's masterminds you can join. You can join something like the Freelance Editors Club, you know, you can join the Editorial Freelancers Association, or ACES. But the bottom line is just making those connections is key. Just one. And if you are like me, you can make those connections, and then you can retreat to your cave after to, you know, relax and unwind and decompress.

**Tara Whitaker** [13:10] All right, number nine, approaching the end. I have “failed” at things. But that does not mean that I am a failure. Sometimes things just don't work out. There's a ton of reasons why that can happen. And I have learned that rather than making it a reflection on me, it's better if I just view it kind of 10,000 feet up, like take myself—the personal bit—out of it. View it as a learning experience, take what I can, you know, take the lessons learned, leave the rest, and just move forward. I would dwell on my “failures” or errors or things I missed while editing way too much. And I know when we're first starting out, it's easier to get upset about those things, which is completely valid, we're new, and we don't want to mess up and all of that. But learning that I was still a human being. I don't know why editors are put on this pedestal that we are expected to be perfect 24/7. But we are not. We are going to miss things. And it's okay. That's not an excuse to do poor work. We will always put our best foot forward and try our best. But things will slip through the cracks. And they will slip through 48 rounds of editing and proofreading and cold reading and everything else, and it'll still make it through. Some of those typos—you have to give them props. But that's not a failure on us. It's not. And the sooner we realize that, the better off we are.

**Tara Whitaker** [14:47] All right, number ten. Last but not least, I am incredibly proud of myself for taking the leap ten years ago and doing it not scared but absolutely freaking petrified. I'm still in awe that I'm a business owner, that I get to do what I love every single day. And that's not to say it's amazing 100% of the time, but the good, so far outweighs the bad. And I started this, like I said, ten years ago. I was still living in the city, I was renting, I was dating my now husband, you know, life has changed a lot. In those ten years, we've moved to a house, we've gotten married, we've had two kids. He's had businesses and different jobs, like a lot has happened in those ten years. And I'm so grateful that I've had the flexibility. And just being able to show myself and now my kids what's possible. How they can do something that they love, how they don't have to work for a boss, they don't have to do the typical nine-to-five, and they can truly enjoy their work. It might not happen right away. But I'm really proud of myself. And I don't ever say that. So here I am saying it to myself and to who knows how many people listening right now, which is a little terrifying. But I am. I am proud of myself. And I think we should all take a minute to sit and reflect and see how we're proud of ourselves for doing anything. Life's hard. Ugh. Life \*is\* hard. Let's celebrate our wins, no matter how big or small. So yeah, number ten—I'm proud of myself.

**Tara Whitaker** [16:39] And that's it. Those were the top ten—not top ten, but the first ten lessons that I thought of when I sat down to think about the last ten years as a freelance editing business owner. And I just want to say that I appreciate you so much for tuning in, not only to this episode, but the whole series celebrating my anniversary

and the entire podcast. If you would have asked me ten years ago what I'd be doing in 2022—if you had said, “Ah, you'll be coaching, and you'll be a facility (a facility?), you'll be a community facilitator, and you'll have a podcast,” I would have laughed in your face and said that you're absolutely bananas because there's no way. No way would the shy, introverted, not “a real editor” be doing any of those things. And yet, here we are. And I have you to thank for supporting me by listening to this and so many other people over the last decade and before for helping me get to this point. So, thank you. And you know, here's to another ten-plus years. I hope, right? Ah, ten years. Wow.

**Tara Whitaker** [17:51] So if you're at day one of your business, or maybe you haven't gotten to day one, month one, year one—wherever you're at, and you want an editor friend, or you need help and support, I am always free to chat. Always. I know what it's like to not have a clue what you're doing or do it by yourself for way too long. So, I'm always here, grab a free call with me or check out my Quickstart Guide at [tarawhitaker.com](http://tarawhitaker.com) and I would be thrilled to talk to you. And again, one last time, thank you for being here and tuning in. So, until next time, keep learning, keep growing, and know that you've got this!

**Tara Whitaker:** [18:37] 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.