

The Modern Editor Podcast – Episode 16: How To Simplify Your Decision-Making Process

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. Welcome to today's episode—we are going to be expanding on our chat about decision-making that we had back in episode fifteen, and we're going to be talking about our purpose and our values. Now, I know those two things, you're like, whoa, whoa, whoa, those are pretty big, scary, existential. But I promise you, how I approach them is not going to be scary at all. I really think they are two key components in making business decisions easier and keeping your goals and those decisions in alignment with what you truly hold dear. So, we're going to talk about how you determine your purpose and your values. And then I'm going to give you some examples on how they help you make decisions. So, let's dive right in.

Tara Whitaker: [1:04] The first thing is your purpose. And again, I know that sounds a little scary. It's, you know, when I first heard it, I was like, *Whoa, I just need to, you know, figure out what I'm doing tomorrow. I don't know what my big life purpose is. Yikes!* And it was too big and scary, so I just put it off. That's not what we're looking for here. So, we're going to approach it a little differently. And I don't expect you to have the answer off the top of your head, especially if you've never thought about this before. So don't worry about that. Take some time and dig into it once we go over what I mean when I talk about purpose. And if purpose feels too big, try posing this question: What do I think is important to me? (In your life.)

Tara Whitaker: [1:49] Now, this is not to be confused with a to-do list or goal-setting. This is deeper than that. It's (sometimes) what drives you every day or most days in your business. It's what makes you happy; it's what brings you joy. It makes you feel like you're making a difference—if that's important to you. It's what gets you into a flow state where you are doing something, and the whole world just melts away around you because you're so focused and so into what you're doing. That's a good indication that it really aligns with your purpose. So, it's important to talk about your purpose because it really is that big, overarching thing that you're going to refer back to each time you make a decision. And just to be clear, I'm not talking about decisions like what to make for dinner or do I sign up for Asana or Trello or anything like that. These are more specific decisions, mostly about your business, but they can be applied to life as well, just like so many of the things we talk about here on the podcast.

Tara Whitaker: [3:00] Now, here are some examples of a purpose or something that feels important to you. Maybe you want to leave a positive impact on the editing industry. Maybe you truly want to help authors share their stories; you have a, you know, this innate feeling of everyone has a story, and I want to help people share that story with the world. Maybe you want to make sure that you leave the editing industry better than you found it—perhaps more inclusive or welcoming or whatever the case

may be. Maybe it's most important to you to design a life that you want to live that you are in control of, which is, a lot of times, one of the big driving factors of people starting their own freelance editing business. We want to be our own boss, and we— that autonomy is incredibly important to us. Or, those are obviously very editing-specific, but personally, maybe, maybe you want to build a business so that you can leave it for your children. Maybe you want to leave behind generational wealth for your kids and perhaps their kids. You know, it could be anything, really. All that matters is that it's important to you. That's all that counts. It can be as big and super deep as you want it to be, or it doesn't have to be at all. Maybe you simply want to approach every day in a way that works for you, whatever that may be. That can be your purpose, and that is completely fine. So don't get too philosophical here if that doesn't feel good to you because that's not going to help with the decision-making, and it's always going to have this scary element to it, and you're not going to use it. So have a think, take your time, and figure out what drives you. And honestly, because I like to cheat and I don't really follow the rules a lot—enter why I have my own business, and I'm the boss—maybe you have more than one purpose. Maybe you can't drill it down into just one. Have two; have a couple. Whatever floats your boat. We let everything slide here. So, give it a think and come up with a purpose.

Tara Whitaker: [5:33] And then the next thing you're going to do is we're going to dive a little deeper, and we're gonna get into your core values. So, if you kind of think of maybe a triangle with your purpose at the top, and then core values being underneath that—we're just getting more and more specific. And for the record, values are simply just beliefs that guide your behavior and your actions or things that are just important to you. So, what inspires you? What motivates you? What do you value? What are your values? What do you value? What do you hold dear? Things like that.

Tara Whitaker: [6:05] So, some examples would be you are a strong believer in running your business in an ethical manner. You could only want to work with people who value the same things you do. Maybe it's honesty or integrity, collaboration, community building, whatever the case may be. Maybe you are a strong believer in meaningful self-care and knowing that you have to put yourself first in order to pour into others. Those are just a few examples. There are bajillions out there. But again, take some time, and think about what truly you believe and what you hold most dear. And then—and write these down, of course. We don't want to forget them; write them down. Once you have your purpose, or purposes and your values, then you can go along and take that lovely question of “Why?” that we discussed in the previous episode and get to the decision-making.

Tara Whitaker: [7:08] So now we're going to go into a couple of examples of what this looks like. And, of course, I've simplified it just for example's sake. Rarely are things in life cut and dried. But this will give you a good idea as to how you apply these things to your decision-making. So, let's say that you have a difficult time deciding on which clients to take on and work with in your editing business. Maybe you're getting burned by editing clients, or you're not feeling fulfilled, or it's not, just not feeling right. Now, let's say that your purpose is that you want to help elevate independent authors' voices, like you want to work with independent authors. And your core values are collaboration,

accessibility, and integrity. Now let's say you have a potential client reach out to you who's looking for editing services. They're a first-time author; they have no intention of being self-published, doing the self-publishing route. They want to be traditionally published by a Big Five, and they want the cheapest, fastest editing done possible.

Tara Whitaker: [8:15] So, what you're going to do is you're going to put those attributes against your purpose and values to see if they're a match. Now, again, you want to work with independent authors, but this person wants to be traditionally published. So, that's not necessarily going to jibe. Right? And if they're looking for cheap and fast, that usually doesn't lend itself well to true collaboration, which is one of your values. So based on that, this potential client seems like they are out of alignment for you. And the decision would most likely be to pass and perhaps refer them to another editor who might be a better fit. Now, if you did take on this client, that's where you probably will experience that potential issue. Right? If they don't want to be independently published, that doesn't jibe right there. Plus, if they want cheap and fast, you're going to not do that. You want to work with the author, you want the collaboration and the relationship building, and you're just going to butt heads, right? And that's where the poor client fit comes in. Do you see how that, see how we pit those things against the purpose and values to make that decision?

Tara Whitaker: [9:26] Now, let's just do one more example just to drive the point home. Let's say again that your purpose is working with independent authors, but your values are, among other things, self-care (like the importance of self-care) and sharing social responsibility. Now, let's say you have another potential client reach out who wants you to edit their book, and the topic of their book is why self-care is selfish and a complete waste of time. Now clearly, that's an obvious example. But those values of the author clearly don't align with yours. So, if you take on that project, I am going to guess that you are going to resent the heck out of it, you're not going to do your best work because it's so far out of alignment, you're probably just going to be ticked off the entire time, right? Every word you read is against your beliefs. So, in that case, the decision should be relatively easy—thanks, but no thanks.

Tara Whitaker: [10:23] Now I understand how we have all been in that situation, and likely will in the future, where we need money. And we tend to let our purpose and our values slide a little bit in order to put food on the table. And I completely understand that, like, let's recognize that first and foremost. But knowing that it's so far out of alignment will at least help a little bit if you have to take on that project. It'll give you a heads-up, and it'll hopefully make it a little bit easier to distance yourself from the content and not get so aggravated about it. But some of you out there might not be able to do that. It might be so against what you believe in that you can't do it. And that's okay. But that decision might make it a little more, it might be a little more difficult, you know, if it's between money and your values and your ethics and your morals. So, I want to throw that in there. Because I don't want to make these decisions seem super easy. Because, like I said before, they're not always easy. There are definitely different elements to it. But it's always going back to your purpose and your values. And you will know when you take on a project—if you have those in place—you'll know when they

don't align, and you'll be able to easily tell, and then you'll be able to apply that in the future.

Tara Whitaker: [11:45] And those are the examples. That's how you can have another tool or another filter—whatever you want to call it—to use when you're making decisions about your business. And like I mentioned before, with the incorporating “Why?” in there, you can apply that when it's applicable. (Apply when it's applicable? That makes sense.) You know, you don't want to drill down too far. But if you get one of those potential clients and you're trying to figure out if you should take them on, asking that question “Why?” is going to help determine the reasoning behind taking that client on or not. So, for example, like the last one we talked about where the author thinks self-care is, is just a waste of time, and you say, “Okay, well, I'm going to take on this client.” Well, why are you going to do that because you know it's out of alignment with your values? Well, the answer could be, “Actually, I don't have a good reason why; I shouldn't take this on.” Or it could be like we talked about, “I have a bill to pay, and I need to make the money to do it.” And that will help, help that decision become a little more clear. So that's that.

Tara Whitaker: [12:54] Now, when you make those purposes (purpose or purposes) and values, like I said, write them down; put them on a sticky note; tape them on your wall; make it your phone wallpaper. Whatever you need to do to remind yourself of that bigger picture and serve as a touchpoint for you when you are making those decisions. And we did a full workshop inside the Freelance Editors Club about this, where we dug even deeper into purpose and values and paired it with goal-setting and setting priorities. So, heads up, if you join the club, you do get immediate access to all of our past trainings, including this one. And then, if you didn't know, my Business Navigator coaching program also dives deep into this, and that is one-on-one coaching support. So, obviously, with the club, that is group support. The Navigator coaching program is one-on-one. And I offer this in either three months or for an entire year, where we can touch base throughout the year on setting your goals and your intentions and refining your purpose and values and all of that good stuff. So, if you're interested in either one, you can get full details, as always, at tarawhitaker.com. So, until next time, keep learning, keep growing, and know that you've got this.

Tara Whitaker: [14:11] 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 to connect with me and stay in touch. We'll chat again soon.