

myweeklymarketing.

Janice Hostager: 0:04

I'm Janice Hostager. After three decades in the marketing business and many years of being an entrepreneur, I've learned a thing or two about marketing. Join me as we talk about marketing, small business and life in between. Welcome to My Weekly Marketing. Hey, hey, and welcome to another episode of My Weekly Marketing. Today I'm going to talk about something that's not necessarily related to marketing per se, but still something that I've seen and continue to see in the small business world, and that's starting a business over the age of 50.

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Now you might be wondering what's age got to do with it. Well, think about it like this. Launching a business later in life isn't just about chasing a dream, although it could certainly be that. It's about mastering a lifetime of skills that can really supercharge your marketing game as well. I believe that age should not be a barrier to anyone starting a business, but instead a feather in your cap when you're crafting a compelling brand. If you're over 50 and starting a business, or even thinking about starting a business, turns out, you're in good company. Over 50s, or encore entrepreneurs, as they're sometimes called, are a big group of people. According to the US Census Bureau, more than half of US businesses are owned by people 55 and older. More than half 52% of business owners are 55 or older, 29% are 55 to 64, and 23% are 65 and older. So if you felt alone or felt like the oldest one in the room, you are not.

Janice Hostager: 1:50

I started my current business after I turned 50. When my kids were really young, we were financially able for me to take some time off to be a stay-at-home mom for my kids. Then, when my kids went to school, I started doing some freelance design work, which grew into a small but mighty design and marketing agency. But several years later we moved again to a larger city. I was really burned out from doing design and running an agency, so I was really ready to face some new challenges. I had just turned 50, and I went to a networking event and this is what I heard: You'll never find a job when you're over 50. This made me feel ill. That wasn't true, of course, and I did find a job, which I kept for a couple of years, but once again, I really longed for the flexibility and freedom that having my own business gifted me. So after another move, this one to Texas, I decided I would go back into business this time back in marketing and my current business was born.

Janice Hostager: 2:47

Your story might be similar or very different. Maybe your kids left home and you had abandoned your career a long time ago to stay at home with them. Maybe a layoff forced you in a position of not being able to find a job in your field. Maybe you've always wanted to start your own business and you finally have the opportunity. Or maybe you've had a passion for doing something significant and new and you feel like this may be your chance.

Janice Hostager: 3:13

Whatever your reason for wanting to start a business today, I'm going to go over a few things that I've learned along the way as an over 50 entrepreneur. I'll talk about the benefits, the challenges, what you need to identify first, the learning curve and, finally, some building blocks to your brand. First, the benefits you know more than you think. Even if you've been raising kids and volunteering at your kid's school. You've absorbed a lot, so don't let the thought of I'm not qualified rear its ugly head. Imposter syndrome is a real thing and can leave you paralyzed. What you don't know can be learned, and there are more than enough resources to get you started. Emotional resilience, problem-solving skills and conflict resolution abilities honed over a lifetime can mitigate huge challenges in your business. You're better equipped to handle setbacks, adapt to change and navigate complex business situations. Trust me when I say this If you have the most basic computer and smartphone skills, you're already almost there. Bonus points. If you already use social media, even if you've been going to PTA meetings, raising kids and volunteering, like I said, you've gained skills. Did you raise teens, people, management and wisdom, right there, volunteered? You probably used email, balanced your household budget. That's bookkeeping. So much more has been done with much less experience.

Janice Hostager: 4:37

Sometimes starting a business is about more than just money. Sometimes it's about redefining the next chapter of your life. With your children grown or your career goals achieved or maybe never realized, this could be the time to focus on a project that excites you and gives you purpose. Starting a business allows you to pursue your passions, turn a hobby into a career or make a real impact in a field that you care deeply about. If you have been working or had a career, or make a real impact in a field that you care deeply about, if you have been working or had a career, your decades of professional experience and industry knowledge can provide a solid foundation for your success. You likely have a deep understanding of your customers' needs, the market trends and some industry nuances, which is something no 25-year-old can muster up.

You may also have a professional network that you've built over the years. That group can provide you with contacts, mentors and potential customers or clients. You might also have accumulated personal wealth, some assets or retirement funds that you can use to finance your business venture, which gives you the ability to self-fund or invest without relying on external funding sources or financing sources. Lastly, many entrepreneurs our age are driven by desire for personal fulfillment. Pursuing our passions or leaving a legacy. You can create meaningful impact through your business.

Janice Hostager: 5:56

Having said all this, starting a business is not without challenges. First, there are some financial considerations. Although you may have a healthy personal savings or retirement fund that you can invest in your business, you also may be stretched financially each month because you're putting kids through college. As I record this, in April of 2025, the financial market is very topsy-turvy, so that can bring some uncertainty. Securing traditional financing options, such as loans, can become more challenging due to age-related perceptions of risk by lenders. The good news is that many businesses can start with little startup costs, especially consulting or service-based businesses and these days it's easy to work out of your home. All it takes is a laptop and an inexpensive Google Workspace account and you can hold Google Meet meetings right from your house or anywhere you want to go. And you can start with a limited budget, leveraging a ton of free resources and trainings. Focus on profitability right from the start. You don't need a lot of paid software, and I'll talk more about that in a bit. As your business grows, you can explore opportunities to scale your operations and reach a wider audience later on.

Janice Hostager: 7:06

Challenge number two technology. Keeping up with rapidly changing technology and digital tools can be daunting, especially if you have limited prior experience with digital platforms and marketing platforms. Fortunately, there are YouTube videos for just about every popular platform out there. These days, nothing is too complex and with AI, things have just become exponentially easier from the tech end. I just had ChatGPT write some HTML code for a custom reform on my website. It literally took seconds to create the code and I was able to add it to the page and get it all set up in less than an hour.

Janice Hostager: 7:46

As somebody who spent hours trying to learn HTML to hand code a website back in the early days of website design back in the 90s. These are awesome times. Also, I'm going to borrow a quote from business coach Dan Sullivan, who says this who, not how? So

what that means is, instead of asking how to do something, ask who can do it for me. As entrepreneurs, especially bootstrappers, we can spend a ton of time trying to DIY things just to save a little money. Trust me on this one, especially if it's tech related. Trust me on this one, especially if it's tech related. Tech changes fast. Like me, who invested weeks learning CSS and HTML and haven't used it since in years, you're better off going to Upwork and hiring an educated, eager worker to do it for you for just a fraction of the cost of your time and saving you a lot of frustration.

Janice Hostager: 8:39

Challenge number three marketplace perception. Although it pains me to say this, you may have to overcome some stereotypes or biases related to your age in the marketplace, both from customers and potential business partners or investors. But I've learned the name of the game is confidence. When someone finds out how much you know and how hard you work, it will be gone. I can't stress enough why being confident in who you are and how you can help others is a game changer. Truthfully, fear and self-doubt are going to be your companions throughout your entire business journey.

Janice Hostager: 9:12

So how do you move forward? One thing that's always worked for me is when I'm thinking about my age or that I'm not sure they're going to take me seriously. I know that I'm putting the focus on me, I might think nobody's going to take me seriously. They think I'm too old, I have wrinkles, what am I doing? So at that point the focus is on me and it paralyzes me. At that point I turn my focus to them. When you're 100% focused on them, your fears recede and you can move forward. You just can't focus on both you and them at the same time. Just shift the focus to them. Also, keep in mind that people buy from people they relate to. You may start to see that many people who follow you on social media and buy from you are closer to your age. People like to find their tribe. From there,

Janice Hostager: 9:58

Be yourself and let people learn to know, like and trust you. People need what you can share. Sometimes we don't know how much we know, but to me it's a crime to leave it all locked up. Share what you can. You bring experience and wisdom, and people will be grateful for that. So what you need to do? First identify your passion and your purpose. I'm going to assume that you're starting a business that interests you and that you enjoy doing. If you're starting a business just to make money, take my advice and rethink it right now. I'm not sure exactly who said this quote, but somebody said starting a business is like eating glass, and I have to say I agree. This is not to scare you from

doing it, but it's a reality check that if you're doing it just for a big paycheck, you're gonna burn out. Money's important, of course, especially as we look ahead to retirement, but it can't be the reason why you go into business. You just need to unlock your bigger why.

Janice Hostager: 10:54

I have several whys. I have always wanted to do what I do and I feel like this is maybe my last chance to do it. I want my kids to see that you can do anything with time and perseverance, and I've also had the opportunity to travel a lot and I've done mission work in some very impoverished countries. I've spoken to mothers in Haiti who watch their children die because they have nothing to feed them. I have met children who live in orphanages in Africa because their parents can't afford to keep them. I feel like God has put me on this earth to help others. Money can do that and that is my bigger why. I also grew up in a small business family and watched my dad struggle as he grew his small business. I know that small business owners are hardworking people who have a heart for serving others and I know that I can help those people.

Janice Hostager: 11:42

So what about you? Maybe you're starting a business to give you some freedom. Maybe it's to allow you to help others in a bigger way. Whatever it is, do a little soul searching and journaling to kind of understand your bigger why. It'll keep you going on those weeks when the sales are not coming in or you're overwhelmed and want to curl up in a fetal position on your office floor. Just a warning you will probably experience one of these two states and probably both. Hey, just being real here.

Janice Hostager: 12:10

I also want to take a minute and talk a little bit about networking and the value in your connections that you have. If you're working from home and you're used to being in an office or around other people, one of the first realities you'll face is isolation. I get past this in a few ways. First, I go to networking events. A word of warning, though these can take on a time-sucking life of their own, so only go to the ones that give you the best time and money, roi. I have a few tips to making the most of networking events. The best events double as socialization and marketing. I've got a couple of podcast episodes about them, episode 16 and episode 50. Both have some great tips.

Janice Hostager: 12:53

The second way to network is with meetups of like-minded individuals in your same sphere or at the same level of business. These might be free or paid meetings or paid masterminds. My experience, the paid events are the best, since everyone has skin in

the game and wants to be there. Masterminds are an investment, but they will hold you accountable and can be an incredible boost to your business. The thirds are an investment, but they will hold you accountable and can be an incredible boost to your business. The third way to network is online in groups. Facebook has groups, linkedin does, and Reddit and some other online platforms provide opportunities to connect with like-minded people and ask some questions, because sometimes it's easier to ask a question when nobody knows you. There are also a lot of benefits to being in groups where your ideal customer is, so you can answer the questions that people are asking. It gives you insight as to what your ideal customers are asking and thinking about, and I've also found several clients in online groups.

Janice Hostager: 13:50

If your home office walls are starting to feel like they're closing in, there are some co-worker spaces popping up everywhere. I have a co-working office a few days a month at Regis. I'll put the link in the show notes. They have offices in every major city of the world, so if you travel, no problem, you can just grab a office, a private office, a shared office there are a lot of different options and you can rent conference rooms there too. This is not a paid plug or anything. I just use them and I like them.

Janice Hostager: 14:21

Okay, let's talk a little bit about the learning curve. You might be intimidated, thinking there's too steep of a learning curve to start a business right now. As I mentioned earlier, if you have basic computer skills you will do just fine, and if you don't, it's easy enough to learn. Most apps now are extremely user-friendly. When I was starting out, the apps that I used daily were pretty much all the Google Business Suite, google Docs and Google Sheets for documents and spreadsheets, gmail or Apple Mail for email. You can make presentations on Google Slides, get feedback on Google Forms and do video calls on Google Meet.

Janice Hostager: 14:59

Since I have a design background, I use Adobe for my designing, but Canva has a free plan and for me it's often faster and easier to use that than Adobe. Once you get a team or if you hire remote workers, you might also want to use Slack for messaging, also free, and there's some project management software that I recommend. I use Blue, but Asana has a free plan as well. Guidance from peers or business coaches has made a huge difference in my business. One-on-one coaching can be expensive, but there are many group coaching programs and online courses. Also, SCORE is in every major city and they offer free guidance from retired business professionals. Of course, you might

also want to put together a marketing plan, and I've got you covered because I have a free marketing playbook featuring a planning and strategy download, and you can find that at janishostager.com. Forward slash trail and I'll put the link in the show notes.

Janice Hostager: 15:56

One last thing; a smart first step is to build your brand and online presence From a marketing perspective. After you decide your business, you should focus on a niche and determine your ideal customer. I have a free download for that as well, which I'll also add to the show notes. For that as well, which I'll also add to the show notes. Here's some early marketing advice: Solve a problem.

Janice Hostager: 16:23

That sounds simple, but it's not easy. Sometimes we start thinking about what we love doing and dreaming about the business and how fun it will be and that's all great. But identify your ideal market first, to make sure that there's a buyer out there. Identify your ideal market first to make sure that there's a buyer out there. Then talk to that buyer and pick their brain. Find out why they would want it. Solve a problem they have. Find your niche, dig deep and own it.

Janice Hostager: 16:47

I only bring this up because this is a step that I skipped when I started my small bespoke wedding invitation business. I had it several years ago and it did not do well and I paid the price. I love designing invitations for weddings and other things too, like children's birthday parties and other events. Turns out, the market for custom designed, high-priced, bespoke invitations is very small, especially where we were located in a rural college town. I created a solution for a problem that did not exist. Don't make that mistake. It was expensive and very defeating. Take this step. Talk to other people, make sure you understand the problem you're solving and you won't be sorry and, trust me, you're going to use that in your marketing all the way to the end. Also, the strongest brands out there are built by people who build a product or service for a problem they once had. I'm going to say that again, the strongest brands out there are built by people who build a product or service for a problem they once had. So think about a problem you used to have, something that you struggle to learn or issues that you've overcome. You'll not only understand the problem, but you'll also understand the buyer, since it was once you.

Janice Hostager: 18:03

I recommend also having a website, since even if you have social media pages, they can disappear at any time. Never build your business on rented land. I'd also recommend that you own your website outright. Having designed many websites, I'll always recommend WordPress, since it's open source. Google loves them and with a plugin such as Elementor, it's really easy to use drag and drop. If you absolutely can't afford to get the website initially, you can get a free one on Google Sites.

Janice Hostager: 18:35

I'll put the link in the show notes but, as a disclaimer, I've never used them, but I do know they're free and it's better than no site at all. You'll still need to pay to register the domain name, but this is hugely inexpensive and a great way to start out. You'll also want to look at your branding to set yourself apart. The brand is so much more than a logo, font and colors. I have a free download for that as well. Visit janicehostager.com. Forward slash brand and again the links in the show notes.

Janice Hostager: 19:05

And although I wouldn't recommend trying to be on more than one or two social media platforms, to start reserving your name on others is a good strategy for the future. Starting out on one or two platforms where your ideal customer is hanging out will help you keep social media manageable, put effort into those one or two platforms, grow an audience and then expand from there. So, in conclusion, I firmly believe there's never been a better time in history to start a business. In conclusion, I firmly believe there's never been a better time in history to start a business, and after turning 50, it's an exciting time of life to do it. You have the freedom to work from anywhere and the flexibility to work when you want. And although it takes some courage to get a fresh start at this point in your life. You're among a huge group of us who are doing just that. You won't likely be the only person over 50 in the room. The secret to freedom is courage.

Janice Hostager: 19:57

Now I know I skimmed over a whole bunch of things today, so you can find all the links to things we talked about today at myweeklymarketing.com forward slash 105. Also, I'd love to answer any questions if you have them, so please reach out. You can send me a message on Instagram at Janice Hostager Marketing, or on LinkedIn Also. If you found this information helpful, I'd love if you would subscribe. Thanks so much for joining me today. I'll see you next time. Bye for now.