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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. Have you ever hit a point in your business where you catch yourself thinking, wait, is this all there is? You're super busy, you're booked up, you're maybe even successful on paper, but something still feels a little off. You built the business, you have the brand, you have the long to-do list, but somewhere along the way you feel like you've lost why you do it. Maybe it's that moment that you hit a big goal but felt nothing but exhaustion. Or maybe like me, you have a constant, ever-moving horizon that you can't seem to ever reach. Maybe by the time you sat down to work on your dream business, you realize it didn't feel like your dream anymore. It might be that you believe, like I do, that God put you here on this earth for a reason, but you can't seem to figure out what that reason is. If you've been craving more meaning, more clarity, or just a sense of direction, today's episode is for you. My guest Joe Denner helps entrepreneurs and business leaders figure out their true purpose, not just their careers, but in their lives too. Because when your business aligns with your purpose, things start to click again. You stop spinning your wheels and start feeling fulfilled by what you're building. So if you've been wondering what's next for you, or you're feeling that quiet little tug that there's something more, grab your coffee and lean in. This conversation might be the spark that you've been waiting for. Well, hey, Joe. Thanks for being on the show today.

Joe Denner: 1:51

Yeah. I'm glad to be here, Janice.

Janice Hostager: 1:53

You talk a lot about helping people find their purpose beyond their career. So, what led you to start doing that kind of work?

Joe Denner: 2:01

Yeah, probably back in the early to mid-2000s, I was in a career I loved. I was enjoying myself, but we began to think about how things could be different for our family. We had chosen to home educate our kids and were looking for ways to get me more involved with that. And that really led us to begin exploring a career change. And so as I did that, I began to think about what do I want to do? I really didn't know. I didn't have any ideas about what I wanted to do. What I did know was that I didn't like taxes and I was in accounting and finance at the time. And I thought, I don't think I want to do a, I don't think I want to start my own CPA firm. And so that led us to a big search and discovery. And in that process, I attended a weekend workshop and I had involvement with some other things that really got me thinking about why am I here? What's my purpose for

being on this planet? And that's really how it all started was beginning to explore a new career. And I felt like it, that should be rooted in something more than just what do I like to do or just where can I make some money? So that's really what started the journey for me.

Janice Hostager: 3:11

Gotcha. Gotcha. How do you define purpose? Because it's one of those words I think we hear all the time, but don't really always know how to apply it in our everyday life.

Joe Denner: 3:20

Yeah, to me, it's a sense of calling. It's a sense of why am I here? What have I been put on this planet to do? What am I here to accomplish? I'm I've been put here for a reason. I tell my kids all the time, you were created on purpose and with a purpose. And I really do believe that we have certain natural skills and abilities, things that we didn't have to learn how to do. We're just really good at them. And we just really enjoy them. And I think that those are some puzzle pieces that have been given to us to be able to discover what our purpose is. And so for me, purpose is about meaning. It's about what am I here to accomplish? How am I here to serve the rest of mankind? And how do I help make a difference in the world around me?

Janice Hostager: 4:09

Hmm. Mm-hmm. So I think there's a lot of entrepreneurs that start their businesses with that in mind. Like they feel like they might come from um a corporate setting or they may like switch careers like you did and um just sort of feel like they're not finding that fulfillment in their nine to five job, right? Um but I think what often happens with our entrepreneurs, well, with myself for sure, is that somewhere along the way it starts feeling more like a job again.

Joe Denner: 4:40

Yeah.

Janice Hostager: 4:41

Like do you have you noticed that? And why do you think that happens?

Joe Denner: 4:44

Well, I think it happens for a couple of reasons. I think, first of all, as you mentioned, sometimes entrepreneurs just jump in, because that's what entrepreneurs do. They just kind of dive in and attack things. And sometimes we get into something because of what we were in. For instance, it would have been really easy for me to start a CPA firm, you know, to start a bookkeeping and accounting firm because that's what I did. I was a CPA. But I didn't do that. I stopped and I took a step back. And there were some thinking on that. But I do think, number one, is that people get into what they get into. I'll call it by accident. They just kind of fall into it because of where they have been and they feel stuck. They feel like this is what I've been doing, and therefore it's what I should continue to do because I'm good at it. I think the other big thing is that I didn't come up

with this phrase myself. I got it from Michael Hyatt, and actually he got it from his wife, Gail. She said, when people lose their why, they lose their way. And I think that that is a big reason that entrepreneurs experience that is because they fell into this thing and they didn't really establish a clear purpose and motivation and drive for this very thing that they've chosen to do. And so when they lose that sense of why they're doing it, why they got into it in the first place, and that can easily happen to entrepreneurs when you start to really get into the grind of building and growing a business. Because as you know, you hit certain plateaus and certain places along the way in building a business. I was with a company where we grew from about a half a million dollars a year to \$20 million a year in five years, and that was a total rocket ride. Wow. Right. And that happens to some entrepreneurs, not all of us, but it does happen. And when that happens, you can easily get lost in the whirlwind of activity and demands and risks and challenges that entrepreneurs face. And so I think if you go into something and you're not anchored and you don't stay anchored, it's very easy to wonder, why did I do this in the first place? What am I doing with my life? And I think those kinds of things can easily happen.

Janice Hostager: 6:58

Mm-hmm. Definitely have happened to me. In fact, very recently. I just needed you know, re-anchor myself. So I love that you put it in that way. So for us who sometimes get to feel off track. And I think you're right. I think this happens when I'm just stressed out, um, trying to carry everything on my own shoulders, but you just feel like you're off track. So what's the first step to getting realigned with your purpose?

Joe Denner: 7:23

Yeah, getting realigned, first of all, obviously is to make sure you understand your purpose. If you don't, I think that's where you start, is to really step back and say, wait a minute, let's back up the truck here and let's really take a good look at why I'm at, where I'm at on the map. But if you already do know your purpose, I think it's a matter of stepping back, getting quiet. I know that can be really hard sometimes, but I think it's about being intentional, about creating some quiet space to begin to reconnect, to rediscover and realign. Because here's what happens: it isn't just that I get busy, it's that I get distracted. I take on additional commitments and obligations and all these other things happen. And all of a sudden I find that it's not just that I'm busy. I find that I'm my life and my work are not aligned with my sense of purpose and my sense of what I was put here to do. And so I think it's a matter of stepping back, and it all depends on how deeply you've gotten off track. Because if you've gotten way off track and you have gotten yourself entangled with a lot of different commitments and with a lot of different things where, hey, it's not just you, but you've got other people that are depending on you for something. Now it may take a little more work. But I think if you can step back, re-first of all, make sure you know what your purpose is. If you do, reconnect with that,

start to begin to look at what do I need to do to realign my life with that purpose? How complicated is this? And then begin to create a plan. The plan might be very simple, make a few tweaks here and there. Maybe I need to hire somebody to do that thing that I've gotten myself stuck in my business and I need to offload that and delegate that. Or maybe I've got to step back from some commitments either within my business or within the community that I have got involved in because it's taken me off the track. So those are just some really basic, simple steps that I would encourage, and it's probably a good place to start.

Janice Hostager: 9:30

I love that. So with business and life purpose, do they overlap or can they be different? So I feel like there was a time in my life where I felt really called to stay home with my kids, right?

Joe Denner: 9:42

Sure, sure.

Janice Hostager: 9:42

So um, and I was able from there to launch a small business and kind of go from there, but there was definitely calling in my bones, in my soul that I knew that that was what I needed to do at that time. Um so I felt like that was more of a life purpose. I've never really felt that sense of being compelled with a business goal.

Joe Denner: 10:02

Yeah.

Janice Hostager: 10:02

You know what I mean?

Joe Denner: 10:02

Yes.

Janice Hostager: 10:02

A business purpose. So are they different? And how do you get to that point where you feel like, okay, this is exactly what I need to do?

Joe Denner: 10:10

That's a really good question. I think that the way I would begin answering that is by saying that it is my personal conviction that we're all here for a reason. I do think that there are seasons of life that come and seasons of life that can go. And I believe that typically there is a main reason I'm here. And I would hope that if you're going to have a career, that your career could be aligned with that purpose. Otherwise, you're going to feel that pull from one thing to the next. Now, it could be you felt really called to be at home with your kids. You did something while you were doing that, and maybe while when that was over, all of a sudden you're in a new season of life and things changed. So I do think that seasons come and seasons go. And I think that that's perfectly fine. But I, but it is a somewhat of a personal conviction of mine that overall there's this

overarching purpose, the reason why I was put here. So I think if you are able to connect with that, and if you're able to align your career with that, I think that's the ideal. But a lot of people find themselves in a place where the ideal feels really out of reach. And so I think that it's a matter of doing the best that you can to align yourself. But I do think it's also possible to go through stages of life where you feel a different sense of calling at different times in your life. And I do think that that's very valid and meaningful.

Janice Hostager: 11:44

Hmm. That's interesting. Yeah. How can you tell the difference between just needing some rest versus needing a change or when you're all out of alignment, for example?

Joe Denner: 11:55

That's a good question. Um I think again, it's a matter of stepping back. There's there's something I heard years ago from a guy named John Maxwell. You know, there's an old adage that says that experience is the best teacher. And John actually adjusted that slightly by saying evaluated experience is the best teacher. And if there's one thing I don't think we do well in the West, is we don't take time to reflect. We don't take time to really step back and evaluate and look at and analyze. One of the things that my wife and I do almost religiously is every 90 days, we go away for a night. Typically two days and one night. We go away and we do a 90-day review. We look back over the last 90 days and then we look ahead over the next 90 days. And we do that as a way of creating a regular rhythm in our life and our marriage and for our family, of making sure that we don't just all of a sudden wind up a year down the road and we just say, What just happened to us? We're introducing a regular rhythm of stepping back and reflecting. And we've created eight different categories that we walk through and we think about our marriage, we think about our family, we think about our business, we think about our ministry life and our church life and our faith life, we think about our health, our finances, and we go through all these different categories and we really do say, hey, what's right and what's not right, what's in alignment and what's out of alignment over the last 90 days. And so that's just a practical example of something that you could do. But if you find yourself feeling tired, find yourself feeling really stressed out, I think it's good to try to just take, even if it's two hours or four hours, to just get away, get out of the office, get out of the house, go to a place where you can get quiet and just begin to reflect and to start asking yourself questions. Is my life aligned? Am I have I made commitments to things that are taking me off the track of what I really feel like I'm called to do? Whether that's be a stay-at-home mom or be in a particular kind of career or be making a certain contribution in my local community, whatever that might be, it's stepping back, asking yourself questions, and taking the time to slow down and think long enough to come up with meaningful answers to those questions.

Janice Hostager: 14:37

That is so good. I mean, it's not a complex thing to do, right? Just take some time off.

Joe Denner: 14:42

Yes.

Janice Hostager: 14:43

And I love-

Joe Denner: 14:43

That can be hard to do.

Janice Hostager: 14:44

It's hard, right?

Joe Denner: 14:45

That can be hard.

Janice Hostager: 14:46

Yes, yes. It's been a struggle I have had forever. I think it's that I've gotten to the point where I feel guilty about taking a day off, especially because I have a team that's still working. You know, I feel a little bit like I should be doing my part here or something. But yeah, I definitely feel like I don't do that enough. And every year I get a brand new journal and I start out really well for the first six weeks, and then it gets sporadic, and then by October it's just not happening anymore.

Joe Denner: 15:17

So um that's why for us that 90-day check-in has been so important because it's easy for 10 months to fly by.

Janice Hostager: 15:24

Yes. Right? Yeah, yeah. And you have each other to hold yourself accountable. So yeah.

Joe Denner: 15:29

That is helpful. And but I want to go back to something you said, Janice. You said that you feel almost irresponsible taking that time away because I've got this, I've got a team. I feel guilt.

Janice Hostager: 15:40

Yeah.

Joe Denner: 15:40

And I think that's something that leaders need to recognize that if all I do is work in the business, I'm not really leading the team the way I need to lead the team. I need time to work on the business. And by the way, in my strong opinion, part of working on the business is working on myself as the leader because the team runs at the speed of the leader, as someone once said, and I agree with that wholeheartedly.

Janice Hostager: 16:08

Yeah, yeah. And I know that cognitively, it's just getting past that and saying, "Okay, you know, I'm gonna take a Friday off. I'm just gonna wander around." And then I find myself like, well, what should I do today? Kind of. But so I love that you have some intention behind it, right? Because you it's like, okay, uh on 90 days, we're going to XYZ

location. We are going to talk about this and this and this. And at the end of it, we'll have not only relaxation, but we'll have some time together for your marriage. And also um, you'll have up a plan and you'll have that time of reflection. I think that's a great idea.

Joe Denner: 16:47

Yeah. So it's been a it's been an amazingly rich experience for us.

Janice Hostager: 16:51

How many, how long have you done that?

Joe Denner: 16:54

Somewhere between 15 and 20 years, we've been doing this. And I think in 15 or 20 years, we might have missed doing it once or twice. And it hasn't always looked the same. Sometimes we've had to literally just lock ourselves away in our bedroom, you know, until the kids, hey, for the next two days, we're not here. Other times we've taken a trip to another city. So it's looked very different at times, but I would say in the last 15 to 20 years, we've only missed once or twice.

Janice Hostager: 17:27

That is great. That's awesome.

Joe Denner: 17:29

Yeah.

Janice Hostager: 17:30

That is a great way of making time for that. But what are the specific exercises that people can use to kind of clarify their next step in their life? So do you have just a checklist that you use, or do you have just some open-ended questions?

Joe Denner: 17:42

I have a three-step guide, which I'd love to offer to your folks. It's a three-step guide on living the life you always wanted. And it's very simple. Three simple steps. The first step is to take some assessments. I'm a big believer in assessments. Most of them are very inexpensive and very accessible to the public. One is offered by the Gallup organization and called the Clifton StrengthsFinder. Another one, which is much newer on the market in the last four to five years, is from the Table Group and a guy named Patrick Lincioni. And it's called the Working Genius. They're both very simple. The working genius, especially, is extremely easy to understand. And the reason that I use assessments is because part of connecting with your purpose is being able to step back and really understand what do I do well? And there's a difference between what you do well naturally and what you've learned to do well. I call them innate talents and acquired skills, right? Your innate talents are just the things nobody had to teach you how to do, nobody had to show you how to do this, nobody had to show you how to have fun doing this. You just love it. Time flies by when you're doing at it. And if you've had the opportunity to give time and energy to it, you've developed some functional skills around

it that are really, really valuable. And so I call that living in a place where you're successful and satisfied.

Janice Hostager: 19:15

Okay.

Joe Denner: 19:15

So that's when you're operating in your very natural ways of doing things. And then we've got our acquired skills, the things we've learned how to do, whether it's fix a car, write a program, write a book, fix the plumbing, give a public speech. And there's all kinds of different things. And they both can go hand in hand. But sometimes, like I said, we get stuck on a track where we've learned and become competent at things that are out of alignment with what we are naturally good at. Whether it's because we kind of just went down this track in school and we graduated with a degree and figure, well, that's the career I got to pursue. And we just got stuck going down a road or we just got distracted and off the track somewhere along the way. But reconnecting with our innate talents, the things we were just creating, my God, to do and do well, I think is a great place to start. The second thing is to get, so that's the first piece of data. The second kind of group of data is to just ask some of those reflective questions. What am I good at? And then go to your spouse, go to your kids, go to your friends, go to your people in your community at other organizations that you contribute at. Also, if you're a person of faith, I really recommend get quiet and get alone with God and say, what am I good at? What am I here to do? What gives me joy? Where do I add value to the world around me? And I get energy and life from that. I was thinking about it the other day because I think sometimes when we think about doing what you love, it can sound very selfish. Like, I just want to do what I like. I just want to do what I love. And I had a big aha moment just yesterday. I think it was literally just yesterday. And I thought, when I'm doing what I love, I'm often going to be doing what I'm most talented at and where I bring the most value. And where am I bringing that value? I'm bringing that value to other people. I'm not just doing, I don't just do executive coaching and business consulting just because I like it and just because I can make money doing it. I do it because I love it and I love seeing other people benefit from the work that I do. So I think while it'd be easy to think doing what I love sounds really selfish, I think doing what you love is just discovering what you were made to do. And now doing that for the benefit of others around you, whether that's locally or globally, I believe again, you were created on purpose and for a purpose. And so if you can connect with that through self-reflection, getting your family involved, getting your friends involved, and spending time alone with the Lord, I think that's great. And then the third thing is really assembling all the pieces of this puzzle and beginning to look for where are the connections, where are the overlaps. It's almost like making a little Venn diagram, if you know what that is, like taking these circles and figuring out where do the circles overlap. Those places of intersection are to me where the puzzle

starts to come into view. You started off with all these puzzle pieces, and as you began to put them together, it's all of a sudden like, oh no, this piece connects with that piece. And I think once you start doing that, all of a sudden the picture starts to emerge. But again, Janice, like you said, it can be hard to take the time to do this. But I really do believe without the intentionality and without the commitment to take the time, you won't discover it, you won't connect with it, and you won't really live the life that you were intended for. And the world will miss out on what you have to offer. And I think that's what this is really ultimately all about.

Janice Hostager: 23:11

And it really changes your definition of success that way too, doesn't it?

Joe Denner: 23:15

Absolutely.

Janice Hostager: 23:16

Yeah.

Joe Denner: 23:16

Yeah.

Janice Hostager: 23:16

Yeah.

Joe Denner: 23:17

My success is rooted in the success that others derive from how I help serve them.

Janice Hostager: 23:25

And it leads to burnout if you don't. Oh yeah. Yeah. I would imagine you see that, especially if you do executive coaching. You're gonna run into difficulty. Yeah. Yeah.

Joe Denner: 23:35

I see people who get disconnected and it's not a good picture.

Janice Hostager: 23:38

Right. And what a blessing that a lot of us have the opportunity to find something that we love and do that thing rather than having to just take a job, right? So you've convinced me now. I have Patrick Lencioni's book sitting on my bookshelf here.

Joe Denner: 23:52

Okay.

Janice Hostager: 23:53

The 6 Types of Working Genius.

Joe Denner: 23:55

Oh yeah?

Janice Hostager: 23:55

And I've never opened it. Isn't that terrible?

Joe Denner: 23:58

It's okay.

Janice Hostager: 23:58

But it's recommended to me. So I think I might just have to go through that and see.

Joe Denner: 24:03

It's worth it. It's very worthwhile.

Janice Hostager: 24:05

If everybody that's listening today, if they could just remember one thing from today's conversation, what do you hope that would be?

Joe Denner: 24:13

I really do hope people will remember you were created on purpose and with a purpose. You're not an accident. You're not you're not here by mistake, no matter what anybody else might tell you. And because of that, and if you were able to connect with that, not only will you live a life that you won't regret, but the world around you will greatly benefit from it. Because I don't believe we were put here for ourselves. I believe we were put here for others. And if they can connect with that truth and that reality, I believe it will compel them to go down the path that I'm encouraging them to go down and make those discoveries and become the person that they were intended to be by God.

Janice Hostager: 24:58

100% agree with you. Thank you so much, Joe. Where can people find out more about you?

Joe Denner: 25:04

Yeah, my website is joedenner.com. It's a great place to start. Also, I'll give you a link that you can put in the show notes that will give you access to my free Three-Step Guide to Living the Life You Always Wanted. And that's a great way to start.

Janice Hostager: 25:19

That sounds perfect. Thank you so much, Joe. I definitely am going to be thinking hard about all of this. Well, great and applying this to my life as well.

Joe Denner: 25:27

So thanks for the privilege of being with you today. I appreciate the time.

Janice Hostager: 25:31

I hope my conversation today with Joe makes you feel like you know what next step to take to feel a little more aligned or a little more focused. For more information about anything we talked about today, visit myweeklymarketing.com forward slash one three five one thirty five. Thank you so, so much for joining me today. I'll see you next time. Bye for now.