

E01 - How I went from zero as a teacher to \$100k in business

Welcome to the Empowered Edupreneur Podcast. My name is Michelle Smit, and I am an ex-teacher turned online business coach for entrepreneurs, the owner of Digiteach and a six figure entrepreneur. I am in love with empowering educators just like you to create freedom filled online businesses and lives they love.

If you are looking to uplevel your skills, your finances, your mindset, and change the trajectory of your life as an educator in business, then you are in the right place. Think of this podcast as your weekly dose of business and mindset development to help unlock the infinite potential within you. To play bigger with your life and go after your dreams.

We are going to have so much fun together. So thank you so much for pushing play today. Now let's dive in.

Welcome to my first episode of my podcast, man. I am so excited to be recording this first episode. As with all new things in business, it is going to take some time for me to get good at podcasting. I don't a hundred percent know how to do it. For now, I have all this nervous excitement and those slight moments of fear.

You know, all those feelings you get when you start anything new in life, and especially anything new in business. Messy action baby. That is what I'm doing, and I must say I'm actually loving being a newbie at something again, and a beginner and sort of navigating that world and how it feels to be back there.

I'm definitely stretching myself. I do feel a little bit out of my comfort zone, but I'm telling you, I am here for it. I'm really enjoying. Anyways, I asked you to vote which episode you wanted, number one to be, and there was a clear winner, and the winner was how I went from zero to a hundred K in business.

So that is what I'm going to be jamming on today. Don't worry, I will still make episodes on all the other topics because I all think they're great. This episode is all about how I went from zero to a hundred K in my online business. I'm going to share my story in a nutshell, and then I'm going to give you some key takeaways at the end.

By the way, reflecting on those early years in my business was really, really great and strange because you do forget. You forget those years in the past, right? But I was just thinking about how intense they were and being reminded of those years was, it was quite cool actually to look at those early years and then look at where I am at now and how wildly different it is.

I promise you, I've definitely never hustled and grown and expanded as much as I did in those two years. Those first two years of my business were massive. I'll just start off with some real talk when I mean. I started at Zero because the title is how I went from zero to a hundred K when, I mean, I started at zero, I mean zero.

I was 26 years old. I was a backpacker basically, just before I started. I was obsessed with traveling. I was a party animal, a bit of a spirit child. I was an online teacher. I had no clue about online business marketing. I actually didn't even know that people could really make money online at that time, and I moved to the Netherlands for love.

And I worked as an online ESL teacher, and I was earning \$20 per hour, which was great when living in Vietnam or South Africa. But as soon as I came to the Netherlands, it was no longer great anymore because it wasn't even minimum wage, and the cost of living was too high for that. What ended up happening is I taught millions of classes and I worked most weekends just to make ends meet, which was absolutely not a vibe.

And this was in 2018 when I moved to the Netherlands and it was around March or April that I moved. And I also stumbled across a Facebook ad that was literally speaking to me and I clicked it and basically I went down that funnel. And to cut a long story short, I ended up investing in my first business mentor.

So shout out to him for being probably the most influential mentors of my business journey so far. He absolutely was. So yeah, at this point I had zero knowledge of how to sell something online, but I had so much drive to create more for myself. Honestly, I could not face teaching. ESL lessons until I retired.

And I didn't really fit into the conventional school teaching systems, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with online ESL teaching or conventional schooling systems, but they just are not for me. I loved impacting and serving

and educating and helping people. I was always helping people, but I just didn't fit into that normal schooling education system, okay?

So I felt so much misalignment with where I was in my life, and I knew that I had to make some serious changes or I was going to be miserable and screwed and broke. So anyways, I basically started this business journey out of desperation and necessity. And I started like an absolute deer in the headlights.

This mentor, he had a digital program and he had training each week. And then he had a Q&A once a week and it went for 12 weeks. And I must tell you, I was the best student I. Say, I never missed a live training. I never skipped any of the training at all. I absorbed everything my mentor said. I applied myself like crazy.

And my boyfriend Mike, shout out to him. He also got super excited about this business venture because we both sort of shared this dream of working online and traveling and living between the Netherlands and South Africa and chasing the summer and all that jazz. So we made it our routine to go to work during the day.

And then when we came back from work, we would eat some dinner and then we would start working on the business and we'd observe absorb the training together. And I'd be taking notes and we sort of did it every day together for like weeks, right? And let's fast forward a bit. This is now four months later.

And yeah, after spending weeks on the business with this business mentor in his program, this was four months of intense growth. I'm talking learning curve, like no other. Massive expansion, lots of growing pains, breakdowns, all of the self-doubt, all of the imposter syndrome, all of the, what the hell am I doing?

This is crazy. I had all of that, right. It was just jam packed and I was really aggressively taking action in those four months. Like we were gearing up for launch within four months. So we went from zero to launch within four months. Which I think for anyone who's it building a business and wanting to launch a course or a product knows how intense that is.

Alrighty. So, yeah, in August of 2018, after this, these months we launched my first course helping people become online ESL teachers. And of course

that's the course I'm going to create. That's what I knew how to help people do. I was an online ESL teacher, so I was teaching what I knew. I knew I could help people get hired and get placed in jobs, and people were always asking me to help them with that.

So this course was four weeks and it was \$379 and that was it. I launched it and in my first launch, we. Seven people purchase, seven human beings on the internet bought this program. We invested \$400 into Facebook ads, and then we made about \$850 in income in revenue. So we had about \$400 of profit

This may sound like a fail, but let me tell you, this was the best thing ever. I had zero confidence. I honestly thought no one would buy. I took such messy action that the launch was pretty bad. I basically did not know what I was doing. And still, seven strangers on the internet bought my program. I didn't know them before my launch and they bought this program, so, oh my gosh.

The fact that I'd actually sold something online was a revelation for me. Like I remember that first sale as being, the most epic moment of my life because it just showed that this was possible. Like this was a thing and it would, it could work. So it kind of just gave me hope. And also I had to push through the biggest amount of resistance to launch that course.

That was the hardest launch I've ever done. And I was just super proud that we followed through with it. We did it, we got to the other side of it and yeah, we had sales and that was really, really special for us. Now, at this point, the course was not built, so we sold it without having built it. And this is, I'll speak about this on another episode, but this is what I recommend.

So when people bought the course, I then had to create the course and deliver the course week by week with these students. Which was pretty intense. A big fire under my butt to sort of get this course created and done. So, yeah, it was amazing. I had to deliver and I did deliver. I would create the program and then Mike would do the editing, and then we would release it week by week, and we ended up getting testimonials and the students got placed in jobs and it was all amazing.

And we decided by this point, it was the end of 2018. We had done one launch and then we were going to launch again in 2000 and. And I was with my mentor. He helped refine mistakes in my launch process, and I decided to just use the same strategy to relaunch, which was a video series launch, and

we reinvested the profits from our launch into Facebook ads into the next launch.

So we made 400 bucks. We then reinvested that into Facebook advertising at that point. And we relaunched in 2019. We just refined the process and then we had a \$5,000 launch. This was incredible. I was really like, holy cow, this is amazing. And then we refined it, we improved the launch process.

We got more testimonials and success stories from students, and we launched again, and we hit around \$15,000. Now by this point, all I was focusing on was number one, growing my audience with qualified leads and I was using predominantly Facebook ads at that point. So I started with Facebook ads.

It wasn't organic marketing that I was doing. I went straight into advertising, which I don't necessarily recommend these days. Times have changed. This was five years ago when it was still possible and doable. I think now it's a bit different, but I started with that and then I also focused on selling and launching one offer and getting very good at it.

I was sharpening my skills like crazy. I was also reinvesting all my profit from the previous launches into Facebook advertising or mentorship. One of the two. Both of those things had a direct ROI on our business, so that's where we were putting the money. And for the first one and a half years neither of us took a salary, me or Mike.

We both did not take any money out of the business. We just kept reinvesting all profits back into the business to scale up. So at the end of 2019, I think it's pretty cool to mention that we actually won this amazing online business award with my mentor. He was running this competition for whoever would create the most sales in a period of, I think three months would win this amazing five-star yacht trip through Greece.

And so we ended up winning that in I think 2019 from that \$15,000 launch, which was such a huge moment in our lives and in my business that, you know, we still haven't gone on that trip, by the way, we're going to go next year on that trip. But that was a really big moment just to say, you're on the right track.

You're doing something right. Keep going. Alrighty. Yeah, this was 2019, and then also in 2019 I ended up investing, I think it was about \$2,000 into

another program about launching with a video series. And I applied a lot more strategy. I was compounding my skills. With more skills basically. So just to note, I wasn't changing my launch strategy.

I was determined to get good at one strategy, and then I wanted to build momentum and make money before moving on to the next. So that's what I did. And then it was the start of 2020, and this is the year of the pandemic, right? Let's not lie. This was a massive, crazy year and we were going into our fourth video series launch at this point.

And this was after us refining and repeating and improving stuff. And the goal of this launch was just to get more eyeballs on the launch and more eyeballs on the offer. The goal was audience growth and just getting lots of people in. So that's what we were focusing on, and we did use Facebook ads and then we launched, it was the end of March, or maybe it was the, it might have actually been February of 2021 of those months.

But it was around the same time the pandemic hit where that everything started going crazy, and it was crazy timing. I cannot believe how it aligned. I had no clue this would happen because we all never knew this pandemic was coming, right? But I was launching an offer helping people become online ESL teachers. And at this moment in history, the entire world was moving online and there was this mass surge of people wanting to teach online.

And the online ESL industry boomed. So what happened is in that launch, we ended up, it just had like perfect timing, strangely enough, and we ended up selling 105 spots and it, we made \$40,000 in five days. And this was two times my yearly online teaching salary. Two times it my yearly and we did it in five days. So yeah, mind blown is how I felt. And this really was a huge turning point because we ended up making \$20,000 in less than an hour because we had such a big flow of people buying the program and wanting to be in the course.

And this was when we really knew that our lives had changed, me and Mike. I knew now what was possible that there were really no limits. If I could make \$20,000 in an hour, I could make a hundred thousand dollars in an hour with launching online courses or group programs. Anything was possible and the mind was really our biggest limit when it came to this model of business.

It felt limitless and it is limitless. So after that launch. Which was incredible. We then decided, I had perfected it and I was keen for another challenge.

And at this point we moved on to webinar launches and then we just started launching with webinars and we started making really good money doing webinar launches.

And then I invested in another coach to help. And another course rather to help me turn my webinar evergreen and to sell my own course all the time. And I basically started making, I don't know, it was between \$8,000, \$15,000 per month with this funnel, this webinar funnel, which sold my course for me.

And this was really as passive as it can get besides me maintaining the student delivery and customer service, and obviously tweaking my advertising, my ads and stuff. But yeah, I went on holiday in Italy for a month and the sales were just flowing in and it took me. It was honestly incredible. Just being on holiday and having people buy your product is a really incredible feeling.

But yeah, it took months to refine that strategy and actually get it converting, meaning what we put into ads was coming up three times or four times in a return. It was working and when it worked, it worked amazingly, right? And in 2020, this was the year we hit our first hundred K and it was through that big 40 K launch.

And then we had a few, maybe two webinar launches. And then we just had our webinar selling our course on autopilot. And yeah, we hit a hundred K in that year and it just happened really quickly. It was, it was crazy. But yeah, I've, I've just spoken about strategy mostly here, but what I want you to realize is the deep internal work that it took me the deep internal work that I needed to do on myself to be able to take the actions that were going to lead me to this hundred K a year because I took so much action.

I cannot even tell you how much action I took. I was in the arena playing big, right? I was not side-lining at all and I had to push through a lot of fear, self-doubt, imposter syndrome, and just utter turmoil is what it felt like at the time. and I had to really push through some serious preconditioning of what I thought was possible for myself, and I had to really start reworking on my belief system and my identity.

So it was a hundred percent a death and rebirth, the way I viewed myself, my mindset, my attitude, my teacher identity, the scarcity mindset that I had. All of that stuff had to go. It had to sort of die off in a way, and I had to rebirth

myself. I had to rebuild what I believed, how I viewed myself, how I dealt with obstacles, how I took action.

I had to start embodying my next level self. So I was doing all sorts of internal work. I was meditating, I was doing breath work, I was doing visualizations or subliminal wealth, hypnosis tracks in the background. While I was working, I was immersing myself in podcasts and surrounding myself with inspiring people.

So whilst I was taking action and building skills, which we need the skills, we need to know how to sell, we need to know how to launch. We need to know how to create content or run ads, build traffic, whatever it is, we need to build skills, right? Whilst I was doing that, I was working on my internal world to match what I desired.

I started cultivating more confidence in myself, more belief in myself, and more CEO energy. Just being a CEO and being a boss of your own business and taking action from that place rather than this weird, insecure, oh, I'm just a teacher place, right? I ended up making decisions faster.

I was tuning into my intuition very strongly. That was very important. And I was taking radical responsibility for my actions. And I wasn't blaming anyone. If I made mistakes, it wasn't someone else's fault. My results were my own thing. And yeah, for those first two years in my business, I really look at them as an awakening.

It was an awakening of my dormant potential that was within me, and I didn't know it was there. I really didn't know. And I knew that I was destined for more. But I didn't know what that was and I was lost. And then I found my mentor and he guided me and he saw potential in me. And he showed me what was possible and if he could do it, it felt like, well, I could do it, right?

And essentially, I became absolutely obsessed with business and my business became my baby, and I put all the love and energy and focus behind my business. My life transformed and I changed a lot so I could grow my business. And in 2020 I ended up quitting my teaching job.

I think it was in June of 2020. And that was really scary because that was a safety net, right? But at this point, we were making enough money and I was like, you know what? The hours I'm, I'm earning so much more than \$20 an hour. I'm just wasting time now. So yeah, we went all in and because I was

able to go all in and I could work fully on my business, I was able to grow it even more. And all sorts of stuff.

So I was ready to expand even bigger at that point. And that was in 2020 and we got to the end of that year and there was just one minor obstacle at that point, and it was that I built my business in the wrong niche. So yeah, I reached six-figures, which was absolutely incredible and life changing.

It was an amazing amount of money for me. I'd never ever made that much money in my life, but I no longer felt aligned to my business and I did not feel aligned to my offer, the offer that I was selling anymore. And basically what happened is I needed to change niches and. I realized I couldn't even sell my offer anymore.

I could not sell it, even though it was making me money. I just could not launch it again. I could not put any more energy behind it. It was just not feeling good anymore to me, even though I was making money. It was very confusing. Anyways, this is a topic for a whole other episode, but basically we had to restart. Meaning, stop selling the offer and change niches, rebuild, restart, everything.

And yeah, it was crazy. And we did, and the thing is, I just want to mention this is very common to start your business in a niche and then to change niches down the line because we are human beings and we will evolve and our business will evolve with us, right? So it's common. It's not unusual.

But when you restart your business, you don't start from zero. Because now you have the skills. I didn't start from zero. I had the skills. I built the skills, I had the knowledge of how business works, online business, and I had primed the mindset. Internally, I was really, really, way ahead from where I was when I started.

So when I restarted, it actually went really quick and was successful very quickly, right? Within the new niche, but I'll talk about that in another episode. Okay, here are some key takeaways from how I went from zero to a hundred K in business that I think is worth mentioning and maybe can help you too.

Firstly, I invested in mentors from the start, so at no point was I winging my business. I stuck with a mentor for a while and a strategy for a while, and then I invested in multiple courses depending on the skill that I wanted to

acquire. So when I wanted to deepen my launch skills with a video series, I invested in a program for that.

When I wanted to go Evergreen, I invested in another program for that. If I wanted to learn this, for example, Facebook ads. I'd invest in that. I was just whatever I wanted to learn, I was investing in quality information from someone who had done it before, had the results that I wanted, and I listened to them.

I didn't listen to anyone else. And then I focused on one niche. I got specific, and this was online ESL teaching at the time. By the way, this is not what I do now. Then I focused on creating one great offer, and I kept refining and improving this offer. So note that I did not keep changing ideas and restarting new offers.

This allowed me to give one, offer enough time to gain momentum and really start churning for me and making money for me. And this is how I was able to make over \$200,000 from a \$379 course, right? We had 550 students join that program. It's because I just focused on it and I made it good and I was allowing the offer to build momentum and to start creating that money.

A lot of people just create new offers and they don't let their offers build up energy to sort of, and momentum rather. That was one thing that I did. I focused on one launch strategy to sell my offer sort of sales process, and I kept it the same strategy for about four times before I changed to a whole new strategy.

And every time you change strategy, you need to relearn it basically. And it's like starting again. Because each launch strategy has different assets that are involved for that launch to work. And you have to rebuild your assets often if you change strategy. That takes energy and so much time to restart your launch from scratch.

Whereas if you keep compounding on what you've already done and you simply just refine and improve and tweak, then your results compound a lot quicker. So this is my experience and I often see people. Launch for the first time, and then they change strategy and they go to a different type of strategy and they launch with that and then they don't do so well.

And then they blame it on the strategy and then they move to another strategy. But the problem is not the strategy. The problem is that you haven't given yourself enough time to get good at the strategy. And you've moved on before building the skill essentially. And it takes practice to build the skill and get good at launching.

So you've got to give it a crack for a couple of times before you move on to the, the next thing, right? And just allow those skills to compound and become good at a sales system or a launch strategy before moving on. So yeah, being more patient and just committing to something for a longer runway, essentially, you're going to win at the end of that.

I also focus on growing my audience always. This was priority at this point. I used Facebook ads in those first years, but for now, I think organic is the best place to start and just use ads to sort of amplify your organic stuff. So use both 100%! I started saving money and allocating it to Facebook ads, and I also allocated the money to either mentorship or courses.

I was saving money and I was saving all the profits from my business to reinvest into the business. And this was really, really, I think, important in how I got to a hundred K a year. So I'm not saying, this is what you must do. And it's different for everybody. You know, you can build a business without ads.

And just on organic or you can build a business using just ads and not on organic, like you do what you want to do. We use both and we've also just. Saved money and invested in the business. As I said, we kept reinvesting before paying ourselves out and things like that, which helped us grow, of course.

And then of course I worked daily on my preconditioning, my identity, my limiting beliefs, my mindset, my money mindset. That was huge. I worked on that a lot. I still work on that a lot. I invested in a mentor. I watched him and I studied him, and I embodied his grit and his drive and his character and his attitude.

And I was really learning from, a multimillionaire for a reason. He was incredible at what he did, and he was someone I wanted to learn from. Yeah, I just think you need to find that person that you want to learn from, model the way it is to run a business, the way you think as an entrepreneur and the way you behave and the actions you take and all of that stuff.

You want to find someone who you resonate with and model. Let them model that for you, and then you want to sort of absorb that into you and let that help change you. And I also immersed myself and surrounded myself in a community of entrepreneurs online, and I did that daily. And I connected with people doing it because you'll find it's very isolating.

No one really knows what you're doing. So just find your tribe of people that are ambitious and are doing the thing, taking action, playing bigger with their lives and just immerse yourself with those humans makes a huge difference. And yeah, I worked on the internal stuff and I worked on the skills and I had to overcome so much from going from being a teacher who earned almost nothing.

Well, not nothing but about, \$1,500, \$2,000 a month to being someone who could make, \$20,000 an hour. It's kind of a crazy quantum leap and it has become a lot easier to make money now. Going from zero to a hundred K was really hard, but maintaining a hundred K every year has been pretty simple, and I actually work much less now.

I even took about four months off this year because it's been a really tough year and I still have had my biggest financial year in business. It just shows you if you put in that energy and effort and focus in those earlier years, you're really building a business foundation that's going to be able to hold you and support you for years to come.

So when I tell you that online business is such a transformation. And I'm talking in every aspect of your being. It is a transformation. It's not just, okay let me just create a course and sell it will be a transformation. It will ask you to transform in the process for you to be able to be successful and parts of you will die.

And that is tough. You have to let go of a lot of stuff that you believe. And that is really tough. You go through a bit of a dark night of the soul kind of experience maybe like an identity crisis. But in this process, new parts of you will be born and these parts of you will match your future rather than your past.

And that's what you want. If you want to create, success in your business, you want to. You want to rebuild yourself and prime yourself internally for what it is you want rather than what it is you don't want. It is a death and a rebirth. It's like a metamorphosis. And I know that if I wasn't, if it wasn't for my

mentors in those few years and especially the mentorship and stuff, I wouldn't have been able to get to a hundred K because I wouldn't know what I was doing.

So I found people who knew what they were doing, and I followed them essentially. And yeah, I had the drive to change my life. I was driven, I wanted to create new things. I wanted to make more money. I was not going to settle for this job that was making me miserable. And all I needed at that point was guidance and I needed to shift my identity.

And I did both of those things. I found what I needed and I did it. And yeah, I guess that's how I got to hundred K. And it's been so cool reflecting back on it which really reminds me of how much I've grown. And I guess that's it for today's episode. And my story from going from a pretty broke, disempowered, overworked, and undervalued educator to being a six-figure business owner, which is pretty, pretty awesome.

So I hope you have loved this episode. I have loved making it for you if you loved it or you had any aha moments. Please share it on Instagram, screenshot the episode, share it on ig. Let me know hearing from you about this podcast and just hearing feedback is just going to make my day. And I really want to co-create this podcast with you.

I want you to tell me what you want to hear and I'm going to create episodes for you and I want to hear the feedback. So, yeah, let me know if you had any yeah, I think this is the first time I've really candidly shared about. In such details. So I'm curious to hear if you have any aha moments. Just let me know.

Thank you so much for choosing to listen to me in your spare time. I cannot tell you how much I appreciate that and how much I appreciate. You Have an amazing day, and I will chat to you soon.

Thank you so much for tuning into today's episode. If you loved what you heard today, then be sure to take a screenshot of the episode and share it on your Instagram and tag me.

I honestly love hearing from you, and I appreciate you so much and can't wait to connect with you in the next episode.

In the meantime, go create a business and life you love.