



Doers Shakers Makers with Sierra Bailey

Episode: 3 Is The Magic Number

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[00:07] Do you have a mile long to-do list? Well, like all doers shakers makers, I'm sure you have quite a few things that show up on that daily to-do list. Today we'll be talking about prioritizing your to do's, why three is the magic number and what three things they should be. My name is Sierra Bailey. Welcome to Doers Shakers Makers, a podcast for go-getters to inspire you in your business and life. I want to talk a little bit today about what exactly is on your to-do list. I'm not going to have a conversation with you about all the things you should not have on your to-do list. What I am going to do is stress the importance of identifying the top three priorities. Now there are two schools of thought. Some people believe in just picking one. I, however, find that impossible, so I have three items that I prioritize on my list each day.

[01:08] I actually was really excited because it's a little fast and loose when I decide on podcast topics, and today, I thought, oh, what am I going to talk about? And over the weekend. I like to think about it a lot and I kept thinking, I really want to talk about this whole concept of prioritizing the top three things. And I had a client meeting this morning with somebody who I've worked with for about a year. He is a retainer client, so we work on his business once a week together. And when at the end of the conversation I was about to say goodbye. I said, Oh, can I ask you a quick question? I said, you know, I have my podcast, it's under 20 minutes. If there is one thing that I have taught you or shared with you or something that you have taken from like our time together, like what's your favorite thing that I could talk about in under 20 minutes?

[02:33] This is because the three things may not be necessarily like a five-minute task. I'm assuming these three things are going to be a part of a project or a larger thing that will be moving it along a little bit. Let's talk about the fact that they should be something that makes you money. So when you were choosing your three tasks of the day for work, because I mean if this was just for your life and on a Saturday would have a different perspective on your priority. But if we're doing this for work, be it owning your own business. If you have a side hustle, if you are even starting up a business, if you have a corporate job, if you have a job in anything, the top three things that you're doing should be either you know that make you money or something that is involved in that job being profitable and sustaining.

[03:23] Because quite honestly if wherever you're working or whatever business you have doesn't eventually make money, then it is not going to be able to sustain you for very long. So I like to say that if your service, if your product, basically of whatever you are, your top priorities should be those current clients, customers, guests, whenever you want to call them, be it you have, like I have in the past a jewelry company or a website company or whatever. There are people that you're involved with on the day to day that you want to make sure that you're checking in with their needs are met. So if it's a product based business, you're wanting to make sure that you're, answering correspondence, getting the orders out, something involving those current clients. The next should be the hot leads. So those are the very interested parties.

[04:10] Let's say you have a product-based business and you are pitching to wholesale accounts. Those are your hot leads. If they've already been back and forth and you're trying to either close a deal or set something up or ship to them or something that is going to like make the hot leads become an actual client. If it is service based in a little more obvious, you're wanting to make sure that a hot lead becomes a client. Those are pretty obvious things. So, where you were, you know you're going to want to be doing those tasks first and kind of those two areas. And the third thing is going to be in your non-negotiables. There are two types of non-negotiables. Some people like to have non-negotiables that they have for basically their self-care well being, like going to the gym, eating dinner (because some people don't eat when they're stressed out).

[04:56] You know things like that. I'm not talking about those. I'm talking about non-negotiables when it comes to work. So if you are owning a business, there are definitely things that you have to do each week that keep the lights on or something like that. So I like to pick one per day in my own experience and personal like business and things like that. That includes doing this podcast that includes doing blog posts, that includes writing articles, that includes speaking, that could be doing a newsletter or something along those lines would be a non-negotiable that I have to do every week. Other examples of that are things like setting up ads, product development, doing a video, things like that. We'll get a little more, like I said, into what exactly the items are in the to-do list. But first and kind of outlining the big picture.

[05:44] So you're picking three things from current clients, hot leads, non-negotiables. I have a friend of mine, Darlene who is a leadership coach and she always talks about: get a post-it note. Write those top three things, whatever your three things are. There's a lot of people very into three things. You'll hear it now that you have heard it from me. Hopefully, you start to hear from other people and understand the importance. She likes to have those things written down on a post-it note, smack it right there on top of her list of things to do for the day and that way her focus is literally drawn to the brightly colored post-it note in the middle of this to do list with all of the other things from taking the dog to the vet to sending a thank you note for somebody who sent a client your way.

[06:24] So you really want to make sure that whatever your method is, I personally like to keep an index card on my desk where I write those top three things down. I also in my to-do list, I use todoist on my phone and computer. I actually highlight them in red. So there are a variety of ways that you can make those top three things dominant, but whatever it is, highlight them so that you realize what exactly those top three things are. All right, so now that we have figured out kind of the category that the top three things should be from, how to highlight those top three things and obviously why they're important. One of the main reasons why you want to have the top three things is because many of us, be it working for somebody else or for ourselves end up doing a lot of putting out of fires.

[07:11] So if you are constantly putting out fires and solving problems that come up, you're really not putting a lot of effort into the future business. And so much of work and owning a business is not just in that current client and even the hot leads that I do call the third one, the non-negotiables. But what it really is is looking forward. So looking like three to six months forward and it's kind of my way of slyly sticking in some marketing efforts that you end up doing every single day so that you're always working down the road on something that you're not just stuck in the present. Because if you are having a lot of momentum from something that happened a few months ago and all of a sudden the momentum wears off, then where are you if you haven't been working on the future of that?

[07:51] This is a lesson that I personally learned the really hard way many years ago when I had my jewelry company and I was in the *Real Simple* gift guide, which comes out obviously for the holidays and it was 2008 right when the economy was falling. And I happened to have these adorable little \$10 earrings featured in the magazine. Basically, it was the right price point for what was going on in the economy. Just everything aligned. It was the best piece of press I've ever had. And I had uh, I think ten thousand orders in six weeks and I had to bring in a staff of 10 and it was a chaotic experience and I can go into that a little bit more another time if anybody wants to have coffee and talk about it. But what I've really learned from that was, I coasted on basically that one piece of press for months.

[08:38] The downside was that I was exhausted from it. It came out of nowhere. It made me realize so many problems with my business model and why I'm obsessed with scaling and business strategy at this point is a lot due to that one time in my life. What I really took away from that was that I was so exhausted after that that I just wasn't able to really be working on kind of the future of things. Like the next collection, I put out did not have the same energy put into it. And you know, I had a publicist who worked for me so she was still putting press out, but it just sapped my energy so much if that, these were the days before, like at the time you had to code your own shopping cart and there was no way to sell stuff out. So it was ugh, people would give me their credit card numbers and then I would actually have to enter the credit card number into like a different program.

[09:24] At the time it was such a hot mess, so people's credit cards are not going through and then I'd have to contact them. I mean there was just so much chaos that went on. Like I said, the biggest takeaway that I took from that was that I was so exhausted and caught up in implementing the systems

that I realized that I didn't have when things got really busy that I just let myself coast on kind of that press and didn't push for other things as hard as I had been pushing up until that point. So up until that point, I was so hungry for things to happen and for work. I had had my business for about five years at that point and it had evolved over time. So I had been focusing just on you know, jewelry for about two years and I absolutely wasn't looking far enough in the future from that point on for like a year or two and it really affected three years from that point because kind of the hunger was gone a little bit and that desire to be in so many places at once.

[10:20] I just got so busy that I couldn't be in so many places at once. Even with people coming in and working. For me, a lot of it was because I had to scramble to train people really fast. I did not have systems in place and so from that, I always say to people, you have to be looking ahead and you have to be focusing constantly on those like top level and high-level tasks that are thinking about your future and not just about your present, which was the longest segway ever into: what are the four levels of tasks? Because there are four levels of tasks. All right, so there are top-level tasks, high-level tasks, mid and low. Let's put a little attention onto what these things are. Top level tasks are tasks that produce an exceptional amount of value for the time they take.

[11:07] They are what you should be prioritizing and make the best use of your time. So they are the things that basically if you put 20% of your effort in, you get 80% of the output kind of thing. Examples of these are generating leads, executive hiring decisions, decision meetings with key joint venture partners to secure high value win-win partnerships, making those strategic decisions about your business and your marketing efforts that will set the direction for your business, holding your team accountable for their deliverables, designing products, creating deliverables for passive sales. These are all examples of top-level tasks. So really you should be doing one top-level task, not even high-level, but I'll let you have high-level because some of those will need to get done too each day. Now, high-level tasks are highly focused tasks that generate less value than top-level, but there's still a really great value.

[11:57] So examples of these are meeting with key clients to work on those relationships, coaching your management team, reviewing your quarterly progress, instituting systematic solutions to reoccurring problems so you don't end up like I did, (so overwhelmed after that big press) and writing content. From the things that I gave you in the beginning when I talked about tasks, a lot of the things that I was actually talking about really are high level. And I find that if you are a solopreneur do you have like a service where at the moment you're the only provider of that service? Your high-level, and top-level lines are a little bit blurry because a lot of the top level tasks involve if you have a team and if you have a larger sort of structure in place. So for those of you that are in organizations where there are like hierarchies and things like that, those that are director and up basically are really going to have more of the top level tasks than a solopreneur will. Because everything that I gave for examples just now in that top-level task basically like generating leads, partnerships, strategy, deliverables, and products. Those are your top-level tasks.

[13:02] Quite honestly coming from somebody who had a product based business for so long I released quarterly collections. I was not designing new products year round especially as I hit that like seven to 15 year mark. Most of my designing of collections, I had such a system for it so for one month out of each quarter I was not even involved in creating products and deliverables so those high-level tasks really would get moved into the weekly spots like writing blog posts and creating content in that manner. I also would put in there that if you are in the service industry, meeting with people one on one that you have met, networking and networking events are also included in the high-level tasks because a lot of your lead generation is going to come from going to networking events, and things like that.

[13:55] They could be top-level if you know that they work well for you. So, if you do have something that you are doing constantly for lead generation in the networking realm, that can become a top-level. Like I said, solopreneurs very small business owners. The lines get really blurred between top and high-level, doesn't matter. You're doing all of those anyway. All right, so those mid-level tasks are considered leverage tasks. These tasks can provide you with a great income, but you'll have to work really hard to earn it. And this is the trap that catches most high earning professionals. Examples include delegating to an assistant, holding a group meeting, updating master to-do lists, sending emails to the executive team, doing things like billable work to clients that are things like reviewing contracts and things like that. So, this is the stuff that really starts to fill your day.

[14:41] You need to be careful that this does not fill your day. I say to people all the time, I do what I do so that at least once a week you're making sure that you're working on those top-level tasks with somebody even if you tend to not get to them daily, you're following the rule of three here. You are hopefully getting to at least a top level and high-level task daily. But I know especially if you are a solopreneur or a tiny business, these mid-level tasks can really eat up your time. You don't want them to, you want to make sure that you're working on your business and on your future as much as possible. And then there are the low-level tasks and these tasks are that minutia that should be delegated, deleted, deferred or designed out. You should not be wasting your time on these tasks.

[15:25] These include reading emails to reroute internally, so basically like having to forward emails to the right person, reviewing bills for discrepancies, scheduling meetings and calls, reviewing meeting notes to determine follow-ups, writing replies to low-level emails, making copies, sorting mail, fixing computer glitches. I know more than anybody if you are a solopreneur or a very small business owner, sometimes it just has to be taken care of right that minute and you don't have time to get somebody to get involved to hire it out. But try to put into place systems where you can delegate these things and like I said in that list, some of them can just be deleted. You don't even have to do all of the things on this list. You do not really have to reply to emails that, if it is some person that is soliciting you and you aren't even interested, you don't have to reply to that email.

[16:11] Try to take a week, look at the tasks that are filling up your day. Start to look at what you're doing, jot down these tasks and assign to them if you are doing top-level, high-level, mid-level or low-

level or what's filling your day? If you're constantly overwhelmed and feeling like you're not making progress or moving forward on projects or getting to things that you really want to get on. There are many reasons. Fear, so much fear, fear of failure, fear of success. A lot of people deal with that. You know there are lots of things that could be holding you back from doing it, but if the actual reason you're not getting things done is because you are so busy doing low and mid-level tasks, then you need to really look at how you're spending your time and you need to make sure that you're at least getting to those top three, one for your current clients, one for your hot leads and one of your non-negotiables that's looking forward because if you're not getting these things done, then what is the point of having a business or you're just going to burn out, which I'm also very well versed in. So, I hope at some of this cleared up a little bit of the idea of having a top three in your to-do list.

[17:16] I hope it inspires you and motivates you to clear up some of the tasks that you find in your to-do lists. I hope that you feel a little more maybe organized or pulled together afterward. Not so much overwhelmed and in the weeds a little bit, and if you ever want to talk about it, you can absolutely go on MsSierraBailey.com and you can schedule a free consultation with me at any time. We can have a 30 minute conversation and we can see if we're a fit to work together. Whatever you want to do, I'm here for you. You're welcome to send an email as questions, all of that. But thank you for joining me today, my name is Sierra Bailey and this is Doers Shakers Makers, a podcast for go-getters. If you enjoyed this podcast, please subscribe and if you're listening with apple podcasts, know that reading and reviewing help me get found and I highly appreciate all those stars that you give me. I'll be back next Monday to keep you inspired and get you doing shaking and making.

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