



Transcript

Cash Out BIG Podcast, hosted by Nina Kaufman

Episode Title: Grow Your Business YOUR Way

Guest: Shawn Driscoll

Nina: Hello. How are you? Welcome to Cash Out Big, where we're sharing the tools to get your business functioning like a well-oiled machine. That way, your company can generate real wealth, real freedom for you, and a real legacy. I'm your host, Nina Kaufman, coming to you from the heart of New York City, and I'm glad you're here today. Thanks for tuning in.

Today on the show I'm going to talk with Shawn Driscoll, who's a business strategist, about what happens when the model, the way you're serving customers, and the money you're seeing just isn't working and it's not taking you where you want to go. What do you want to do about it? What can you do about it? Stay tuned for that.

As I mentioned on a recent episode, I'm reading a book called *The Network Imperative: How to Grow and Survive in an Age of Digital Business Models*. In addition to the information around subscriptions, what I also find fascinating was the multipliers that Barry Libert, the author, attributed to different kinds of businesses.

If you're an asset-builder business, like Ford or Walmart, where you've got things and stuff and selling products, you have a multiplier of two. If you're a service provider, like us, you've got a multiplier of three. If you're a technology creator, like Microsoft and other software companies, you have a multiplier of five. Where his thesis comes in is when you become a network orchestrator, Uber, eBay, Airbnb. He's giving them a multiplier of eight.

As you think about, "How do we get more leverage in our business?" it becomes even more valuable. As you can see with those multipliers, that leverage is so all-important. It's important not just from the exit strategy point of view, but it's also important from a day-to-day point of view, because the more you're building your business in that way, the less you have to be on the hamster wheel with everything on your shoulders. How good is that?

That's something that we also touch on in our brand-new, yay, brand-new webinar, Cash Out Big. Gee, I think I like the title. It's our brand-new webinar which looks at: How can you get your business plane, as it were, off the tarmac and into cruising altitude? That's part of what we talk about in our Cash Out Big webinar training. Sign up for free access at CashOutBIGTraining.com.

Now for our guest. I'm really happy to have, as I mentioned, Shawn Driscoll, because she understands the struggle that many business owners have, particularly when the business really relies on their expertise. She's not just coaching them to deal with the struggle and put up with it, but also to make sure that the business is tailored to where they add the most value. If we're going to be in it, why be miserable, folks? Right? Exactly. We're happy to have her on the

show. Have a listen.

Nina: Shawn, thanks so much for joining us today. I wanted to talk to you because you have a very unusual approach to business. As you probably know, there are many small business owners, especially in the service and expert industries, that struggle. Very often we tend to think, "Well, I don't have enough clients, I don't have enough staff," but you pinpointed something that's really interesting. They might be trying to build a business that's not right for them. Can you speak to that a little more?

Shawn: Yeah. There's a lot of different directions that are available in the marketplace for a service-based business owner. Sometimes, though, it seems like you should do what is common in your space. If you're an accountant, build it like other accountants have built it. If you're a coach, build it like other coaches have built it. There's just those standard accepted ways of practicing a service-based business. A lot of times people end up marching down a pathway that ultimately isn't working for them and they can't figure out why. They see it working for other people who are similar to them, but they can't figure out why it's not working for their business and for their life and for who they are. It can create a lot of frustration.

Nina: Talk to us about how do you first identify, "Maybe it's the overall business model that might be the issue"?

Shawn: Right. I think there's a couple things that I listen for and that I see in people when they're in the wrong model and they might not realize it. One is if they find that they'll put a plan in place or they'll get an idea, "This is what I'm going to do, I'm going to create this product," or, "I'm going to create this community," or whatever, they get some idea that they're going to implement for their service-based business to help scale and grow the business, and then they find every step of the way they're procrastinating, they're hesitating, they're spinning their wheels about it. That can be one red flag that you might be off track, that you might be trying to do something that's not in alignment with how you're wired to be in business.

It could be that you put something out there and your customers don't respond. You work really hard, you develop it, you do everything right in terms of the marketing and the messaging and all of that, and it flops. It's like a nothing. I'm doing everything I'm supposed to do, and, boom, nothing. That happened to me in the early years. I remember launching something. I was told by a coach, "You've got to have a product." Oh, I spent forever doing this product and doing all the marketing and blah, blah, blah, and I sold five.

Nina: Ouch.

Shawn: I was like, "Okay, that was a really expensive lesson for me." I was miserable during the making of the product, which didn't help the situation because I hated every step of the journey. That's another signal, is that you look at your calendar and you dread what's on it, you look at your to-do list and you think, "Oh, my gosh, I'm so drained, I'm discouraged." Any of those kinds of things, especially for a service-based business owner, are really critical clues that you might be working against your dominant type, against the way that's going to work best for you and for those that you serve.

Nina: Isn't there a danger to focus on what feels good and not on ultimately what can really become the business that has legs, that's not just going to be a job for me going forward? I hear a lot about the, "Do your passion, do what you love."

Shawn: This is not exclusively about feel-good development, but it is about, if you're in a service-based business, one of the greatest assets you have is your own enthusiasm and energy for what you do. You want to harness that and you want to understand what your biggest asset is when it comes to the value you're bringing to the marketplace.

Often times people get caught up in trying to do something because they think they should when there's another strategy that's equally viable that would allow their business to thrive that would give them a little more juice as the business owner, instead of draining them it would actually give them a little juice and some energy and some enthusiasm, and that's equally viable and smart strategically.

That's really what I'm talking about. It's not just, "Wake up every day and do what feels right." It's about a strategy and really understanding, "Okay, this is what my business is about, this is how I deliver exceptional customer value, this is what customers who do business with our business, with my business, want to experience, and this is work that when I do it I know I'm in my zone of genius, I know we're doing our best work here."

There's also an area for most business owners that's not that, that's the opposite of that, that's like the dead zone, the derailer. Even though it might be smart business for somebody else, and somebody else might just be perfectly wired to do that, it's a drain for you and it's a derailer for your business and it's going to be the least lucrative thing you can do. Like the product for me, one of the least lucrative things I could've spent my time and energy and effort on because it wasn't going to allow me to deliver the value that I'm known for and that distinguishes me in the marketplace.

Nina: Can you give another example of a client just so we can see what that looks like,

making that shift from a strategy that may not be working, that's draining a business owner, to something that gets them invigorated and also gets the profits flowing?

Shawn: Yeah. Let's see. This one's going to seem a little unusual, but I think it's a great illustration, is I have worked with a client for a few years who came to me at first, and she had a dog-training business. Her service was a specific way that she had developed to train dogs, in particular competition and herding and sport dogs, so people who compete on the circuit and are really into working with their dogs. It works for the everyday pet, but it's specific to people who are into sporting with their dogs of some type. She had a farm, lived in the Midwest, and had people coming to her farm to work with her. Super limiting business model. She didn't love it. She was wanting to have a much bigger impact in the way in which people worked with these kinds of dogs and partnered with their dogs.

When I assessed what was going on with her, she was working in this really intimate hands-on way. She was also limited seasonally because a lot of the work is outdoors, and when you live in the Midwest, or like in New York, you're limited by the seasons. You can't be outside in the middle of January. Well, you could, but I don't think it would work as well with the dogs. She had this really confined business model. When we really looked at what she wanted, she was somebody with an innovative approach who wanted to be a big impact. We looked at how can you develop this as an online training, where you can teach somebody its foundational principles, you can create courses for these people, you can create community for these people who are into sporting and herding and things like that with their dogs.

She decided that that was the direction she wanted to go because she was more wired to do that, that was what she was really into, and was finding the hands-on work on the farm really draining and limiting. In a matter of probably just over a year, maybe a year-and-a-half, she developed a series of courses, she launched them online, she marketed them through Facebook ads, and began a community, an online membership. Now her business is totally scalable. 90% of everything she does is virtual, online, supporting this community, and only about 10% are the people who want to come and work privately with her. Of course, now that's at a premium because she's built up her membership reputation and people see that she's somebody with unique expertise. She trains her dogs differently. She doesn't use rewards. She has a different approach. She's more holistic. She has managed to completely flip her business model to this membership, training-based model, and also not be limited by geography or weather.

Nina: Terrific. You have identified a handful of different kinds of business models. Can you just take us through what are the top, say, four that you've seen that tend to work or can provide service business owners with options?

Shawn: Yeah. What I've identified over the years is that there's four dominant ways to be in business, I guess, for lack of a better way of saying it. There's four dominant strategies in service-based businesses, expertise-based businesses. One is more of an intimacy-based business. Like I was describing with the woman and the dogs, having that really hands-on, connected relationship. Now, it doesn't always have to be limited to one-to-one. It might be small groups, things like that. Intimacy is one strategy and one customer experience that you can offer that people will pay for. They want that connection. They want to be seen and heard and they want it customized a little bit to them and personalized. Intimacy is one type. There's ways to scale intimacy and we can talk about that. I'm going to go over the four types first.

Then there's inspiration. The second category that I identified is inspiration. These are businesses that the predominant value that people come to them for is to be empowered, to have a vision for how it can be, and maybe to have a path laid out for them of, like, "Here's how you can become this thing," or, "Here's how you can achieve this." These tend to be larger communities and having a much bigger vision. Everybody follows a similar pathway, as opposed to with the intimates where you can be hands-on and tailored.

Nina: Is that like a Tony Robbins type business?

Shawn: Tony Robbins, totally perfect example of a high-inspiration business. He's got his new movie out right now. Tons of people coming into this environment. Everybody's getting the same experience pretty much and going through the same material. It's high-energy and all about where you can go and vision and really inspiring people and creating transformation and serving them in that way.

The third type is information. In online world you hear a lot about content and information. This is the type of business that really delivers value through their expertise, through their content, through systems or process, and really serves a market that craves understanding or knowledge or craves to some degree to be competent in something.

Nina: Who have you seen that does that really well?

Shawn: Let's see. I would put somebody like a Seth Godin here. A lot of typical authors would go in the information quadrant. Maybe even a Jack Canfield, although he pairs that with some inspiration. Most businesses might pair a couple types together to create a robust model.

Then the fourth one is innovation. This is a business that really delivers value through new ideas, challenging the status quo, doing something original or unique or just off the beaten path. This is creating a customer experience for those people who really want something cutting edge, something different. They like the insider status. Obviously, this isn't necessarily a service-based business, but Apple would fall here. I mentioned Seth Godin. I think a lot of his stuff is innovative. Let's see who else would be more in the service space that would fall here. Even companies like the StrengthsFinder company. They're innovating. They're innovating through their assessment and giving you some innovative ways to look at yourself. That would be an example.

Nina: Typical intimacy businesses I would think might be, you mentioned accountants and accounting firms and professional services where it tends to be that one-on-one kind of service.

Shawn: Right. You have that. Attorneys to some degree fall into the intimacy-based business. You can certainly scale that. A classic example to me of a business that successfully has scaled intimacy, and then as they scaled also moved into a couple other complimentary areas, would be like a Weight Watchers. Weight Watchers started actually here near where I live in Michigan by a woman in her living room. "Come in." They held each other accountable. They sat in their living room. It was a very intimate setting to help people with weight loss. As she scaled that, like through franchising and through creating all these local, the Weight Watchers program retains that local meeting, intimate space, trusted environment. They just have scaled that by taking it to other locations. An intimacy can scale as long as you retain the customer experience of trust and connection and safety and customization.

Nina: Terrific. Now that we've outlined the four different kinds of dominant strategies, how do businesses identify ... I should say really business owners, how do they identify maybe where they are and what's really right for them?

Shawn: Well, there's a couple ways. One is some people, just when they hear the types they start to resonate and they'll say, "Oh, yeah, that's me." Sometimes people feel like, "No, I'm everything," or, "I'm all of it," or whatever. Then we want to look at, "Okay, how do we really discern what's the main driver in your business?" One of the things you can look at, sometimes I'll have a client, and this is something anybody can do, is identify where have you historically made the most money in your business? Now this isn't a definitive answer, but it will show you a pattern of where people come to you and what they value in you. If you've historically made the most money off of one-to-one service and then when you've tried to do a product it didn't really work, that's something to look at and say, "Am I missing the deepest value that I provide?"

I'll have people map, "Where's the value exchange that's already been demonstrated historically in your business? Why do people naturally come to you? If you did nothing to market yourself, if you did nothing to define yourself, what would people already think of you for?" That will give you a clue. It's not the definitive answer, but it will certainly give you a clue as to where already you have distinguished yourself as a value provider. It's about you, but it's really a lot about building your business around the best way you can maximize the value you bring to your ...

I want to say the other thing to look at is customers and customer experiences, so service experiences that have been the best, if you look at, "Okay, what were your top five customer experiences for your company?" Whether you personally delivered them or your team delivered them, it really doesn't matter, but, "Who really represents the best of the best of our customers and the people who got the best result, who were amazing for our company to work with, we had longevity, it was just a really good overall experience for both the business and the customer?" If you look at that, that can also give you a clue, as can looking at some of the worst customer experiences you've had. I like to find the edges first, the extremes, "What was the best thing? What was the worst thing? What was the best place you made money? What's the worst thing you ever did to make money?" to start to find the edges, get some contrast.

The worst customer experiences will also be a clue, because typically what I have found is that the worst customer experiences are because you brought in a customer who valued an experience that was in your derailer type, that was not what you're best at delivering. If you brought in a customer who really wanted a proven methodical way but you're a high innovator, you're going to conflict with that customer and that's going to be a non-pleasant experience for either of you.

Nina: Terrific. How do you balance, let's say ... gee, because I don't have any experience with this ... being in a expertise area, shall we say, where there's a common business model, that this is the way it's always been done and this is what you do when you want to start a business that's in that particular field, like law? [Laughter]. There are certain ways, let's say an intimacy model, that people resonate with you and you're delivering good service. How do you balance whether that really is the right business model for the owner versus it's what people gravitate toward because it's what they know? Does that make sense?

Shawn: Right, because it's how it's done. When you first get started, most of us want to do the path that's laid before and something that's proven, especially when you're new starting your practice. There does come a point where there's a cost to doing that business that's maybe too high for some owners because it's really out of touch with who they are. I have a story about this. Not exactly the same, but I'll

answer this through this story I think. I had a woman several years ago that I started working with. She was in the health care field and had developed a pretty solid reputation as a health care consultant, helping hospitals in very specific ways. She had written a couple books and gotten herself known. However, when she came to me she was super burned out. She traveled all the time. She didn't like the intimacy of having to be in these hospitals and be working one-on-one with everybody.

She was debating whether she should just chuck the consulting thing and focus on writing and keynoting and just doing the speaker circuit and write. When we assessed it, one of the things that was super important to her, she was a high innovator, she had a methodology she had developed that really helped change things within these hospitals that affected how patients were cared for on a day-to-day basis, and she was super passionate about that happening. When we looked at it, it was like, "Can you really achieve your mission of effecting change in hospitals if you're keynoting and writing books?" She said, "No, but I'm also dying because I'm working all the time. I'm traveling 80% of the year. This isn't right for me." She was in this typical consulting model, but it was not right for her.

Then we looked at the transition of, "Okay, how can you scale this and you can carry the message, be the messenger, be the thought leader?" It really became about she decided her choice was to build her own internal team, so hire somebody to be the lead consultant, build up a consulting team over time. She would go out and do some keynoting, speaking, to be seen by CEOs of hospitals. Really within about 18 months of that decision she found the right person. She got off the road of doing the work and trained people in her method. She built up these assets. She had her own methodology. Now she had a trained team. She could deploy them and she could stay home and be the CEO.

For her, that model was the smartest model so she didn't have to be the consultant anymore. Then she also began developing some other product lines that would support these hospitals. She was able to take her business from like the mid six figures into multi-millions and get offers to purchase that business within a couple of years.

Nina: That's a beautiful thing. That is a great story. I like that story.

Shawn: It's an amazing story. I love that story very much because it served her. She was stuck before thinking it was one or the other: "I either have to do it this way where I go in because people want me, or I have to step out of that completely and forget it and do what's going to serve me personally better." She didn't really see a different road until we looked at, "Okay, what's going to accomplish the mission, what's going to support your lifestyle, and what's really going to allow you to have the impact that you want to have?"

- Nina: Great. You have a quote on your site that "the marketplace responds when you're in alignment." As you say, it's not just money but also, in this particular situation, that client, she said she was dying. She was on the road all the time. She was exhausted.
- Shawn: It's really hard to walk into a suite of CEOs or C-suite to try to pitch your product when you're just feeling like you need a nap, and even worse that there's a part of you, a big part of you, that almost hopes they don't buy your consulting project because you don't want to have to fulfill it. I think that's what happens to a lot of people when they're in a business model that's not right for them. A big part of them is internally praying that this customer doesn't buy.
- Nina: I'm sorry, I shouldn't sit here on dead air, but that is really, really powerful to acknowledge that, because I know that clients have said that to me as they've been expressing some of their exhaustion issues, that they just wish it weren't such a flow, but they don't then have the system to handle it without having to fall onto their plates.
- Shawn: Exactly. That is not good for business growth, that's not good for scale, because that energy is going to come through. You're not going to go into that sales conversation or that opportunity and really shine if there's such a high cost to you. That's why I said, like at the beginning, it's not just about feel-good. This isn't just about "what feels good to me." This is a conversation about what's really going to be sustainable long-term.
- Nina: Right, terrific. Last words of wisdom? As we're thinking about business owners, again, who want to scale, who want the revenue, but also want to be in alignment with themselves so that they also have a life, any other points that you would give us?
- Shawn: I guess I would just say that you have to believe that it's possible to do that. Sometimes even that is a fundamental conflict, because a lot of times that's the first place I have to start with somebody, is undoing some of the thinking that's keeping them from seeing the possibility. It is possible that there is a business model that's right for you, that's scalable, that your customer will highly value, and that will support your life, and you don't have to sacrifice. It's not always about sacrifice and shoulds and force-fitting. It's really about fine-tuning the business. There's already some really good things happening in any business. There's already evidence of where the maximum scalable value is. You just have to be willing to take that second look at it.

Nina: Right, terrific. That's a great place to end. Shawn, thank you so much for being with us today and showing us that, yeah, you can actually grow your business your way and have it scalable and have it produce the income that you need and deserve and some great examples about what happens when all of the pieces really do fit together. Thanks so much for being with us today.

Shawn: You're welcome. Thanks for having me.

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