



EPISODE 002 – THE ART OF TAKING TIME OFF

Welcome to the Fun & Profit for the Active Entrepreneur podcast. I'm your host, Paula G. Join me as we explore what it takes to get you out from behind your desk and endless to-do's so you're feeling more vibrant, alive, and engaged in your business and in your life.

Today I am going to talk about something that I know is on every single business owner's mind, and that is **the art of taking time off**. For those of you who are new to the podcast, welcome. For those of you who have come back, thank you. I'm looking forward to it. I don't know about you, but I did not start my own business and leave a lucrative corporate job to take off less time, to become a slave to my business. If you're an active entrepreneur, you've got stuff you're excited about, stuff you can really get your hands in, sink your teeth into, if only you had the time.

As I like to say, early on when I started my business, **if you are self-employed and you are working for a total jerk, you've only got one place to look: in the mirror**. I had some real doozies of bosses over my time in corporate. Boy, could I spin some stories. But what I realized was the absolute worst boss I ever had was the one I was working for when I first started my business, because she was a freaking slave driver, just push, push, push. There was so much stress around not making enough money to pay the bills, going from the transition from a fairly good corporate salary with benefits to nothing, crickets. Hello? Where do we find any clients? My driving motivator in all this

was freedom, freedom. I wanted financial freedom. I wanted time freedom more than anything.

What I've learned is the art of taking time off. This is a timely episode, because as I record this in August of 2015, I have just returned from a week away. I usually go away to some pretty remote places where people can't get in touch with me and even if I wanted to I could not use my mobile device. This time for sure, I could use nothing. It was glorious. I went up to upstate Maine, and I mean upstate Maine, to a friend's cabin on a lake. There's nothing there, I mean nothing. You look out across the lake and there's Canada. As we would kayak during the day, we would go in and out of the international waters. I even touched the rock with the international marker that says U.S. / Canada so I could be in both countries at the same time. It was quiet. There was nothing. There was very little if any cell phone service. And god forbid you tried to use it by leaning over on a rock, sticking your phone out. You would probably catch the Canadian signal spend three dollars per kilobyte or three dollars per text to talk to anybody. It was wonderful.

I noticed even for myself -- and I'm pretty good at regularly disconnecting and taking time off -- I had an initial twitch for the first day or so like: Shouldn't I be doing something? Isn't there something I could be attending to? My god, I could be marketing on social media or attending to something on Facebook. It just melts away. My friend told me, "Well, it was fun to watch you because when you arrived you were stressed out from the drive," understandably so, 15 hours in a car, "but you've been like the Wicked Witch of the West, slowly melting as you've been here." When I left the beautiful lake, I proceeded to be pretty darn disconnected by taking an overnight sea kayaking trip in mid-coast Maine where, again, no cell phone signals. We were carrying nothing except a change of clothes and a dry bag. That's it. That's freedom. That's being in the moment. Your joys and passions might look differently, my friends. Think about that feeling, that quality, **that rich feeling of freedom, of not having to tend to**

something, not being “on call” with your devices or other obligations, but just being able to step into the flow.

It has taken me awhile to get to this place. As of the time I'm recording this, I've been in business full time eight years. If you would have asked me to do this in year one or two or three, I would have freaked out. I would have been leaning off the rock in the lake reaching for a signal, desperate to see something, anything related to my business. There's an art to this, and an art that I think I've gotten pretty darn good at. I look forward to getting even better at it and richer at it, with more and greater expanses of time. I want to talk about them. There's really three key things to the art of taking time off. Let me go through them with you.

The first, the fundamental, the bedrock to all of this is you need to **give yourself permission to do it**. End of story. No one, and I mean absolutely no one, is going to come by and give you permission to take the time off. It's like I can remember even in corporate I would sit there on a holiday weekend and you'd wait to see if the boss would come by and tell you that you could leave a half an hour or an hour early. I came to the conclusion after a while that I just needed to get up and leave because there was no one going to come around and say: Oh, you should really leave half an hour early. It wasn't happening. Now that you're your own boss, don't sit blindly at your desk hoping and waiting for someone to come save you. Claim what you wanted in the first place, now, not later. In an appropriate bit, you might not take a month off, for instance, but you can and must take time off to renew, not only to love your life but so that you can be great for your clients, and masterful at your craft and your service.

I know what you're thinking. You're thinking: Paula, I wish I could give myself permission but I'm not making enough money yet. I'm not making enough money yet. **How could I possibly take time off when I'm scared about how I'm going to pay my mortgage, how I'm going to pay my bills?** I'm here to tell you that there's always going to be a different level of concern. Whether you're earning \$10,000 in your

business or \$10 million, there's always going to be the concern of cash flow. There's always going to be the concern of lead generation and sales and client delivery. Don't use it as an excuse. You might think: It's not the right time. It's not really a great time for me to take time off right now. **There is no such thing as the right time.** There's only now. But what if my clients need me? What if they email me and I don't answer? Unless you are in a 24x7 on-call position, think emergency operator, or maybe you're running a true tech support business or something like that, they don't need to reach you always. In fact, empowering them to solve some of the problems on their own and to respect your boundaries is part of a great relationship with ideal clients.

You think: My god, if I go away I'm going to have so much. How am I going to catch up? I'm not going to lie to you. There's some prep that needs to be done to take some time off, and there's certainly some catch-up to be done. It's worth it if you do it right. It's not oppressive. It's like the fact that you do laundry before you go on vacation so you have clean underwear to wear while you're there. You need to do some extra loads of laundry when you get back so that you're not walking around naked now that you're home. Same thing. It's not rocket science. It's not impossible. Totally doable.

The permission is the bedrock. Without that, none of the rest is going to work. From that, the next piece, number two to the art of taking time off is **communication**. You need to communicate. You don't want to just vanish and your clients wonder: Where the heck did he/she go? I emailed her and she hasn't answered me in a week. What's up with that? You need to communicate. You need to let them know in advance when you're going away, when you're coming back, and what to expect from you. Are you going to be checking emails intermittently? Are you going to be totally off the grid? You need to define it the way you want and communicate it as such.

Let's remember, the way you interact with your clients is not just about when you're going away. This relationship, the boundaries you create, these things and expectations get set earlier in the relationship. They get reinforced every time you have

an interaction. For instance, what kind of expectations do you put in your client agreement? How do you behave? How do you conduct yourself regularly? Are you checking emails all weekend long on a regular basis? You're going to teach them how to treat you. Start small, taking weekends off, taking evenings off, setting office hours. This is something you need to do. Also, **make the communication very clear and then do what you say**. If you're not going to be available, don't be answering emails. You send mixed signals. You might think you're doing them a favor like: Oh, they're going to be so surprised I responded. You're actually shooting yourself in the foot. They also will get that feeling like: Well, she doesn't really do what she says. There's an odd feeling, an incongruence here. Remember, this is not just about you going off and playing, although that's important. It's also about the expectations and relationships you create with your client.

The third piece to the art of this is **disconnecting**. Again, this is anchored in permission, but going off the grid to the degree that's right for you. You need to honor your word to yourself. This is where you build or destroy trust with yourself. If you can't trust yourself, things don't work. You might think: This is kind of deep and esoteric. The truth is, when you make a commitment to yourself and you honor it, you build trust. You build confidence in yourself that you can trust yourself. When you go back on your word, you destroy that trust in yourself. It's the same as any other relationship, but it's even more important than any other relationship because you've got to live in your own skin.

What that means is **you need to honor your word**. If you say to yourself "I'm not going to check email," don't check it. Don't check just one thing. You know how that "I'm going to check one thing" turns into hours of emails, getting sucked in. Even just the act of looking really quick sets your mind on a whole different trajectory. You start thinking about one thing and then pile on another. It becomes like monkeys swinging on a tree. It's out of control. It sets forth a reaction of thought and physical reactions. Now I'm thinking about this thing that's due when I get back. Don't check it. Disconnect and

honor what you agreed to, whether that's an evening, a couple hours, a week, a month, whatever. Start outside your comfort zone and stretch from there.

If you think it was easy for me to just disconnect and not look at anything for over a week, I could not have done this before. I had to start small. I started with an hour or two. I started with an evening after 5 p.m. I started and I built it. I realized: My god, the world does not cease to exist. It does not fall apart if I take care of my own needs, if I go have fun and play, or whatever it is that I need. The world will keep turning. The world will keep turning if, God forbid, you or I drop dead tomorrow. Remember, live it today.

You might think: Gosh, how do I not do anything in my business for this time? There is one more piece that wraps around these three, and that's having systems and automation that helps your business continue to run while you are away. Marketing was happening while I was away. Newsletters were going out while I was away. Auto responders were going out. Social media updates were happening. Blog posts that were scheduled to publish published. Things were happening in my business without my intervention. There's lots to teach on there, and I promise to keep these podcasts bite-sized. If you are anything like me, just thinking about this time off and this three-pronged thing of permission and communication and disconnecting is a meal unto itself.

I can remember along the way, I've got some great mentors and such that helped me with this. Some really seminal books way back in the day that helped me to set these boundaries and believe that it was okay to do it, things like Cheryl Richardson's *Stand Up for Your Life* or the classic, Cheryl Richardson's *Take Time for Your Life*. These books are now a bit dated, but the content is absolutely still evergreen and timely. I studied with Debbie Ford and all that shadow work. That's some really deep stuff and dark stuff. Her *Dark Side of the Light Chasers* being, in my opinion, the best book, the fundamental book of her work.

To look at yourself and say:

- Where are you getting in your own way?
- What are you making it mean about yourself if you take time off?
- Does that make you bad business owner?
- Are you scared that your competition is going to sweep away your clients?
- What's going on in your mind and in your heart that's keeping you from doing what you want to do?

Your active entrepreneur self is yearning to get out there, whether it's in your boat, with your canvas, with your instrument, in the kitchen, building something. Whatever your thing is, it's calling to you. You need to honor it. And you need that space away from your business so that you can be productive and create.

I'm going to wrap Episode 2 with that for today. I invite you to do one small thing to honor this and start practicing the art of taking time off. If you're afraid that taking time off means you're not going to meet your income goals, there are some models and things you can do to make sure that it works for you. Don't panic about that today. With that, I want to invite you, if you want more freedom and profit, you can get started on this right away. Go to ThePaulaGCompany.com/freedom and get the freedom and profit worksheet. I tell you, that is -- that will really free you up. I continue to go back to it and it gives me more and more. The URLs I mentioned for the books and for the freebie will be in the show notes. Please subscribe to the podcast. Leave a review because that's the currency that you can pay back some good vibes for the time and effort and cost that comes in producing this podcast. By all means, share, share, share. Tell your friends. We'll be back and we'll be starting our interview series with some really cool people in the next episode or two. In the meanwhile, as always, I invite you to create a great day.