Episode #50 - Creating A Business That Works With Your Life - with Erin Thomas-Wong Transcript

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Podcast Introduction and Mission

Welcome to the Startup Support Surgery podcast, where we light the entrepreneurial spark in medics and healthcare professionals. Join me, Dr. Jo Watkins, GP, business coach and co-founder of The How People, on a journey to discover where your medical know-how meets the business world.

This will help you find some clarity on how to balance work, passions and family so that you can gain more freedom and control over your life but also continue to help people, which is actually why most of us went into medicine to start with.

Embarking on this entrepreneurial adventure is not easy. It is a roller coaster of emotions, but it's hugely rewarding and exciting in the process. Drawing in on my 20 years of blending medicine and business as a GP, I am here to share experiences, insights and lessons.

Expect lively chats, expert interviews and real life stories from medics who have taken their own path. Let's break free from traditional healthcare norms and explore more innovative ways of making a real difference to people's health and wellbeing, along with paving the way for a brighter future for us as healthcare professionals.

Oh, don't miss my free PDF called From Stethoscope to Startup, which is an 11-page guide in the show notes full of practical help and advice.

50th Episode Milestone and Guest Introduction

This is your roadmap to kick-starting your journey with us. Enjoy the Show. So before we begin today's conversation, I wanted to just pause for a second.

This is the 50th episode of the Startup Support Surgery podcast. 50 episodes. I was never sure that there was going to be more than 12. So it feels slightly surreal, if I'm honest.

And I just want to say a massive, massive thank you. Because podcasts don't magically exist. Behind the scenes there's a lot that goes on and a big shout out to Pete from Monkey Pants production at this point because I could not have done this without you.

But podcasts also will only exist if people press play and choose to listen. And the fact that you have chosen to spend your time here with me, whether this is the first time or whether it's the 50th time you've done it, when you could be listening to literally anything else, that's not lost on me and I really, really appreciate that.

Your time is precious wherever you listen to this and i'm really really grateful that decide to share some of your time with me. So I did think about doing a Best Bits episode or one of those sort of slightly self-indulgent milestone specials, but it just didn't feel right because this podcast has always been about having really good conversations.

It's about hearing other people's ideas. It is about real stories from people that are out there building businesses alongside their real life. So instead, because it's March and it is also International Women's Day this month, I've decided to use this 50th milestone to highlight four brilliant episodes, which are conversations with four female founders who are building businesses around their lives and not the other way around.

These are incredible women who on navigating burning ambition, family, identity, money, growth, all of the things. And they're not doing it perfectly.

They're, not pretending it's easy, but they are being intentional. with how they grow their businesses. I genuinely couldn't think of a better person to begin this mini-series in March, 2026 than Erin Thomas Wong.

Erin is a small business mentor and author of How to Build a Life-Friendly Business. She's been building and growing businesses for 17 years through motherhood, relocation, reinvention, and she's one of the clearest voices in the UK when it comes to building something sustainable and life-friendly.

Through her cocoon membership, her podcast, live events, one-to-one mentoring, she helps women create success on their own terms without burning out, trying to keep up with someone else's definition of success.

In this conversation, we talk a lot about trust, ambition, redefining success, And we talk about the long game and the fact that as everybody knows, business really is a marathon and not a sprint.

And Erin's random fact, which has actually just floored me, is that she has danced on stage with Christina Aguilera. It is true. So I used to work in television and I worked on the MTV Awards in Barcelona.

And I mean the kind of, you know, the little secret behind this is it was during rehearsals. But they basically said, quick, we need extras to come on stage.

So she was like in her chaps and we had to stand behind and dance.

From TV to Business and Motherhood

So I'm not a dancer. I was just kind of on the stage with her. Yeah, it was one of those crazy experiences being on this massive stage. And I just felt a little bit sorry for her because she just stood there all on her own and not talking to anyone.

You know, and I thought actually that looks like quite a lonely life. Wow. not able to interact with you wearing next to nothing and being told to move around one place to the next.

Yes. Yeah I know I think it's probably not quite as glamorous as it maybe looks but good for you I hope there's some photographic evidence somewhere of this.

There is not. It was a moment. I love it. Absolutely brilliant. And this is, as I just said in the introduction, one of those conversations that we found each other, probably LinkedIn, I'd imagine, found for obvious reasons jumped into our DMs and just started chatting and then made this happen.

Erin, the reason I think we first connected is because you have just written a book which we are going to talk about. And that book, when I saw the picture of the book I was like, oh my God, I've got to speak to this woman.

We will share the screenshots of The Two of Us and our books because, you are the life-friendly business mentor Is that correct? Correct. Are you based down in Southampton?

Bournemouth. Bournmouth. And you are all about helping people build businesses that fit their lives. That is something that is so close to my heart. So tell me how this will happen.

Why don't you just sort of verbally vomit at me and then I will sort pick things apart. Lovely. There is such a nice visualisation. I know. So I, as I just mentioned, I used to work in TV and thought I would always work on TV.

And then got pregnant at 29 and had my baby. It was not what I was expecting. You know, had a really traumatic birth experience. I couldn't breastfeed.

And I started thinking, how on earth am I going to go back to the world of TV? Because it was absolutely all consuming. I loved it. But when you work in that kind of industry, it is your life.

And basically, I think my son was six months old. and I thought I would be a real Earth mother and just love being at home. You know, and i just felt so anxious, so lost.

i Just needed something for me. So I was quite fortunate that I got voluntary redundancy and I actually ended up buying a franchise of a jewelry company.

That was my first experience in business. My friends and family thought I's absolutely nuts. And I can't really explain it. It was just, you know, I, was absolutely drawn to it and it basically opened up this whole world of business for me.

and, and then I go a bit addicted to starting businesses and this is actually my fifth business This business is now 10 years old and really the kind of transition into this business was one of the businesses I had was in West London called Ealing Mums in Business.

And we then had the opportunity to move to Abu Dhabi for my husband's job. So that was quite a big curve ball. but we thought you know what an amazing opportunity so by then we had two kids.

I left my three businesses in the UK and we went over to Abu Dhabi and once again that's another story of how hard I found that unexpectedly really because I thought it'd be amazing living the expat lifestyle, but actually, once again, very anxious and, you know, just never felt grounded there.

And so I threw myself into learning more about digital marketing. I want a business that can go with me wherever we go. So that's when I created what's now life-friendly business, but back then it was launched as Making Mumpreneurs.

So it kind of a continuation of the Ealing Mums in Business that had been in person. It was bringing that online. So that was 10 years ago, and we weren't happy.

We didn't enjoy the time in Abu Dhabi, unfortunately. So we came home and moved to Bournemouth to be by the sea. And my husband went self-employed because he had massive burnouts from the experience in So we've kind of designed our lives now very, very consciously.

Like you say, life first. These are the important things. And having those kind difficult experiences really amplify that. My business has kind grown and evolved ever since that." Wonderful.

I'd like to say that those knockbacks and experiences are all part of this, aren't they? Without those, these sort of different twists and turns that we take in our lives wouldn't happen and I would love to come back and talk about that piece because I think resilience and learning from our mistakes, not mistakes but learning form our difficult experiences is just so important.

Thank you for sharing all of that. Let's go back to that feeling of Aaron having just had a baby and leaving this sort of world because I think a lot of people I work with the medics and similar to the world of TV or the corporate world or somewhere that's completely immersed you in your sort of early twenties, through your twenties.

A lot of people have this kind of like, oh God, hang on a minute. You've got this young baby to keep alive, your hormones are everywhere, you're thinking, how the hell am I gonna make this work?

You talked about feeling anxious and lost at that stage. Was that because you were, did you feel that was more related to being at home with the baby?

Or do you think that a lot that anxiety was about what you are going to have to go back to? I think I really lost my sense of identity because I'd always been that person who worked in TV and I loved it.

I love going out into London and meeting people and they'd say, what do you do? And you'd stay, I work in T. V. and their eyes would light up. You know, it was exciting.

It was all those things. And, you know I was a production manager. So I organizing shoots and, writing schedules and And I thought having a baby would be the same.

I though I would set a schedule and the baby who would follow the schedule. And of course, you know, I that was absolutely blown out the water. So everything that I knew about, like, being organized and doing all those things.

Identity, Confidence, and Life-Friendly Work

and I mean, it was I just felt completely sideswiped. I think is probably a good description. And also my baby was very ill a lot. So I was anxious because of that.

I would sleep deprived. You know, I, was drawn to starting this business, but the people that knew me were like, why would you want to leave TV? Why would want you to work on your own when you're such a team player and very gregarious?

Absolutely true. Even now, I mean, I love it now and I loved being on my own now, but I didn't used to. So all these things, and now I understand that there is this term matressence about becoming a mother and the whole shift in identity and, like you say, the hormones and everything going on.

And I think I was in this absolute storm. I love the fact that it happened how it did, but I think it took me years to really build my confidence in business and for a long time I just would constantly, you know, internally be putting myself down and I didn't want to call myself a business owner and all this stuff.

And so my only regret would be that, it, took, me so long to, really own it. Yeah, interesting, and that's something I'm sure you see repeating in other people that you support.

And it's that concept, isn't it? That you were in TV, top of your game, probably, you know, didn't, that confidence had grown over years and years of experience, putting the reps in, doing the work, then suddenly you're like a fish out of water in this new world of business, learning everything as you go along, That's not a confident place to be, is it?

You're a learner again and everybody talks about imposter syndrome, but essentially you're starting a new skill and you've got to learn, haven't you? And there's no job description.

Yeah, like having a baby. Yeah, exactly. So, when you're in a career and you are employed, you know what you need to do, hopefully most of the time, to, do a good job and to impress people and your boss and all those kind of things.

When you run your own business, You have to create your job description and keep yourself accountable. and all these things and it is, you know, I mean it's a double-edged sword.

I find it absolutely liberating to be in that position but it s also daunting because everything's on you. All the decisions. Yeah, all the decision, anything that gets done, the firing, hiring, client acquisition, marketing, deciding whether or not you need a new computer now or next week, like nobody does this stuff for you, do they?

It's a series of decisions that, and I always say to people that whole clocking off, you know, medics don't tend to work nine to five, but generally, we finish our day and we go home.

Yes, there may be bloods to check at home these days. People seem to be doing that more and more in the evenings, But generally we walk away and switch off and come in our door and are parents at all.

partners. But running a business, you have to have that ability to sort of boundary yourself as well, don't you, and be able to switch off yourself because no one's going to tell you to do that.

Is that something that you found a difficult shift as? Absolutely, absolutely. Like, yeah, especially when you're

working at home. You know, You could work all the hours.

There is always more that You can do. And so that, unfortunately, is what leads so many women that I work with to just constantly feel behind because they know there's more they can do.

But we have to put that boundary and say, it's enough for today. That's it. And we've had so much conversations over the years about how people put the boundary in place for themselves.

I'll never forget one client said that she wears a lanyard. and she literally takes the lanyard off and hangs it up when it's time to stop work. And that is such a brilliant prop to use.

But I also make sure that I mindfully shut down the computer. I don't just close the lid, I actually shut it down. Because I know that if I've left it on, then I'll just say, oh, i'll nip and do that.

It's never just that, is it? You know, and so yeah, it's really hard and I think also one of the things that I really noticed with my husband is it took him years to be okay with not sitting at his desk between nine and six.

You don't have to be sat at your computer to working or to being productive. It's so ingrained in us that that is work. What are you doing if you're not actually working?

But we don t need to work in that way. We can work flexibly and actually probably be more productive than someone who's sat in an office all day. Absolutely.

So this is where we get to this concept of building what we're building whether it's a business, whether a portfolio career, a lot of my clients still working a couple of days in the NHS, and some people are working full-time in NHS and I do not advocate for people leaving their place of work to run a businesses, particularly at the beginning, because finances generally take time.

So we're talking in this world where people making choices about how they work. we have to, we make the rules, right, don't we? So this, you know, from your point of view, what does life-friendly sort of mean when it comes to building a business?

For me, life friendly means working around my own energy and also having the flexibility to be able to prioritize my kids, my life, if she needs me. But also, it's about working to my own measures of success, rather than what other people tell me that my measures should be.

So, yeah, being able to go and walk the dog down at the beach at two o'clock because it is glorious weather. You know, that kind of thing, like I can do that.

I've got the flexibility to do. That I don't have to answer to anyone. And I. Don't really work during school holidays. II don' book any calls during that time.

If I decide to. Do a bit of work, That's fine. But I'm not beholden to those kind. Of calls, which make me feel stressed. which you know it gets tangled up doesn't it with the kind of parent that you want to be and you just know that the kids won't need you and then just as you're about to go on a course something happens and it's really hard to have one leg in and one like out and so I've just kind made that boundary.

My kids are getting older now they're 17 and 13 so that's going to start changing again and I probably will start working a bit more during school holidays but it's about that evolving nature of my life and being able to evolve the business with it but I did want to say about the measures of success because this is something that really stayed with me when we were in Abu Dhabi because obviously, you know, working somewhere like that.

It's all about status and it's about money. And it is all kind of about how nice your apartment is or your house and your car and going out to six-star hotels for brunches.

I was really struggling there and I would be messaging my friends back home, telling them that I really was down and missing home and everything. And they were literally saying to me, but your photos look amazing, like it's blue skies and palm trees.

And I'm like, yeah, I am actually really miserable. We've got this weird link with success, happiness, picture perfect, palm tree, that that should make you feel happy and successful.

But I don't think that's right for everyone. I mean, for some people. And I think kind of recognising, actually for me, success is doing something where I feel like I'm helping people, where are making a positive impact, when I am there for my kids when they need me.

You know, I not feeling burnt out and stressed. Not feeling sick on a Monday morning about what's coming in the week ahead. Like they're my measures of success.

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. There's a slide in one of the talks that I do exactly on that. And it talks about the importance of working that out for yourself.

For me, it's not about money, impact 100%. I love having that ripple effect of supporting other people doing things that they love. But being able to go to every school play, being to drop everything and go and pick your kids up, like you say, adapt for elderly relatives, to adapt to the situation that your family is facing.

And I did an interview with Lucy Legal the other day and she said, you know, my measure of success is that I didn't miss the scarecrow's wedding. You know that's ultimately if you don't the family show, whereas previously in her corporate job it just wasn't a thing.

So building a business that suits your life and what you want your live to look like.

Boundaries, Success, and Flexible Business Design

And I think when you talk about things like school holidays, I thing there are people listening to this that will be like, well, that's just unrealistic.

That's never going to happen. I would reiterate that that, as you start out in business, before you starting worrying about posting on social media or what color pink your logo is.

This is the groundwork that I'm sure you do with your clients and I do it with mine. It's the first thing. What are you doing this for? What do you want in life to look like?

what does success look for you? And for me that comes off the back of not doing it right before in other businesses that i've owned. Like kind of learning a little bit the hard way.

Have you had that experience? You talked about having five other businesses. have you run businesses that haven't been life first? Well, it's really interesting, actually, because my first business, It was life-friendly and then it was not.

And it life friendly because it making jewellery. So at that point, I had a six month old. My first son was six months old and I bought this franchise.

I thought this is perfect because at the weekends I can go and do the stalls in the markets and sell the jewellery. Then during the week when I have little bits of childcare, that's when i made the jewelry.

So that worked. And then I had a second son and I did manage to kind of take a bit of maternity leave and all those things. So once again, still really flexible.

Then my eldest went to school. Well, I don't want to be stood on a market stall Saturday and Sunday when he's at

home. So like it just it changed. So I run that business for five years and luckily I was able to sell it.

But you know I think that's where we have to be really conscious about the season of life that we're in and I thing that what you just said as well like this is the thing I keep seeing happen is people are falling into the trap of listening to the hustle heavy advice online about basically sacrifice everything until you reach a certain level of success and then you can add your work-life balance in.

But you're absolutely right. Like if you don't start that from the beginning and think about your capacity first, then you'll just going to be chasing your tail.

And I, you know, I mean, running your own business is not easy and it's not the easy option at all. So many people are burning out before they even get to any kind of measure of success because they've just done that thing of going all in and sacrificing everything else that matters.

Yeah, absolutely. I see this particularly in service-based businesses, so coaches, people offering one-to-one services online. You know, to go into that thinking, right, okay, sometimes people will say, well, I just want to work three days a week and I want see people one to one and then we look at the actual, you know you've got two kids, do you want be there for the school run, either side of the run.

Like we literally sit down and map out What this will look like well actually how many clients can you have back to back in a day? What about the prep?

what about? The uploading and downloading of zoom calls. What? About the summaries like that's the sort of way that I think it would be good to approach things before you start and it's constant tweaking like you say when I remember I sort used to start my zoom cause at nine.

So it's quite often I'd have like maybe four calls between nine and three with uploading download. There's literally no time for anything else. And I had a mentor that said that she'd shifted all of her Zoom calls to start a little bit later and give you that couple of hours of flexibility in the morning to do some deep work, some writing, and some content creation, whatever.

Or if it is really nice weather, go for a coffee and meet up with somebody for a chat, because that's OK. And so now I don't start on Zoom until 11. I always do my group Zoom call at 2pm, so that if we're in Asia, it's 10pm and if were in Canada, at 6am.

So all of these are very, very deliberate decisions and I think that is what this is about, isn't it? It's being intentional and deliberate and not letting business suck the life out of you.

Yeah, absolutely. And one of the biggest game changes for me is my Monday morning CEO time. So every morning I block out my calendar until 11 o'clock.

And I go to a local cafe. I have to get out the house. So as soon as my my youngest leaves the House at eight, I get this cafe and it's just such a ritual.

And it basically allows me to transition from the weekend, you know, being mom and all those things into my business. And I just take that time to be super intentional about the week ahead, what's coming up, where does my focus need to, be intentional, strategic, all of those things.

And, I often find that my week is the most productive at the beginning of the weekend, then it peters off towards the weekends, and that's fine. that, you know, that's absolutely how I work.

And I've learned that my energy works like that. I just go with it. When I'm doing training, the CEO time now is just being reflected back to me again and again about that has made such a difference.

But most of us feel like we have to be reactive immediately to the clients or, And it's just like, that's the culture we

were in when we are employed by a boss, because yes, you got in on a Monday morning and you had to do whatever they needed, and now we get to choose.

So I think taking that time to be proactive before being reactive just shifts the way that you approach your week and just makes you feel much more in control.

I love that. I'll be passing that on to my community. And I think if your GP day is a Monday, Tuesday, then do that Wednesday, whenever that shift is for you.

People often talk about that lack of commute, that like downtime between dropping the kids off at school and starting work. So having something that is your ritual to begin and end your week or begin an end that time that you're going to be working on your business.

So I love this concept of the, you know, the lanyard at the end of day. I just think that's brilliant. But just allowing yourself to not be responsive to the people that are requiring your attention.

You know, for me, that's my WhatsApp feed, my emails, messages on LinkedIn. If I get involved in that, you know that like two hours of time before you've even started, isn't it?

So doing this important, this sort of bigger picture thinking followed by actually what's the stuff that I need to get done this week? Let's prioritise that.

And then do you have a system with your emails just out of interest? Do you do this kind of lunchtime email thing or do Do you have anything that you would sort of tips around?

No, I think you'd probably be a bit horrified if you saw my inbox, because I'm one of these people that doesn't file emails. They're just like, so I use like an action label.

So I know where I need to respond to people. But then when we've had this conversation so many times in the community, we got lots of virtual assistants and they're like Erin, what are you doing?

But I just use a search box for the person's name for that email to come up. But yeah, so I do dip in and out of email, but I remember being told by a coach years ago and she's so right that, you know, if you fall into that trap of say you're getting the kids ready for school and you just have a quick look in your inbox, And the problem is, is that you don't even have to open the email.

Your brain is already trying to work out what that email might say and what it might mean for you. And then your brain's trying work that out. You're trying get the kids ready.

That's when you get really snappy and you're really irritated because your brains like, hang on, I'm trying this out, and we do it to ourselves. We do it to ourselves and this is where we have to take responsibility, I think, for those things.

And don't get me wrong, and I still do every now and then, but it is recognising like actually we do have control over when we decide to, you know, go into, like you say, do the reactive work.

Yeah, absolutely. OK, so let's talk about something else that you mentioned before we start talking about books, which I do want to talk You were saying that you, you know, when you bought that jewelry shop, people said to you or you're mad like you going to work on your own.

You're a people person. I can you obviously. You are obviously really gregarious and great with people because I've seen what you're doing online now, but you have this working alone thing that other people identified in you that might be a problem.

And obviously, as you grow your businesses and as your done your five businesses, and you've worked with other

mumpreneurs and now support other That working on your own thing comes up a lot, doesn't it?

And I know that you really value community, as I do. Can you just explain to anybody listening here who maybe is starting out on their own and maybe hasn't found their tribe or isn't part of a community how important that is for people that are starting businesses, particularly mums?

Once again, this is a game changer, just like the CEO time idea, the community the people that you surround yourself with really, really affects how you show up and the support that mostly being women, you know, women supporting women is something really magical in a lot of ways.

And I think, when I first started out, I was living in West London, and I tried to go to all these like business networking things, with my jewelry business.

I just felt like a fish out of water. A small little girl, there would be the men in suits and accountants and lawyers. And I was like, oh my goodness.

And it just made me shrink. That's why actually my business partner at the time and I set up Ealing Mums in Business because we started meeting other women who had started their businesses after children, blah, and blah.

I realized then the difference it made. to all of us to be together and to talk openly about the challenges that we were facing. And I think that's what I am really proud of, that I have built a community where people feel safe, to really be honest.

I'm totally over the pretending everything's amazing.

Community, Networking, and Support

There's so much stuff on social media about people flashing money and how much they're earning and I know there's a lot of money mindset stuff that I've probably got to deal with as well but it's making so many of us feel like we're failing, and to actually surround yourself with like minded people.

who are just on the same level as you and have the Same challenges. And it's really inspiring to see how other people are dealing with problems. So, yes, I mean, i love working on my own, but I'm surrounded by people every day online and I do do some stuff in person.

I think that's the one thing as well is that I really believe strongly you can get that connection online, just like we're talking now. And actually online is amazing because you can be sat in your own home, whether you've got kids at home or someone else that you're caring for, you still have that human connection that we all need.

So I think it's so important to give ourselves that support because it is flipping lonely and you are stuck in you own head a lot and don't get a chance to talk things through.

It's absolutely invaluable. It's vital, isn't it? And I think what you touched on there with your previous networking experience, I that's what people imagine networking is.

And, and I still find the term really uncomfortable because I just love talking to people. I'm just super curious. business is building relationships with people, opening doors, talking to people.

Finding those people that are aligned with either, you know, maybe it's the service that you provide or maybe, it is the way that do things like us, that sort of life-first, life friendly thing cuts through everything that we do.

So, therefore, we were always going to have lots in common. You've got to find the people. I've been to many, many particularly with my first business, weirdly my fist business was granola and it was exactly the same as you, weekend markets.

you know, doing stuff in the daytime when the kids, when they kids were younger and it, you, know long story, but the same concept. And with that, I used to go to breakfast meetings, like these awful networking meetings with lots of people in suits, really formal, rarely stuffy.

I like to say I just shrink, feel dreadful, run away, think, and also it was like tick, tick the box. So I did a networking event, spoke to somebody and got their business card.

That's not what this is about. This is finding your people and there were groups everywhere. So there are groups online, but there there in there groups in lots of geographical areas.

Now, there's one near us called She Thrives run by Crystal and Hells who need a shout out because they're brilliant. And, you know, going there, it was like, oh, like this lovely relief.

It was the here are people that I can just, let's say, be honest, stand up and burst into tears and say bloody hell, this is hard. and people have got your back.

It's not about how brilliantly you're doing, it's like, do you know what, I'm struggling with this too, or has anybody else ever felt like walking away, somebody said the other day.

And it was like everyone, hands up. Yeah, we had a similar, it was a goosebump moment. I do an annual Momentum Day in person, and there's going to be 70 women this year.

It gets bigger and bigger each year, but one of my favourite parts of the day is the Q&A at the end where we have all the speakers and I'm there. And then someone was really quite emotional and she said that her partner wasn't supporting her with the business.

and you know she didn't know what to do and I just kind of looked out to the room and i could see everyone nodding and, I said can you just put your hand up if you've got someone close to you in your life that doesn't spot and everyone put their hand and even now years on it was like whoa it, was such a magical moment where everyone looked around the, room, and realized that everyone there had had this kind of similar experience of not feeling supported.

And it's just, yeah, to be in that environment is, it really does make the difference with how confident you feel about what you're doing and your resilience as well when you have challenges to realise that you've seen and you heard about other people that have overcome similar things.

Love that. Let's touch on the kind of Instagram hustle culture, bro marketing, you know, earning 10 grand a week from a hammock and barley after four weeks of showing up online.

You know you just need to do this. you Just need do that. And then, download this PDF and your life will be complete. There's a lot of that around at the moment, isn't there?

We've seen to have gone through cycles and it's like, I turn on my Instagram feed and I'm just like this is ludicrous that this stuff is there. I really struggle with it.

I feel like there's a lot of this, like you say, this is how I've made 10 grand a day and all you need to do is follow these steps and you'll be able to make that money too.

And once again, the whole life-friendly approach as well is about doing things that align with you and align your own values and everything. People are buying these courses and then being like, Oh, I don't want to do that.

You know, like that feels icky to me. It's like it's somebody else's strategy, which is designed around them and their zones of genius. And we need to be designing our own.

But I mean, you know even I find myself getting caught in this rabbit hole of like, there's a magic pill. What's the

magic? Maybe that's that magic. That's, that the thing that is going to change everything.

Shall I buy it? Shall buy. Like we're all we're all guilty of falling down those rabbit holes. Even I find it difficult sometimes to speak out about this stuff because you think, but what if people think that I'm not ambitious?

What if And I'm just I've gained the point now where I am like, this is ridiculous. And, you know, I, there's a stat in the UK. I m pretty sure this s still valid, but the average UK salary for a full time person is 35k.

And so many of the women that I work with would be really happy to be earning 35k flexibly, running their business with a sense of purpose, helping people around their kids.

And yet we're kind of told as entrepreneurs, if you're not aiming to earn six or seven figures, what the hell are you doing? And it's like, where has that come from?

And once again, this is the whole thing about measures of success. Because, yeah, we all need, and don't get me wrong, you know, money is a driving factor.

We need to live. we want to have nice lives, We want go on holiday, have all those things. But I think when there's all this kind of toxic bro marketing messaging about, earning 50k a month, it's just it compounds and it makes you, it like it, makes us shrink doesn't it?

Absolutely yeah it totally does and I think you know you do have to, It's difficult because you you have start learning and obviously people once they, I mean when I when i was on this sort of different path from having run the granola business and then run a property property and then going traveling with the kids.

I had this period of like self coaching for about six months where I was literally surrounding myself by everything and anything to kind of work out. So I just want to be paid for being me wherever we are in the world, top of the mountain, middle of rainforest.

That's what I want on my computer. and I want to work and have an impact and work with brilliant people and do good stuff. And I immersed myself in the learning, the podcast, and the books.

Hustle Culture, Trust, and Long-Form Content

I did lean into that narrative, not of how easy it was because I wasn't naive having run businesses before that it's easy, but that that was was possible in a probably quite an unrealistic timeline, and also that that was some sort of success measure on the way.

So people need to learn, don't they? They need, but I think you've got to be really mindful of what you're learning at what time. And I, think what, you and I probably both do within our own communities, with our, own clients is probably that really early groundwork that it's very easy to think that you don, t need.

And you kind of skip over to then go straight into one of these sort of big generic programs. You know, I was in a sort membership that promised me the earth right at the beginning and it was one if these forty seven pound a month membership with five thousand other people and you're just a little box on a screen learning from people that have the no understanding of your life and live a completely different life, not a life that I would want to live.

And there I am sitting on a Zoom call absorbing their every word. So you've got to learn, haven't you? This isn't about not investing in your learning, but it's kind of that learning from the right people at the time or that sort of, you know, how do you find your people to learned from?

How do, like, we both charge money for people come and learn from us. Why is that any different to what we're seeing online? Yeah, and I think this is why, as business owners, we need opportunities for people to get to know us before they buy from us, like podcasts, books, videos online.

That all helps, doesn't it? Because I've heard a lot lately that we're in this trust recession. because people are just so fed up with all the hype that we're being sold and over promising and under delivering.

And I think word of mouth when it comes to working with people is really invaluable. In fact, I've been having conversations today about this, about how do you represent yourself online in the way that people naturally would talk about you and refer people to you.

So, I mean, yeah, and I think that there is a lot for, even though I'm very big about being online, I think meeting someone in person, whether that's in the flesh or on a Zoom call, you know, having that interaction first really helps build the trust.

But I find people out and I also just think sometimes we see these really successful people and we don't quite feel aligned, but we think, well, I'm probably doing something wrong and they must be doing it right.

So therefore I should follow them. Just trust your gut. Yeah, trust your gut. This is what we're talking about is this long form content. So not posting on social media and worrying about how good your reel is or where you put your text, but it's kind of like if you find somebody being able to absolutely immerse, almost like binge their content, so this is where I think of books, YouTube, podcasts.

So you can binge listen to all of these podcasts, 50 episodes full of amazing nuggets of gold. You can read Erin's book, you could read my book. you watch a YouTube channel and you get to know whether this is somebody that you align with, that think about yourself working with that person.

picture that situation. And this is something that I talk about a lot now is that content is almost, you know, with AI and with the ability to make a PDF in two seconds.

You know that five years ago, that whole like, well, I need a lead magnet and I've still got my, 11 page guide to whatever is still my lead Magnet on my podcast because I haven't changed it.

But getting in front of somebody on Zoom, particularly for my medics who are all mostly service providing people who're going to ultimately work with people one-to-one on zoom, running a workshop or a webinar, even if you're absolutely petrified, getting those people into a room and explaining with them the value that you can give, the way that can help people on that call and subsequently I think is at the moment the best way of cutting through that noise, isn't it?

If you haven't got the book or the podcast or YouTube yet, build a workshop, get it out there on Eventbrite and get people into that Zoom room with you.

Yeah, absolutely. And I think one thing that stops people is the fact that when you run your own business, suddenly you're having to sell yourself. Whereas if you are working for the NHS, you know, behind that big logo, aren't you?

And somebody else is finding the clients for you and bringing them in. One quote that really, really helped me, and I always talk about it with my clients, is that selling is simply you offering someone the opportunity to help them.

And so when you're doing that kind of webinar, like that's all you doing, you, giving them all the information that they need in order to make a decision about whether you are the right person for them.

And I think that really takes the pressure off, thinking, oh, I need this fancy webinar and I sell and do the upsell at the end and it's like, oh, you know, it feels so hard.

But if you just think about it in terms of like people need that information to make a decision. And when you said just now about having a binge and consuming all that, have you heard Daniel Priestley, and I think I've got this right, he talks about the 7-11-4 framework.

And that's seven hours of content across 11 different touch points, across four different platforms. And to think

about having seven of hours content for someone to consume obviously can feel a bit overwhelming when you're just starting out.

But yeah, that can be blog posts, it could be email content, It could YouTube videos, and it can a book, a podcast. My podcast is three years old now.

And I, in this last year, I've had more and more people say to me they've listened to every single episode, and then they come to work with me. So it's a marathon.

It's not a sprint, but these things do work. They do. Right, so let's talk about the book then. So podcasts, we need to signpost people too. We'll put that into the show notes.

But you have written and launched a book. How to build a life-friendly business. And I want you to tell me a little bit about kind of the process of writing a books, what you've enjoyed, and what haven't enjoyed and tell us a bit more about it.

So I actually had a brilliant podcast which inspired the way that I wrote the book. And it talked about writing a book, I think she said the three S's, your story, the current situation and your solution.

And I just thought, bingo. I've got that I can do that. And so, you know, I talk about my own journey with building businesses around having kids and things like that and then I talked about the current landscape for female entrepreneurs.

And then I talk about my solution, which is my life-friendly approach. So I actually have had a course for quite a long time called The Life-Friendly Business Blueprint, Which had five modules.

And I was thinking, how can I write the book around those five models? And, I've actually tweaked them a little bit. Um, to make sure that I'm covering everything I want, but I basically, you know, wrote about that framework.

So I kept it really simple. I thought I don't want it to be like a long book for the sake of a longer book, because I didn't ever have time to read. So it's nice and short, it can be read in a couple of hours, and it is as simple as that.

So, you know, for anyone as well that's thinking about writing a book, I, It was so liberating to kind of just take that pressure off myself and just think it doesn't need to be massive.

And I think actually having it as a quick read has helped women read it, digest it and take action on it. has been the fact that they felt a shift in terms of how they approach things going forward.

A lot of, I need to simplify, you know, all these things. So I just really wanted to give them food for thought on how things could be rather than how we are now.

I love that.

Writing the Book and Final Advice

And I think that story situation solution, beautiful framing, And I, September last year, I didn't rush, but I had a book that I basically had in the notes section of my phone, which I'm sure is where yours started as well.

And i decided that i wanted to get it out for a conference. And I have missed this story bit out. That's what my book is missing. So I wrote a book. I had it proofread by about 20 people, and I managed to get it to the conference where I was.

And then I opened the front page. Oh no, I didn't. But I sent a proof home for us to have at home. My husband, who is attention to detail, anesthetist, you'd kind of need them to be attention to detail, opened the book and at the bottom of the first page found a spelling mistake that literally 20 people have read the books.

So immediately I kind fell out of love with it. Immediately I was like I don't like this book. And there was something wrong with the spacing on the second page.

The minute I saw it I didn't fall in love it and I think that's what I've subsequently struggled with. So I've kind of hidden it. It's available on Amazon, it's a really helpful read that somebody, Dave Hindmarsh, reviewed the other day for me.

I was like, really, I must get this book out there. But the another thing that I realized I haven't got is that story, that situational thing, because you're speaking from lived experience and I'm speaking for lived experienced.

And unless somebody sees that and hears that, and reads that lived-experience in your words, framework my solution is, and you know, I talk a bit about the situation, but mainly mine is solution focus.

You know people have got to understand who you are and why you're able to speak about this. you've run five businesses, you got two children, You've kind of made all the mistakes, worn all hats, done all things and that probably comes across I would imagine in your book.

And that's important isn't it? Yeah, absolutely. I mean, but the great thing about self-publishing, I'm assuming you self publish as well. It's the fact that you can change it.

And, you know, but I do think that because this is my second book, my first book was a collection of interviews with women in my community. It was called Mumpreneur Revolution, and that came out during lockdown.

So we couldn't have any kind of book launch or anything. But I felt very vulnerable when that went out. I could also hide behind everyone else's stories.

You know I topped and tailed it, So this time, it's like all me. And I did have that kind of moment of vulnerability. Like at the beginning of January, I was like, oh my goodness.

But actually, It's fine. As soon as I started getting feedback from people. It is a weird thing, like writing a book. Having a podcast is also a little bit vulnerable when you first start out.

But I don't know, there's something very, I dunno, about this tangible book, like just everything that you think in this book just handing it over to someone is a very weird experience.

Well, you've inspired me to write the beginning of the book and get it back out there because I am so passionate about women, mothers, People from the healthcare space, people from corporate sector, People that are looking to be able to grow something that they're really invested in, really passionate about, that's making a massive difference, That enables them to either be the mum they want, or for me it's around travel.

We have integrated three months of travel into our lives. and that's possible because of the way that my husband's approached his job and he's annualised his hours, but also I'm not tied to a salaried job, I am able to work from my computer.

So this is something that I've so passionate about. To know that your book's out there, your podcast's, out your community's please people get in touch with Erin and buy her book and then one day you'll be able to buy my book.

And they are like matching books when you put them together. They are exactly what everybody needs, I think. So we'll have to have like some sort of like two-for-one deal or something.

people go through. Right, brilliant. I'm going to throw this at you just in case they're on the top of your head. You've shed so much gold and I really appreciate your honesty and all of the advice you've already given.

What would be your sort of one piece of advice or three things or whatever that you would say to that kind of that maybe that Erin who's breastfeeding that first baby at home feeling anxious, feeling lost, Feeling like I can't possibly

go back to this world.

What am I going to do next? What sort of Advice would you give somebody in that situation? Who's maybe thinking about starting a business? First of all, it's all going to be okay.

I think we need to know that, don't we? We need know it is all gonna be ok. And I thing, you know, its very common to, in a moment like that whether its having a baby or having an illness or someone close to you having and illness, like have that moment of what do I really want?

And, I would say to talk about it to as many people as you can but also trust that you know, as time evolves that you will get clarity on that. But also the fact that, you don't need to know the whole plan to make a start.

I love that idea about, you know, walking through the fog. And as long as you can see a few steps ahead of you, the Fog will start to clear as she walk.

I know in my own life, I've got friends who just feel really quite paralyzed because they feel like, where am I? What do I want? And they're waiting for all the FOG to Clear.

and I don't think it often works like that. So, it's exciting because we can have different chapters to our lives. So I agree with you about being careful about taking risks.

If you have got a part-time job or something, don't necessarily get rid of that straight away to start a business. creating a buffer for yourself. But running a business can be the most liberating and fulfilling thing that you can do.

You can help so many people and you work in a way that enhances your life. I find it so inspiring that we've been able to integrate the travel when you've got school-age kids as well.

So many would automatically think that's not possible. So I think we need more people visible and more role models so that we can see what's possible.

Love that. Thank you, Erin, so much for your time. We'll link everything in the show notes. People find you what website, LinkedIn, Instagram? Yeah. So my website is lifefriendlybusiness.com and then I'm life friendly biz or Erin Thomas one on LinkedIn.

We'll put all of that below. I hope this isn't the last time we speak. Thank you so much for your time. Transitioning from medicine to business is not easy.

It's about adapting our skills while embracing the unknowns of entrepreneurship. for support. And don't forget to grab the free PDF from the show notes from stethoscope to startup, which is your go to guide and resource for diving into entrepreneurship.

Many thanks for tuning in. I will see you next time. Thanks for spending your precious time with me. This has been a Monkey Pants Productions Podcast.