



RT: Hi Tiana, thank you for sitting down with me.

TWB: I think it's going to be so much fun! Podcasts are a passion of mine – I listen to them and I even hosted one.

RT: Let's jump straight into that. I think you first came to my attention with a podcast, 'The Entrepreneur's Power Hour.' But for those who aren't familiar with your work, give people an idea of what you do – there's a lot!

TWB: I'm a business consultant and I like to work particularly with creative industries to help them build and expand their businesses. I started The Entrepreneur's Power Hour podcast with a bit of a selfish inclination. I wanted to learn more, and it was the ideal excuse that I could use to get to speak to experts.

I'd contact experts in business all over the world – sales, content marketing and so on – and I'd ask to interview them for my show. They always said yes, and I would learn from them. I then had a wonderful piece of content I could share with my audience so they could learn.

For me, The Entrepreneur's Power Hour was very much based on learning, and for my audience too. I loved doing it, and I interviewed so many interesting people, talking about

work/life balance, business expansion, marketing – all these aspects that small business owners come across all day long.

RT: I'm glad you fessed up to that, because you've just struck on the reason I put together my podcast. I've been really blessed to speak to people in my chosen industry, and sometime heard something I thought: "This is gold! I wish other people could listen to this."

That's exactly the reason for the podcast, and I'll be up front and honest that the reason I invited you hear today is not just for my listeners, but because I think I can learn from you.

TWB: We can all learn from each other. That's the wonderful thing about business and life. It's about opening yourself up to learn, and that's how we can evolve as people.

RT: You're known as the 'Get Stuff Done' business coach, a productivity guru, speaker, author (of the book "The Referral Harvester"), you've also got a property background and you've been a television personality...

Where do we start? Let's talk about 'Get Stuff Done', time management and productivity. Who do you particularly work with in the creative industry and what kind of challenges might they have that would be familiar to listeners of this podcast?

TWB: Time management is possibly the biggest problem of every business owner out there, not only creatives; it just so happens that I work mostly *with* creatives. I think one of the big issues people have is that no one has ever taught them how to prioritise.

They've got all these millions of things floating across their desk, inbox and voicemail with things happening, but they don't know how to prioritise, and that's one of the big issues.

Another big issue is that people don't plan properly – they tend to just knee-jerk all the time. Something happens and they react to it instead of planning. It's very much life happening *to* them instead of them making life happen on their terms.

At the end of the day, you need to set the boundaries and terms and say "This is how I'm going to work" and stick to it. That is possibly the biggest problem, and certainly with creatives they're good at what they do, such as design things or write things. But that's where all their mind energy goes to.

The nitty-gritty of doing accounts, running social media and all the other things that are part of business – they don't really want to find time for it, so it drops right down the priority list.

RT: Would you say it's outside their comfort zone?

TWB: Completely – it's not part of what they're interested in. Be honest, how interesting is to sit and do invoices? You've got to find a way to structure your time and your projects so that everything gets done, even the boring stuff.

But you also have to make time for free thinking and being creative, because that's what we all are, whether you see yourself like that or if you're in a creative industry or not. We are all

creative, because we're building businesses. You've got to make time for everything else, and it's just a matter of planning and structuring.

RT: It's really interesting, because I see a lot of parallels here. The predominant audience for me and this podcast would be technology and IT business owners. One of the biggest challenges I see, especially with small businesses, is that they're started by someone who's a really strong technician.

They're fantastic at fixing computers and setting up networks or designing websites, so people naturally seek them out for help. Then, they've got a business, employees and finance and they think, 'wow, I didn't sign up to any of this stuff!'

It sounds to me that this is a challenge that's across the board, not just for the IT industry?

TWB: Definitely. I have worked with some IT people before, and one of the big things I found in the industry is that they underestimate how long a task will take (and this happens in all business, too). A client will call in and ask them to fix a little widget, so the business owner thinks, 'that's a 10-minute job', but of course things go wrong and it becomes a two-hour job.

Their day then flows away from them, and time management becomes really difficult, because they underestimate how long things will take. All the things such as invoices, social media and marketing then drops off the radar. Their passion is fixing the widget or the software, and that's where they want to spend their time, but underestimating how long things will take is always a big problem.

RT: Let's dig into this a bit further. Can you give some practical advice, for technicians or creatives? How do they make sure that all the things such as HR, marketing, finance and personal development get done when they've got clients asking them to get on and do work every day?

TWB: *You* have to set the boundaries, because if you don't no one else will. It's up to you to run your life. I'm a big believer in time chunking, and chunk my week into 10 blocks – the am and pm of each working day. Certain blocks are allocated to certain things.

For example, both blocks on Wednesday is time when I don't do client work. It's ringfenced as business development. Then I do my marketing, blog writing, social media and anything else I need to do to run my business. If you do something like that, pretty quickly clients accept you're not available on that day.

We always think we have to be available 24/7 for clients, but that's a myth. Set your boundaries – allocate, for example, all day Monday for client work and decide to do the same on Tuesday mornings but leave the afternoon for something else. Your clients can wait for Wednesday. Look at your week, make chunks and ringfence one or two of these for business development, the admin and so on.

RT: Interesting. I don't know if you'd agree with this, but most businesses I speak to about chunking and making time for the important stuff will say, 'Oh, my client would never accept

that.' That's just an assumption, isn't it? What's been your experience when you've challenged clients on this?

TWB: I've never had a problem with it personally where clients don't accept me not being available. They're all business people anyway, and they understand how life works. If you set the boundaries people respect it, by and large.

I've never had a situation where a client was upset because I wasn't available on a Wednesday, for instance. With the clients I have worked with, they've set boundaries too and *their* clients have been perfectly happy with it.

Nothing is set in stone, so if a client desperately needs to see me on a Wednesday because there's a crisis, of course I'm going to do it. This is the structure that I work in, and people absolutely do respect your boundaries.

RT: Let's change tack a little bit. For the smart listener, they might have realised that the accent they're hearing is not a traditional Geordie accent. We're sitting at the beautiful Cophthorne Hotel, the staff have been lovely to us and we're overlooking the River Tyne. What brought you from South Africa to Newcastle in the first place? Tell us a bit more about the business that you do worldwide.

TWB: You might laugh and think I'm making this up, but I actually moved to the North East for the weather! It's cooler out here than it is in Africa, and I know people think I've lost my marbles, but I do like the weather.

I also left South Africa for political and safety reasons. There are some issues out there, and I got to a point in my mid 30s where I thought, 'I want to build a business and a good life for myself', and I didn't feel I could do it there.

So I thought about where I could go and add value to a community, and the UK came up. We moved over and lived down south for a bit before moving to Newcastle because it's a beautiful city. We absolutely love it here, but I still don't speak Geordie!

RT: When I try a Geordie accent it doesn't endear me to the locals! You mention other businesses you work with, which are predominantly in the north east but have worldwide reach. What type of people do you work with?

TWB: A lot of creatives, but not exclusively. A lot of them are video or film producers, graphic designers, writers and a lot of consultants – sales, HR and so on. A lot of them work either nationally or internationally, because for creative industries they're not bound geographically these days.

A copywriter can do work for clients anywhere in the world, which is wonderful. With technology advancing over the last 20 years or so, I think it's the age of the global small business. And why not go out and get clients elsewhere in the world? I work with my clients on global expansion.

It's wonderful to have clients all over the world, because it's so much more interesting. Personally, I have several clients outside of the north east and a few international. The only thing that bugs me is those wild time zones – sometimes I have to have a meeting with somebody in Australia and the same day with someone in Canada, and it's a little bit wide!

RT: As I alluded to when we started talking, I was aware of your work long before I moved up to the north east of England. You've got a fantastic presence online, and since I've moved up here, I have to ask if there's anyone in the area you don't know? Everyone seems to know you and speaks so highly of your work.

TWB: Well, that's very flattering! For me, I love meeting people and I make it my business to go out to meet company owners and employees in the north east and beyond. If I can help people by putting them in touch with somebody else in my network, I do so. I have a 'givers gain' mentality, so if I can put you in touch with someone else and it will be mutually beneficial for the two of you, why not?

I definitely use my network in that way, to put people in touch and help them along. That's what networking is all about, whether you do it face to face or online, and the key is to do it well. My passion is connecting with people.

RT: A lot of the listeners to this podcast, IT business owners – are very similar to me. The idea of walking into a room full of strangers, selling to them and finding customers fills them full of dread.

You wrote the book "Referral Harvester", which talks about effective business networking, finding referrals and being recommended into other businesses. For anyone who knows they should be doing more networking but don't, where should they start?

TWB: Networking can be terrifying, and when I'd just arrived in the UK with zero network, I had to go out and meet people. I was shaking, because you feel like all eyes are on you and I was shaking.

What I've learned is when I walk into a room where I've never been before and don't know anybody, I scan it and look for one friendly face. If I've met them even once before, that helps, but I go over, say hello and start chatting.

That person is usually in a circle of other people, so you automatically get introduced to them and off you go. It's about finding one friendly face. If there aren't any, go straight for the coffee. Take your time making your drink, because someone else will come up to the table and start chatting to you.

But, to pick up on what you said earlier, networking is not about selling – ever. I have never gone to networking with the intention of selling, because for me it's all about relationship-building.

Be a good networker and go out with the intention of meeting new people and see who you can help. Who can you put someone in touch with? Build those relationships and the sales

will happen automatically. If you're a good networker and you run a good referral harvester, it will happen.

It comes down to relationship building, and that's how I've always run my business. Right now, 89.7% of all new business coming into my business is due to referrals, and that's due to relationship building.

RT: My personal view towards networking radically when I flipped it on its head and started attending events so that instead of trawling the room, dismissing people as a bad fit as a client and getting bored with it, I went with the idea to talk to people.

I decided to keep my ears open, listen to what people were saying and try to connect them with others. I wanted to see how I could add value, and once I did that things really changed. The number of referrals that came in after that was crazy, and I think it's human nature to reciprocate.

TWB: Of course. That's one of the cornerstones of my Referral Harvester system. Human nature is to reciprocate, and our parents taught us when we were teeny-weeny kids that if someone gave you something you say thank you. It's almost instilling a sense of obligation to that person, and we're hardwired to do that, so why not leverage it to get more referrals?

Do this in a good way, of course. You never abuse people, because that's not right. It's all about relationship building, and if you're nice to other people, pass referrals or give them information, that's how it works.

What I find with people in general in terms of getting referrals is that it's almost random. Referrals just happen, and people are reactionary. I like to be proactive, and that's what the Referral Harvester system is all about.

It's a proactive system you can implement to get referrals, and to help you build those relationships with key people and identifying your 'A-listers.' It's almost as if referrals come into your business on a conveyor belt, but to succeed you *have* to be proactive.

RT: So apart from going out and picking up your book "The Referral Harvester", what's the one thing you would say to someone who's procrastinating about networking or referrals in general? What can they go away and do immediately after listening to this podcast to make life easier and better for themselves?

TWB: Probably the first thing, is if you want to go out networking and build relationships, identify an event near you. Then, whether you're new to networking or an old hand, sit and think why you're going to the event.

Work out a primary and a secondary goal for each event. That goal should never be to sell, but you need to have a reason for doing it. Be strategic about it, then read "The Referral Harvester"! Learn how to build those relationships.

RT: As well as talking about business networking, you also facilitate it. We're in the Copthorne Hotel on the Quayside, and you run a networking event here. Can you tell us about it?

TWB: Mind Your Business Networking came about around 18 months ago. I was in a networking group and it fizzled out. We had a core of four members left who were really nice people and we enjoyed networking together, but the organiser wasn't interested in maintaining it.

I don't quite know how it happened, but I created Mind Your Business Networking, and it grew organically. The basis of it is relationship building, even though it's a members' organisation. I've also made it so it's cost-effective, because many groups are expensive.

It's aimed at small business owners, and we never sell, we just build relationships. However, a lot of business is done amongst the members and guests but also through referrals.

You get to know people when you meet them every second week, so you build a relationship over time. It's about knowing, liking and trusting someone so it's easy to give a referral.

RT: Let's rewind a little bit. I know from other conversations that you're a voracious book reader. What's one of the latest books you've read that really made an impact?

TWB: I do tend to reread books from time to time, because I feel as we humans and people evolve we can learn more. I've just finished Brian Tracy's "Eat That Frog". Before that I read a book called "Do it Tomorrow", which I loved. It really resonated with how I work, and it's about not being reactionary. When something new comes in, don't do it today – schedule it for tomorrow or another day.

I'm just about to reread "The Winner's Bible", which is very much about mindset. As business owners, it's important to have the right mindset for expansion and to understand ourselves as people, because that impacts on your business. I think some self-discovery from time to time is a really good thing.

RT: Let's talk about the winner's mindset, and not putting things off. What does a typical day look like for you? How do you set yourself up for success each and every day?

TWB: For me, planning is the cornerstone of what I do. On a Friday, I always have two hours scheduled to do my planning for next week. I plan my entire week – I put the meetings in first, and then I look at what projects I'm working on. As I said earlier, you have to estimate how long a task will take you, and then schedule in enough time in the day.

What people do is write a to-do list, and that can be 77 kazillion miles long, and you'll never ever finish it. Instead, I work on a 'will-do' list, which is a closed list. If it's on the list, that's what I do, and nothing else is added to it unless it's an absolute emergency.

I only schedule in 75% of my time for the day because life happens and you need a buffer. You could underestimate a task, which could throw out your time management, a client

might contact you with a crisis or you might be ill. Things happen, which is why I don't schedule in more.

The other 25% I leave open for a buffer, and if the day goes well and nothing happens, I have that extra left over. What do I do with those two and a half hours? I can start the following day's work, get my teeth into a project I've wanted to do, or I can treat myself and go home.

For me, my typical day is absolutely scheduled. My to-do list is there, and I work through it. I don't cherry-pick, because I don't have to. Everything on my list for today has to be done today. The fact that I plan everything means that I get it all done.

Because you've planned your whole week, you make sure you get all the client work, the marketing, accounts, admin, business development and social media done. That means I get *everything* done.

RT: Fascinating. For the longest time, I've kept a to-do list and I like to think of myself as a fairly productive person, but it was a revelation at the start of this year when my friend, the author Chris Ducker, said to me: "If it's scheduled, it'll happen, if it's not scheduled it's not going to happen."

That was a revelation, because instead of putting things on this never-ending to-do list and wondering when I'd find the time to do something, I realised that scheduling is really powerful. There's a quote that says "You can do anything you want to, but you can't do everything you want to do" and that's very true.

TWB: Quite right. If it is scheduled it'll happen. I see too many people, particularly in the creative industries, where they have lots of ideas, struggling because you can't do all million ideas at the same time.

I work on a 'waiting room' system. Any idea that comes into my head I write down and it goes into my waiting room, which is really a drawer in my office. Once a month, I go into it and take them out. I say to myself: "I've got so much time next month to do a project. Which one of these crazy ideas has the highest priority or will have the biggest impact? Which am I interested in doing?"

I never take on more than three business development projects at the same time, because you just can't cope with them. If I finish one, I go back to the waiting room and pluck one out. It's a good idea to jot down your idea to refer back to, because if you don't you'll forget it or it nags at you.

RT: I use Evernote as my waiting room, because I'm a tech geek. I drop ideas for all sorts into it – blogs, podcast guests, projects. The main thing is that it's out of your head and down on paper.

TWB: Quite right! If you get it down on paper or onto your screen it's out of your head, which means it clears your brain space to focus on whatever you need to do. If you leave it rattling around with the other zillion ideas, you can't get anything done, so get it out. One of my

clients creates audio files – she speaks her idea and has a whole folder full of crazy things that she'll get to, and that's her waiting room.

RT: We've talked about business success, and you've been very successful at everything you've turned your hand to. What about the flipside of the coin? What about the mistakes you've made? Would you care to share any and what you've learned from them?

TWB: We learn much more from our mistakes, or failures, than our successes. Yes, success feels really good, and makes us all warm and fuzzy inside, but where you really get street smarts is when you hit a brick wall.

I've made many mistakes in business. I would say my biggest mistake in the last 10 years was starting a business without doing any market research. We'd just arrived in the UK and I didn't know the market at all. Each country and how business is conducted is different.

We rocked up here and thought, 'Brilliant, London, let's start a business', with no market research. We spent thousands to set up a limited company and get training, but there was zero demand. We had a beautiful business with a lovely flashy logo, but no clients! That was a shock to the system.

RT: So how do you market research now, before you kick things off?

TWB: I love research, and it's one of my favourite things to do. If I want to start something new – and believe me, I do *not* want to start another business right now! – I'd go and do a lot of surveys. Twitter is the best place to do market research, so if I was launching a new product, service or package, I'll turn to Twitter to ask people what they think.

I've got 11,500 followers on Twitter, and a lot of them are really engaged, so they're perfectly happy to give me their input. Sometimes I'll create a survey on something like Survey Monkey and send the link out, asking for help with my research on a new offering.

I ask what people think and if it's something they or someone they know would need. I ask how much they'd pay for it and what they'd like included. If you tweet that out a few times and you're quite strategic about it, you'll get 1,500 replies which is a solid core of data to decide what to do.

RT: You are the second smart and successful person to recommend going directly to your audience and asking them what they'd want, and that's something we so often overlook.

I've got a business venture I'm thinking of kicking off at the moment and I've gone off anecdotal evidence, 'Oh, yeah, that sounds good!' but the next thing I'm going to do is go to my audience and ask them what they think.

TWB: They're out there, they follow you and know you to some extent. Most people are willing to give their input, so why not ask them? You've built the audience and given them value over time, so they'd be happy to help you. Go and ask them!

RT: This doesn't just apply if you've got a big following and are well-known in your industry – if you've got a small IT shop and don't engage on social media but have a handful of clients, you can go out and ask them for advice.

TWB: Absolutely, and I do that. If I want to offer something new I go to my A-listers – the clients I've worked closely with and know well – and I can ask them for real feedback because I've built a level of trust with them. Go and ask, even if you've only got three clients. Buy them a coffee, tell them your plan and ask for their thoughts.

They'll be honest with you if you've built up a good, trusting relationship with them. Your clients are fantastic and the lifeblood of your business in more than one way. They can give you all the input and feedback you want. They can feed you with referrals and they're everything.

RT: Going out to your clients and asking those questions shows a little bit of vulnerability on your part, and I find it actually builds relationships with clients. They think more of you, because they like to be asked for their advice.

TWB: That's right. They feel that you trust them enough to ask them, and that builds those relationships. I've got really good, solid relationships with all my clients, and it's because I've worked on it and I ask them for their advice.

They know my business from a client's perspective and they experience what I do for them and the value I provide, so they're the best people to give feedback, as your clients are for you.

RT: How can people reach out to you?

TWB: Probably on Twitter: @TalkingTiana. I love connecting with people so I'm always on Twitter. I float about on LinkedIn, or you can visit my website, www.talkingbusiness.biz and look for the latest freebie.

RT: Is there anything we haven't talked about, or the one thing you'd say to people that they could do immediately to make their business and life a better one?

TWB: The best thing is to decide what do they want out of their business and where do they want to go? Then, decide on one thing that they can do to further their business, and do that every single day until they've achieved it. Take one action towards your goal every single day, and you will reach your goals.