

EXPERIMENT YOUR WAY TO SUCCESS WITH HALLEY GRAY

Welcome back! I'm so excited right now because we are joined by the amazing Halley Gray. She's the founder of Evolve and Succeed and she teaches people how they can get clients booked in advance. In this episode, she takes us behind the scenes of her entrepreneurial journey and shares how she's created a really successful business. It is full of so much goodness. We talk about experimenting, we throw some comedy in the mix — you are going to love it. Also, make sure you stick around right until the very end so you can hear how you can be in with a chance of winning her Gold Sales Page course, which is amazing. So, enjoy this episode.

Halley, it's so good to have you here. Welcome to the She Means Business podcast!

Thanks for having me. I'm so excited, Carrie.

I am so excited to chat with you and hear all about your backstory. This is very fun. I love hearing stories for the first time. This is going to be different and fun. Basically, we're going to pretend that a movie has come out. The movie is called She Means Business starring Halley Gray. The movie is all about your entrepreneurial journey, your entrepreneurial life and how you turned your dreams into reality. First off, to set the scene and let the audience know what kind this movie is going to be, what kind of vibe or feeling would your movie have?

Comedy, probably a quirky comedy.

OK, perfect. Let's begin the movie. The first scene starts to play and you're right back at the beginning of your entrepreneurial journey. What is the story behind why you decided to become an entrepreneur?

I was living in New Zealand. I was half a world away from my family in a shitty job. I got a call that my mom had stage 4 colon cancer. I was tied down by all these life choices I made from a job that I didn't really like and didn't pay very much. I had to work and wait 6 months before I could go back and see her. What I found was that when I was taking care of my mom and seeing what it was like to be at the end of a life versus at the beginning of a life is that you really can't wait for someone to give you an opportunity. You can't miss out on second chances. For me, it was about making sure that whatever I did for my career, particularly because I wanted to start a business, I had to be in charge of it and in control of it and make sure that it created a life that I wanted to live, not just a life that I felt indebted to live.

Wow, that's a tough choice, I suppose. It must have been very emotional at that point.

It might be a dark comedy.

Yeah, when we have those life-changing moments that can just completely change our perspective on what direction we need to go in. From having those feelings, how did that then translate into starting your own business?

I put everything I had into it. I knew I wanted a business. I didn't know what I wanted for a business, which is the hard part of the whole process. I just started doing what I love best, which is putting a science perspective on it. I started experimenting and testing to see which business model suited me best and what I could sell in terms of writing as a service. I find selling your smarts online is just the easiest, quickest way to making good money fast, especially with a small audience. I just put all of my focus into it and just kept experimenting. I didn't want to waste a moment. I was really driven to figure out what it was. Actually, it was an answer that I didn't expect because I found something that was

really easy for me that I overlooked. That was actually the best way forward for me because I was giving people advice and they were telling me, “Oh my God, that’s amazing. I just made thousands more dollars this month and I had nothing before.” Seeing them go from living in other people’s bedroom floors to being able to have their own apartment, that was stuff that I was just “All right, great. Glad to give you advice.” It finally took a friend to yell at me and that I should be doing it for a job. I was like, “I’ll think about it.” Really, it was the hero overlooking what they should be doing and bumbling about for a little bit.

How did you feel back then? I know what it’s like to not quite know what direction to take, to know you need to be doing something different but not know what that is. For me, it was so annoying; I hated it. How did you feel? When you did come to the realisation of what you wanted to do, what kind of thoughts did you have running through your head at that point?

I love experimenting and testing. For me, I enjoyed launching because that’s how I would test my services. I would launch a new package. I would test to see what sold and what didn’t see. And then I would keep doing that to find out what the winners were and what the losers were. To be honest, I had a lot of winners so it was more about turning it into consistent income. That’s where I was “This is fucking terrifying.” That lack of consistent cash is something that I turned into a method for myself because I was really tired of waking up at 3 AM with panic attacks.

I love that you experiment. It seems to me you are overcoming the fear of failing because you’re anticipating that maybe some of them aren’t going to work out. They’re going to be like your case studies to figure out what the formula is, whereas most people are petrified to do one thing because they didn’t want it to fail. It’s a good perspective and an outlook to have on it —just go at it from a scientific perspective.

Yeah, definitely. I feel like when you shift your thought pattern from “This is the start of everything” to “Hey, this is an experiment. I’m going to keep trying.” That’s really all your business is. You can do something one day that works and the next day, it doesn’t work. That’s because you keep experimenting.

So true. After you were experimenting and doing these launches, what was the next thing that happened? How did the journey unfold?

Basically, what happened next is that I got tired of inconsistent cash and income, so I turned my focus on getting booked out months in advance. I came up with this methodology of how to do it. I tested it and I was booked out for a year in advance after launching it.

Wow.

It was a great moment for me.

Yeah, it sounds like an epic moment for anyone and any business to be booked out for a year in advance.

It was a lot of happy dancing, fist pumping and high fives.

I love it. What were the things that you were doing that enabled you to create that success for yourself?

Basically, I moved away from VIP days because those really aren’t sustainable on a smaller audience scale. I looked into how to package my services so that they work together effectively. I offered longer-term packages so that my clients got more success and allowed me to stabilise my income. The VIP days are amazing, but you give all this awesome information to people and then they just don’t process it. Your clients get all this awesome gold sitting in this PDF, but if they don’t put it into practice, it’s useless. Having that accountability every month was something that allowed them to actually work through it and get results so they can move forward. Just like you were saying, they

don't want to experiment, they don't want to launch and they don't want to test things because of fear of failure. Pushing them to keep going out there and experimenting is a crucial part of being in business, especially the marketing aspect.

It is so true. I feel like that is all business is — experimenting. Like what we talked about before, when you have that perspective, all of a sudden, you can take the setbacks and the failures because you're like "Oh, I guess it didn't work this time. Move on to the next experiment." You have to keep on going figuring out the formula. You obviously created that massive success getting booked out a year in advance. What were you doing in terms of getting your message, your business, and your idea out there in front of the audience?

When I first started out, I spent a lot of time being in Facebook groups and just listening to people and offering specific advice. I find that when most people end up diverging from their audience or putting out a generic blog post is, it's because they're not listening to people that they want as customers or clients. What happens is that I try to stay and talk to people as much as possible, and learn what's bothering them specifically. And then I spent a lot of time turning that into blog posts, turning that into services, turning that into sales pages because all those specifics are what really help your marketing connect with people and hit them in the heartstrings, instead of just like "You're another coach. All right, move along." For me, it was all about getting into the trenches with people, figuring out where they're struggling, how I could help, and then offering free advice to test the advice, but also to make sure I was helping people around me.

Throughout this phase and throughout your entire entrepreneurial journey, have there ever been dramas that have come up along the way or twists and turns you didn't expect or anything like that but you feel was significant and also important to share for anyone else experiencing those same things?

In the beginning, I found it really invigorating to be in business. I was testing and experimenting. I felt excited about doing business. Once you've been hit back a couple of times, you get a little bit more cautious and you lose some of that enthusiasm. For me, it was about keeping that enthusiasm. Even when you're experimenting when you're in business, the stakes become so much higher. Initially, you're maybe cocky or something. It just feels like everything is exciting and everything is new. Once you stick around along a little bit longer, you're like "Oh, I'm going to launch again. That's not as exciting as it used to be. I wonder how I can make it exciting this time." It's really about keeping your enthusiasm and your drive for testing and experimenting up because once you get bored and complacent, that's when you start to go extinct.

Yeah, that is so true. What has helped you to keep the motivation? With the other people that I have interviewed, the topic of mindset and personal development seems to have cropped up in one form or another. I feel like it's such a huge thing for every entrepreneur. I think being an entrepreneur is growing and learning as individuals. What has really helped you in that aspect?

Definitely, it's been about testing stuff out. I find that if I read too much, I get information overwhelm and it doesn't feel very useful. So I try to test the information that I've been given to see if it works or put a spin on it. Surrounding yourself with friends who like to push the bar and keep moving forward is really important because they will inspire you just through their own actions. It's really easy when you're surrounded by people who go to 9-to-5s to feel like you've already made it because you're sitting at home on the couch at 11 AM drinking coffee. It's important to have other online business owners who are like "Hey, what about this?" "Oh man, you're right. I could be doing so much more." That's why the quality of people around you is so important. They keep you alive and invigorated. Having hobbies outside your business — I don't think people say that enough. If you don't have an inflow of new ideas and experiences coming in, things are going to get stagnant pretty quick.

That's true. What do you do for a hobby in your spare time?

I do stand-up comedy.

I was going to say where are the jokes? Throw some jokes. Now, here is your stage. Hit me with it.

It's not really how it works.

No. You can't be a stand-up comedian and not do anything.

I don't specialise in bad jokes — that's the only problem.

It's OK. My brother does stand-up comedy. It's hilarious. Every now and again, I do a blog and I keep trying to get him to use his comedy on it. "No, it's beyond filthy."

That sounds awesome. I would love to listen to it.

Yeah, he dresses up and he'll kill me for saying this but it's funny. If you think of any funny jokes you can share or any of your old sketches that you want to share with us by the end of this, then feel free.

The cool thing about stand-up is that you go up to an audience who you've never met before. You have to figure out what they find funny and what's on their mind at the moment. And then you have to figure out how to surprise them. Comedy really is about surprising people. You go along a certain path and then you change it. People are shocked and that shock turns into delight and surprise. That's usually what humour is — it's about turning people's expectations and all of that stuff against itself. That's what makes people laugh.

That's so cool though. You have to have guts to get up on the stage and try to make people laugh.

It was pretty horrific the first few times I did it.

It must help to really grow as an entrepreneur because you're growing so much as a person. I feel like entrepreneurship is so much about facing your fears and doing it. What could be more petrifying than standing up on a stage trying to make people laugh? That's terrifying. I think it was last year or the year before, I entered my brother James into this comedy competition without him knowing. I told him eventually and he was like "I am not doing it. There's no way you're getting me there." I actually was a bit mean and played the bully role. I know he's good, he's doing this. "You can't disappoint yourself. Where are you going to get to in life?" I was really mean, but he's my brother and I'm allowed. Afterwards, he was such on a high because he actually faced his fear. Every time I have that experience as an entrepreneur, when I do something that terrifies me, it feels so liberating. For you to have that in two different aspects of your life is pretty cool.

Yeah, I really enjoy it for that reason. It keeps you fresh. The way you look at problems from a comedy angle is useful for my own business angle as well. Comedy is like "Oh yeah, that sucks. How can we make that funny?" What can we take from it that will make people laugh even if it's just your suffering because people find suffering pretty funny when it's other people, especially on stage. Basically, it's really useful for changing perspective.

I love that. Now, we're getting into a really good part of your movie. Your dreams have become a reality and you created success in you life. At the moment, what is your life like?

I think at this point, it gets a little bit more exciting in terms of starting to go up the hill and climax. I've just hired this amazing team of people. I'm really excited about it because the whole premise of Evolve and Succeed is selling your smarts online is an easy way to

get money. People always need smart people on their team. Now, I'm hiring all these amazing people who are bringing their smarts to Evolve and Succeed and now, it feels more like a business. For awhile, you're doing it all by yourself. You're wearing pyjamas for weeks straight and you're drinking coffee like it's your job. It can get a bit weird, a bit feral. When you have people join you in a team, you feel like a captain of a ship instead of rowing a dinghy.

That's really cool. I think a lot of people want to know how to grow the team and expand that way. I felt for a really long time I was suffocating my business because I didn't know how to get someone to work with me. I was such a control freak. I didn't want anyone else touching my business. I think a lot of entrepreneurs feel that way. How did you find help? Was there anything in particular that you did which enabled you to find the right people?

First off, suffocating my business was exactly how I felt I was doing, too. I think that's totally normal. Hiring is not my strength. I think it's important for you to find people who basically take your weaknesses off your hands. I tried hiring multiple times and I read everything there was to read. I think I just might be too much of a soft touch because I would hire people that I liked or I wanted to give the job to, but couldn't bring what we needed to the business. I actually hired out the hiring and that worked out really well.

That's cool.

Yeah, that was really great. For me, I didn't need a VA, I needed a project manager. I have no problem coming up with ideas and creating strategies and stuff, but to manage a team—manage people inside that team—that is not my skill set right now. It's definitely well worth you being “Hey, what do I suck at?” and then figuring out who you should hire first. I should have hired a project manager first and then a VA. If I had to go back and do it again, that's what I would do.

It's really cool that you got such good perspective on what your strengths are and what your weaknesses are so that you can hire out help. So often, we feel like we need to do everything ourselves or we don't give ourselves the space to realise "You know what? I think this would be a million times better if I got someone who is actually expert in this area to take onboard." I remember when I was building my first business. I built it for awhile by myself. Eventually, I found companies to work with to do SEO and Google AdWords. It was just transformational. All of a sudden, we got to another level because I had these people who literally day in and day out, that's all they worked on. It was easy for them to sit there and make it work for the business. It was such a good lesson to learn.

That's smart of you.

It's still difficult to find the right people sometimes. Sometimes, I just put it out there and I feel like the universe answers back. All of a sudden, these people arrive or a friend says "Let me introduce you to somebody." Oh wow. At least, that's how it's worked out for me.

And I think people are not very good at selling their services. That's why I based my business around it because there's a lot of smart people who just don't know how to market themselves. You find them and you're like "Why are you not booked out because you're really good at this? If you only knew how to talk about it better, you'll get better clients." People are really talented but it's hard to find the talented ones because they're not talented necessarily at marketing.

Yeah, that's true.

You can't be great at everything.

Exactly. We all need a note to self with that one. We try to be great at everything. We think we have all the answers and we think we're Superwomen.

You should see my spreadsheets. They're a horror show. They just keep getting messier and messier.

That's funny, honestly. I sometimes feel like my life as an entrepreneur is such a mess. My husband recently bought me these plastic white things you stick on the walls so I could write stuff on. He was like, "You are so unorganised right now. You need to get this all out of paper and organise yourself." OK, so I write everything on the wall. He was like, "If your head was not attached, you would lose it." So often, I look around at other people and oh my God, they've got everything together. They know what they're doing. They really got everything figured out. I just don't. I don't have it figure out and I'm not an expert. That's how I felt about stuff. And then I thought you know what? This is the most liberating this ever. I have this really successful business and I still don't have a clue. This is great! Obviously, there are areas where I do have massive knowledge, but in so many others areas, I don't. I'm still trying to figure it all out. I think it's fun and I think it's the most liberating thing to realise.

The more I realise that people who are really, really great at running a business are probably not great at spreadsheets and not great at doing admin stuff. That's why VAs are crucial for the online world because they're the people who gets things done. Business owners who think big term have a brain that thinks in different connections and synapses. I think that's your strength. I just think it just doesn't translate well to organisation and systems.

I have to work at that stuff. To close out your movie, if you want to add some comedy in here, it would be a great time to do it. What is the biggest lesson you've learned throughout your entrepreneurial journey?

That's a good question. I think that humour actually is a super key part of keeping going — humour and a lot of gin. If you can't handle changing finances, chaos and unpredictability, it's going to be a tough ride and it's a tough ride for people who like risk and chaos. Again, if you saw my admin side of things, you would know I'm chaotic. I think it's just really about keep moving forward. At the end of the day when you are on your death bed —clearly this is more of a tragic tale than a dark comedy— yeah, I didn't get my spreadsheets right, but I totally did the best with my business, the best I could with my relationships, and the best I could with my stand-up. You know what? That's fucking enough because you are your own gauge of success. Who gives a shit about what other people think? Just keep trying.

I love that. I'm a wine-o. I rely on wine to help me.

Exactly, right? Wine solves all evils.

We all need a vice. Well, I think your movie is epic. I would definitely go see it in the cinema. I'm sure everyone would, too, so thank you for coming in and sharing with us. I loved hearing all about it so thank you. Very excitingly for everyone listening, if you would like a chance to win the Gold Sales Page course (amazing!), all you need to do is head over to the blog and leave a comment. All the details are over there and just let us know your key take-away has been from this session. Have you loved it? I'm sure you have. I have absolutely loved it. Definitely go and get involved in that. Also, go to Halley's website EvolveAndSucceed.com. She's got so much goodness going on over there. Everything is going to be in the show notes so just check it all out. I hope you loved this episode and I will see you next week for another episode of She Means Business.

[End of Audio]