

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison



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You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 78.

Welcome to *The Design You Podcast*, a show where interior designers and creatives learn to say no to busy and say yes to more health, wealth, and joy. Here is your host, Tobi Fairley.

Hello there friends. Today I'm bringing the coolest interview to *The Design You Podcast* because if you own a business, if you're listening because you're a designer or you're a stager or some other creative or your spouse owns a business and you're tired of them working all the time and you're tired of yourself working all the time, you absolutely want to hear today's interview with Adrienne Dorison.

So Adrienne works with the business, for the business, she owns the business called Run Like Clockwork. And it's the business that she partners with Mike Michalowicz, who wrote a lot of great books that you've heard me talk about like Profit First. Also the book Clockwork. And they have this amazing business all around how to help people just like you and just like me create a business that essentially runs itself.

And that, my friends, was the best news to my ears ever when I found this book Clockwork. So today, I have an amazing interview with Adrienne all about how to get your business running like clockwork, how to get out of your own way, how to learn to delegate, and all the parts and pieces of creating this kind of business so that you can have more freedom and more balance and more fun in your life.

So listen to this amazing interview with Adrienne and I'll see you back here at the end of the show to tell you a couple of other exciting things. Okay, enjoy.

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Tobi: Hey Adrienne, welcome to *The Design You Podcast*.

Adrienne: Thank you for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Tobi: I am so excited and I know my audience is going to love this conversation. And those of them who don't love it at least need to hear it. So I love that they're hearing this conversation.

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

Adrienne: They'll love me later.

Tobi: Exactly. Tough love, right? So let's kind of tell everybody a little bit about how you fit into the whole Clockwork world because I know my audience has heard me rave about Mike's books, Profit First and Clockwork and a lot of the principles of those. So tell everybody where you fit in, what your expertise is, and kind of – y'all got a lot of cool things going on, so just kind of set the stage for what that work is that you do.

Adrienne: Yes. So I actually worked in the corporate manufacturing world for years doing operational efficiency. The short story is that I left and started my own consulting practice, doing efficiency for small business owners, and have been doing that work for about six or seven years on my own, and then when Mike was writing Clockwork, which wasn't called Clockwork at the time, he was still in the early writing stages.

He was looking for someone who had basically the same experience that I had from the corporate world but was applying it to the small business space. So we actually had a mutual friend who said oh, you actually need to talk to Adrienne if you're writing this book. So we got introduced and he planned to only interview me one time.

If you've read Mike's books, you know that he kind of interviews different people and he synthesizes all of their ideas together really well. And so it was initially just supposed to be one interview and then he kept calling me back. And again and again. And so we ended up collaborating on a lot of the intellectual property and frameworks that are inside of Clockwork, and then he asked me to essentially run the business because he knew that people were going to read the book and some people would be able to implement it because Mike's books are very actionable and step by step.

And then he knew that there would be a subset of his readers that would actually want more support, and he also knew that he was not the person to give that to them. So he asked me to run that company, and so we have co-founded the Run Like Clockwork company. So he kind of is mostly responsible for going out and speaking about Clockwork and sharing the message of Clockwork, and I run the day-to-day and CEO of that business. So that is my – how I'm involved in that operation and really my role is to keep Mike as little involves as possible.

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

Tobi: Which I love because that's really the entire concept of the book and the whole philosophy. For those of you who haven't read the book yet, it's really about how to make your business run like clockwork without you being in the middle of all the parts and pieces.

And this is so relevant to my audience of creatives. We have lots of interior designers and architects and stagers and event planners, and just you know, creative business people. And they find themselves in every role, which is so overwhelming. And being on that treadmill and all that. So let's start to talk a little bit about some of the principles of this concept of running your business like clockwork because there are some key terms that have to do with the 4Ds and there's some stuff about the queen bee.

And a lot of us think we are the queen bee but maybe we shouldn't be playing that role in our business. So can you kind of talk us through briefly what does – of course I've read the book, underlined almost every page and tried to take it all the heart, like what else can I get rid of. But for those who haven't scoured the pages like me, tell us a few of those key pieces, especially the 4Ds and how that start to show up in a business and get a CEO out of some of those roles.

Adrienne: Yeah, so that's the big idea is that as entrepreneurs, as CEOs, there's so many things, especially in the beginning. We pretty much have to do everything and so then we get kind of basket-woven into every area of the business, every department of the business, every decision that the business needs to make, which can be really suffocating and challenging as the business continues to grow.

And at some point, you as the owner will become the bottleneck to the business's growth as well as you become kind of entrapped in the thing that you create to give you more freedom, which you know does not happen when you're the one kind of keeping the wheels turning.

So that is the whole premise is like, how do we get you unravelled from some of that without compromising anything? Without causing the business to suffer at all. In actuality, it will allow the business to thrive at an even higher level if we can remove you from a lot of those pieces and keep you focused on the things that really only you need to be doing and only the things that really are pertinent for you to be doing, which there's a fuzzy line there for so

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

many entrepreneurs because we think we need to do everything and it's just not true.

So the 4D framework I think is the first place that everyone should start because it's going to give so much awareness around where your time is actually going and where you really want to start shifting it towards what we would call the more ideal. So whatever your ideal day is, I always tell my clients and business owners to really visualize, what would be an ideal day for you in the business. What does that actually look like?

And then we want to understand how do we need to change the status of the current business to get you there. And I always tell people suspend your disbelief that that is not possible because sometimes we're like oh yeah, that sounds nice but I won't even dream it because that'll never be possible for me. And you wouldn't believe what I have seen people create just by taking those daily action steps.

So the 4Ds are all of the work types that we see entrepreneurs and people inside your business traversing as they go throughout their day or throughout the years. You're doing different types of work and so knowing what those different types of work are will help you elevate into the next work type. So I'll just cover them briefly and then maybe some of the challenges that come with each.

So the first one is doing. They're the 4Ds so they all start with D. Really easy here. So doing is when you're actually executing the task. So like I said, in the beginning, you're probably doing everything, which is fine. That's how things had to start. But doing is very valuable. Doing is what adds value to the marketplace so we need to have doing going on in the business but it doesn't necessarily need to be you doing all of that doing anymore.

So the first one is doing. Second is deciding, and this is the really important one that we coined for the book that most business owners aren't aware of. And so by us putting a name on it and you understanding it, I think it's going to give you a lot of clarity throughout your day-to-day. But deciding is when you've assigned a task to someone else but you actually still own all of the decisions around it.

So you might have new team members, and this is what typically happens when we get maxed out with the doing. We can't possibly do any more, and

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

so we hire a team member and we think it's going to make our lives so much better, so much easier. And then, everyone who's hired a team member knows exactly what happens.

It actually creates more work somehow. How did this happen? I thought I was going to have more free time, when at the end of the day you're exhausted. You're like wow, I made 407 decisions but I didn't get any of my own work done, which is the higher value work. So that is a really tough place to be and sometimes we end up just whiplashing back to doing it all ourselves because we say it was just easier when I did it all myself.

Tobi: This was the biggest a-ha for me in the whole book because I thought I was delegating a lot and I wasn't delegating at all. I was still deciding. And it's so easy, even when you learn to be a good delegator, and I had gotten better at it but you accidentally fall back into deciding. Because just one day you're like, oh, I'll just make a decision or instead of sending something back to a team member and saying fix this and this, you just do it yourself, which is the kiss of death.

And before you know it, you're right back in deciding. So this one was huge for me because I think you're exactly right. We think we're doing it wrong because we're like well, they told me to get team members and I've got all these team members and I'm paying all this money, but I'm still doing all the work. And if that's happening to you, it's because you're not delegating, you're just deciding.

I mean, it's wonderful to have some people do some other tasks, but at the end of the day it's just decision fatigue day in and day out, which is the part really that exhausts most of us is our mental fatigue. Not our physical fatigue, right?

Adrienne: For sure, and that's the thing that also makes us almost like, question ourselves. We're like, why am I so tired and why am I so irritated and why isn't this getting any easier? Like you said. Then we feel like we're doing something wrong and potentially, we are doing something wrong. I always tell our clients that we have to take personal responsibility as a leader and there's just a better way to delegate.

And having that awareness of like, it's not that you think the hiring process is wrong or you think everyone else out there has this unicorn that they hired.

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

We fire them and we go through the process all over again and the same thing is happening, and it's because we need to really understand how to get those decisions off your plate. Not just the task rabbit work that is sometimes helpful. But like you said, sometimes you have these team members working with you now and you're still spinning your wheels, you're exhausted, your husband asks you what's for dinner at the end of the day and you want to murder him.

Tobi: Exactly. Not one more decision. All of you can starve. I don't even care.

Adrienne: I'm like, I'll eat a bowl of yogurt. You do you. Whatever you need to do, I don't care. But sometimes we even make more money when we do it all ourselves if we're trapped in this deciding because ultimately, you can't grow and scale the business effectively if you're still responsible for all of those decisions.

So we want to move you to the third work type, which is delegating. And delegating is when you're actually assigning an outcome to other team members. So the outcome – they're taking responsibility for the decisions. They know what they're responsible for in terms of the outcome, and they have the permission to make decisions within that area, whatever needed to achieve that outcome.

And that's going to look different for every business and every role, but even when I share this with people, they're like wow, even if I think about my current team members, I don't even know what outcome is that I want them to achieve, so how could they? Which is just good clarity for you to have and for you to improve from. It's not to make you feel bad about it. It's like, every new piece of nugget and learning is like oh, well let me even look at my current team and kind of think about that.

Like what are the outcomes that I really want them to achieve? Whether it's based around their entire role or based on a project basis, but that will give them more autonomy to actually make decisions within that area so that you can do some of the work that you need to be doing or free yourself up to do this fourth work type, this is the designing.

And this is all about the creating of the future. This is where I want most of our CEOs and anyone who kind of classifies themselves as a visionary, that is where I want you spending a good chunk of your time because you need to

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

be thinking about the strategy, about the vision, about how am I going to rebalance the team. Do I have the right products?

Thinking about all the future pieces of the business that really you are the one that has those answers more than anyone else on the team, but you may not have the space to actually come up with those things because designing needs space. Visionaries need space, and if you're trapped in the day-to-day of making decisions all day long or still doing a lot of the actual work then you're not actually probably doing a great job of creating the future for your company.

So those are the four. We do some time tracking with all of our clients so that over the course of five days, they could see how much doing, how much designing, how much delegating, and how much designing is really making up their week. And what most people find is that they're spending a lot of time doing and a lot of time deciding, and the deciding is the one that's actually very hard to capture.

So now that you know it, you'll be more aware of it, you'll be like that's deciding, that's deciding. Every time a team member is coming to you with a question, so knowing that in advance before you time track is super helpful because it's something that is, like you said, very neurologically taxing. The more neurologically taxing thing that we can do, and it can become a major trap for the growth of your business and to creating more freedom for yourself because all you're doing is entrapping yourself even further into every area of your business.

Tobi: Yeah, and what I see a lot with the creatives that I coach is a couple of things here. So the two that we want to spend the most time in the delegating and the deciding of course are the hardest mindset wise. Really to shift yourself into that kind of thinking. And I think that when I think about myself and I think about the people I work with, it makes perfect sense that we would spend so much time doing and then deciding because that's our comfort zone.

We don't have to let go of very much, we don't have to do that much preparation, like you said, to decide what the outcome needs to be. And it's so fascinating because a lot of these people are designers. Interior designers and other types of designers by nature, but when it comes to designing their

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

own business, there's a ton of fear around that. So they just go back into the doing where they're comfy.

And I think also, a lot of times I see people having a difficult time stepping out of some of these roles because they get all of their validation from the actual doing of the work. Kind of the stroking and the very happy client when you do an installation of a home and bring all the pretty stuff in, all the doing, that's what makes people happy.

And so I see people hesitant to release what they think is fun work and their identity when they don't have any idea how fun it could really be if you've released a lot of that stuff. So they're entrapped in that whole well, if I get rid of all this stuff, what am I going to do? And where is my role? And how do I feel important or validated?

So how do they start to make those shifts? Because in the day-to-day they're exhausted but in the decision making time of okay, I'm really going to let some other people sink or swim and learn to take on some of these roles and I'm going to be okay with that, they just can't kind of pull the trigger. So how do you make that shift?

Adrienne: I mean, that is like, what you just described is so common for our clients, and even to a point when they start working with us and clockworking their businesses, they start to reinsert themselves. They will get the doing off of their plate and then subconsciously, they're reinserting themselves because of this very thing of number one, getting a lot of self-validation and self-worth from our doing, or the work that we actually do in the business.

So if we're not doing or if we're not busy doing, then what is our value as a human being? So we have to do a lot of personal work as it relates to what is – your value is you are you. It has nothing to do with anything you produce or do. And really understanding what your highest value is to the organization is probably more related to that designing of the future versus the actual doing of the implementation or execution.

So you need to really understand as the CEO what is my highest value to the business and how can I transition my work life to be spent more in that space that so that I can do more of these installations for clients, so that I can employ more artists and more designers and creatives who are actually also

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

very incredible at this work if I give them some direction, if I give them that vision and guidance that they maybe really need.

And so you as an individual get to design that for yourself. You get to design what is your ideal and can I risk the – what's currently comfortable. Comfortable is relative because when I say that to people they're like, but I'm not comfortable, I hate my day-to-day. I'm exhausted. I'm like, well it's comfortable enough because you know it.

So comfortable enough to not change anything. Because changing something is at the risk or the potential, the possibility of something better. And something better is available for you. And you won't even know it until you start shifting and taking those baby steps. So I always tell people, let's start small. You don't actually want to do this all in one day or one week. You want to start really turning that dial, 30 minutes, an hour at a time just so that you can start dipping your toes and seeing the proof because that is what's going to keep you going. It's going to show you wow, I actually have so many ideas for the actual execution work for my clients when I have the design time.

And maybe you don't want to fully remove yourself from the doing. You don't have to 100% remove yourself from the doing, but I always tell people like, just be very intentional with how much doing you are actually involved in. Even in that ideal state, because doing is dependent on you and the revenue is dependent on you to continue that doing, then you are essentially the business.

And that can be a very dangerous place to play as a business owner, especially as you're serving clients and delivering things for them, if you've ever been sick or if you've ever had a family emergency or even the positive things where you want to be able to take time off and you're just feeling so entrapped in the business. Well, if you could remove yourself from a lot more of that doing and play more in that designing space for the business and really just make sure that you have the right team and they're doing the right things and you've got the right systems, that's a much more flexible and freedom-filled space to live.

For myself, I'm currently pregnant so I'm like, I'm so grateful that I have clockworked my own business and we've designed something that my clients will still be 100% supported, but they'll realize I'm gone because I'll be having a baby and we talk to them. But for the most part...

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

Tobi: They won't miss you because they will be cared for.

Adrienne: Exactly. And I'm so grateful for that flexibility, to be able to take that maternity leave, whether it's a positive life event that you're going through or unfortunately, a negative life event that we just never think is going to happen to us. And you just never want your business to be the thing stressing you out when those types of situations happen and you need to be present for other areas of your life.

Tobi: Well yeah, and then there's the financial piece even day-to-day, even when you don't have a big exception or an extenuating circumstance, just the inability to make any more money than you can currently make. I always call it like you're the center of the wheel and kind of every spoke comes off of you and you can't grow any bigger when you're that way.

And I think so many people in any kind of business, but especially creatives accidentally build their business that way where they are the only one. If they're not working, they're not making any money. And then there's the cap maybe that the market puts on how much you could potentially charge for different types of services a little bit. I mean, I know there's some room in there.

A lot of people don't charge what they could, but even at that, there are some limits on how much you're trading dollars for hours essentially. And so there's no way to stop doing that if you're the only person that's really in the doing. So isn't part of that this concept in Clockwork about the queen bee role versus – I always think of it, it's funny, it's like there's the queen bee role but you're not necessarily the queen bee and we think we are.

So that was a little bit – not really hard to understand but it's a little bit hard to pinpoint. So what is that? What is the queen bee role? Because I think once you can pinpoint it, you start to see oh, this makes so much more sense to me. It's not me as the queen bee. My face is not on the thing. It's actually the role we're trying to fulfil or the deliverable we're trying to create for our customer.

And once you can see that without your face kind of on it, it helps you I think remove yourself a little bit from some of those jobs. So tell us what that looks like.

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

Adrienne: For sure. So we got this concept by looking at bee colonies. So bees are the most efficient organization on the planet. So we were looking to them to understand what do they know that we don't, and how could we implement that for our business.

So the queen bee role is essentially the thing that allows the bee colony to not just survive but actually thrive within nature. So it's not the queen bee but the role that she plays. And the role that she plays is the laying of the eggs. So in a bee colony, that is the most important thing. It's the most important activity that we have to make sure is protected and is happening.

And it's less about the individual and more about the role, which is super important as we translate it to your business. But the reason we know that is because even if that individual queen were unable to perform that duty, they will spawn a new queen to make sure that that role is being filled. So they can continue to perform that role regardless of the individual who's there.

Now, all the other bees, they actually have what we would call primary roles. They have primary jobs that they do. And those primary jobs are like the other things that they do within a colony. So maybe it's going out and getting food, or maybe it's protecting the larvae or cleaning out the hive.

So there's different responsibilities that they have and they all know that the most important job is protecting the queen bee role. So making sure that that thing happens first. The laying of the eggs. And then, once that has been protected and served, then they can go and do their primary job because they know that their primary job actually doesn't really make a big difference if the queen bee role is not being protected and served.

So we thought about this and we were like, how does this relate to your business? And so every business has what we call the queen bee role, which like you said, it's not about the individual. It's about the activity that is actually being delivered maybe through that individual at this time. But if we can identify what it is, what is the thing that actually allows us to not just survive but actually thrive within our marketplace, with this business, then we could probably replicate that so that it's not just about the individual. It's about the role that that individual potentially plays.

So the way that we kind of have reverse engineered it even since we wrote the book, we've kind of tossed out a couple other ways to figure this out and I

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

always tell people the best way to start out is to figure out what is your big promise to your customer. What it is that you really promise to deliver to them, the thing that really they want very badly and gets them the result.

So ours, if you think about the front cover of our book, it says design a business to run itself. So your big promise to your customer is probably somewhere within your marketing message. It's usually the reason that they sign up to work with you. If you don't know your big promise, you could probably go ask them. Your customers. They'll know.

They'll know why they work with you. And then you want to peel that big promise back a layer and think about okay, now how – what is the activity, what is the how in which we actually are able to deliver that. What is the activity that we do?

So for bees, their big promise is survival in nature and the most important activity, the one singular activity is the laying of the eggs. That's the most important one. Now, it doesn't mean that they don't do other activities. It just means that that's the one that has to be protected and served first and foremost.

So when you think about your company, think about that big promise, what is the promise to your customer and then what is the most important activity we do to deliver on that to them? This will require you to start eliminating some things, usually have people do this on some Post-It notes, write down all the activities you can think of to deliver on that big promise. And then start eliminating.

Start going through and saying you know what, if I still had to deliver on this big promise and I had to remove one of these, which one would I remove? And slowly but surely, you'll get to the most important one. And that's the thing that you really want to make sure you're protecting and serving. You might be in the queen bee role, but you also might not be. That's something else that a lot of our clients determine once they do this activity.

They're like, oh, I actually don't even serve that right now. Three of my team members are the ones that are serving that. And I'm like great, that's even easier for us to remove. But if you are the only one serving the queen bee role, at least now, like you said, we've identified it as an activity, and it's much easier to put a process and a system and identify okay, if in the future we

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

want someone else to do this, now we clearly know what the it is and we can transfer that to someone else on the team.

Tobi: Yeah, and I think where we confuse ourselves is seldom is the queen bee role something that really truly can only be done by us. Basically never. We want to believe that we're the only one. Say for example if it was an interior design business and the most creative design is the queen bee role, we want to think well, I'm the only one that can do that, but that's really not true.

Now, if you're in scarcity mindset and you're not willing to pay somebody at this moment it might be, but in the grand scheme of things, if money weren't an issue, not only are you not the only one, there might be somebody out there that's even better at it than you, right?

Adrienne: For sure, and that's what I always tell people like, number one, figure out what is the queen bee role and are you the only one serving it right now? If you're a little bit cash flow resistant to hire someone right away into that queen bee role to help you duplicate it, or to help you completely take over, what I would suggest you do first is think about or look at your 4D.

So looking at all of your activities that you're doing. And look at how much of your current week is just that QBR, that queen bee role. And if you can maybe hire someone to take on some of the other things, the easier things to transfer, like the administrative or support staff things that are going to be easier for you to hand off just emotionally from the control center, as well as it'll be easier for you to train, easier for you to hire someone in that position. Probably cheaper for you to hire someone in that position.

And at least free yourself up so that the only thing that you're doing, if you're doing anything, it's QBR related. It's queen bee role work. So now maybe you've doubled the amount of time that you're able to spend on that QBR. That is absolutely number one going to grow your business. And then you'll have time to systematize and really think about how you want to transfer this to the next individual who could also serve the QBR if you want to fully remove yourself from the QBR. At least have a backup or someone else who can deliver on it, which I think is really important for a business.

So even if you're the type of creative who's like, I never want to fully remove myself, at least if you could have someone else who is also able to do it, like

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

you said, most of the time we can get someone even better, and I always say that different is better. If you're thinking what's my most creative design installations or whatever, you have one angle of that but by bringing someone in who can understand your brand and your vision, but also brings their own ideas to the table, that is going to only add to the QBR. It's not ever going to take away. Looking at different is better.

Tobi: Yeah, such an abundance mindset. Instead of feeling like you're going to get replaced, you actually can think in more of an abundant way and think not only am I not going to be replaced, it's my business, I get to run it the way I want to, but this is going to make it even better. I love that.

And I think the other thing that you said that's so important is we fool ourselves in that in our minds, we spend 90% of our time in our queen bee role for our company, and the truth is we spend like, 2% in that and the rest of the time we're three hours on cleaning out our email inbox and two hours on dealing with something with an employee or a vendor, or something that came in broken that you ordered for someone or whatever.

And none of that is the queen bee role for most companies. I mean, it could be. And not just that the creative piece is the only queen bee role. For some companies, the customer service is the main differentiator for them or some other piece. So we're all different and our businesses are different. We have to see why do our customers hire us specifically and then get real brutally honest with yourself.

Okay, how much time am I really spending on the thing that makes us the most money? The thing that sets us apart, which I think, it's scary to admit and you're like, wow, this is kind of almost embarrassing that I'm really not even spending that much time on the thing, and here I am exhausted and worn out, right?

Adrienne: It's so helpful to have that awareness because then you can immediately start shifting and immediately start making different decisions. Because you'll have this whole new filter for when those things do come on to your plate in a given week, or requests come in, or you find yourself spending so much time on these other things and you're like, now that you have this new filter of where you really want and should be spending more of your time to allow the business to grow and be more functional without you and serve

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

your clients at a higher level, you can start more easily saying no to those other things.

You can start easily – what we call like, trashing some of those other things and just completely deleting them because you realize they don't actually move the needle. And you can get some of those things off your plate just by having the awareness about like wow, I really don't spend as much time as I really want to or need to on the most important things like the QBR, for example.

So that awareness is yes, hard, it's challenging, maybe have a drink before you look at your time tracking for the week. But it's so valuable once you know it because I always tell people you can't unknow this stuff as you go throughout your week. You'll never look at a team member the same when you're getting all these questions coming through.

Now you're going to be like oh, this is deciding and how could I equip them better in the future to make this decision on their own? So sometimes it requires us to slow down a little bit so that we can speed up. So often as entrepreneurs and CEOs, all we want to do is speed up and that just is going to run us into a roadblock at some future date. Whether it's because we're burnt out personally or because we just don't have the capacity to actually serve more people at that limited level of us being the one who makes all the decisions.

Tobi: Yeah, and that is the designing because I've been doing this now for the last six to nine months really designing how the different parts of the business works and I love it because when something comes across to me in Slack that's like hey Tobi, what do you think about this social media thing? I don't even look at it. I'm like, you need to ask Zack that, our marketing guy.

And it feels so good but I know I can trust Zack because we spent a lot of time designing what does the Tobi Fairley brand look like on social media. What does she say? What does she not say? And that's really what you mean by the designing, right? The designing the parts and pieces and departments. So you can feel confident and I think that's the difference.

When people feel insecure about stepping away from a role, it's like they forgot that they're also going to take the time to design it before they step

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

away. You don't just step away cold turkey and be like, well, y'all have at it. Good luck with that.

Adrienne: Right, and that's where people get into trouble. When they lose a lot of confidence in growing a team or handing things off, and then they just want to hold on to the reins even tighter. So super important that you are yes, taking the time to design and properly delegate like I always tell people. Spend more time in the delegating than you think you should in the beginning, and in that design area so that when you do hand something off, you're handing it off with that confidence, with that trust, and that the team member can be successful.

Because if we want to hire amazing A-players, they truly want to be successful too and it's our responsibility to make sure they have the tools to be able to do that. And sometimes we don't, and we actually drive them away because they're operating in a system that couldn't possibly let them be successful. They don't have any other resources they need.

Tobi: Right, so around this idea of how to create that more autonomous team that can run without you, it's designing those systems. What else? What else do we have to make sure we do so that we're creating that – not only the confidence for us but that ability for our team to be successful, and really us get out of the way because how many times I've been a bottleneck in my company over the last 20 years. And it's so painful but you don't know how to get out of the way a lot of times.

Adrienne: So I always tell people there's only three reasons that I've identified that someone on your team is not making a decision for themselves. So if you can run yourself through this filter and if they can use this tool, it would be really helpful for them from the team member approach as well. So the first reason is they don't have permission.

So a lot of times, they're not making a decision because you've never actually given them permission to make a decision and sometimes that's just as easy as saying hey Tobi, I totally trust you to make all decisions related to this in the future. Anything under this umbrella, you've got permission to make a decision around it if it leads to this outcome. So that's number one.

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

Sometimes you've also given them permission but you've actually taken it away inadvertently. If you give them permission and then you immediately once they make a decision you go and you change it.

Tobi: Which is so easy to do because you're like, I would never have picked those words or that photo or that whatever for this job that they did.

Adrienne: And so that, you want to be mindful around and then people are like, well then how do I make sure they're making the right decisions? Well number one, they're not always going to make the same exact decisions as you, but like you said, we have to design the systems and the tools for them to have the right information so that they can make better decisions and correct decisions, even if they aren't the exact same decisions as yours.

So the first permission. Number two, information. And this is where it comes down to you slowing down and really thinking about what does someone actually need to make a decision in this area? Because as entrepreneurs, we're much more comfortable operating with limited information. We're natural risk takers. Our risk tolerance is pretty high comparatively to probably our team members and employees.

So they need a little bit more information, and usually the information either lives in our head or it lives in a locked Google doc that they don't have access to. So it's taking the time and thinking what information do they need? Do they need to understand the copy voice that I have and how can I transfer that information to them? Do they need information on our color branding guides that we use and do we already have that that I can share access with them for?

And if not, what do we need to do to create it? Could they lead the way on creating it and just come to me and ask for pieces when they need it? Versus you doing the default just answering their questions, which is easier in the moment than creating the system, but it keeps you entrapped versus creating the system, which you do that one time and now you're released from all future decisions. So it's a compound effect.

So number one, they don't have permission. Number two, they don't have information to actually make a decision, or number three, they don't have the confidence to make a decision. Now, confidence can come from – or lack of confidence therefore is either because they don't have number one and

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

number two, they don't have permission or information, which will lead them to not being very confident.

Because their job is on the line. They're already risk averse people typically, and now they don't have the right permission or information. They're scared you're going to fire them if they make the wrong decision.

Tobi: Yeah, they don't want to get in trouble, right? I don't want Tobi to be mad at me, I don't want to be in trouble. I don't want to do a bad job, and most people want to do a good job too. They want to succeed.

Adrienne: Totally. People want to do a good job for you. We just have to make sure they have the permission, they have the information, and that you're responsible for helping to build their confidence. So doing a few small wins at first is going to be the best approach for both of you. So don't hand off this big high-stakes project that involves a lot of high-stake decisions that they don't really feel comfortable with yet.

You don't really trust them yet, they can feel that energetically. They're like, she doesn't even trust me to do this and now I'm even more scared. So start small. Start building their confidence. Start recognizing them for the decision-making that they're doing, even if it's maybe not the exact decision that you would have made. You still need to have a safe environment for them to number one, make decisions, and number two, for them to make mistakes.

Because we have this idea in our head that our team members shouldn't be allowed to make mistakes, although most of my greatest learnings come from the mistakes that I've made.

Tobi: Yes, we're allowed to make all the mistakes, not that we want to, but we're allowed to but anybody else makes one and we're like, we're taking that out of their paycheck. How in the world could they make that? And we're like, oh yeah, I forgot I did mess up that \$4000 thing a couple of weeks ago.

Adrienne: Or maybe I need to write information to actually make a good decision. So I always say instead of attacking the person, attack the process. If there isn't a process, there you go. How could we create a process or a tool or a system to help them make a better decision in the future? So attack the process, not the person.

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

Figure out okay, if it's a safe place to make mistakes and maybe debrief mistakes after they happen, what could we do in the future to eliminate this? How could we help you make a better decision in the future? Did you not have information, permission, confidence, right? It's usually information when they're making a mistake that we didn't properly transfer that to them. Or maybe there just wasn't any information. They were just operating at the best they possibly could, and that's something we can use as a learning to improve for the future.

So we have to be thinking in that way if you really want them to have more autonomy and be improving for the future because this is also an area that they can actually grow and develop and add even more to your future company if you let them. But a lot of times we're just so quick to be like, you made a mistake, you're out. And if that's the approach, you're never going to keep people for very long and that's also very expensive.

Tobi: It is, yes. So I love this. It's been so helpful. So as we really wrap up, because I know one of the cool things about Clockwork is it teaches you, and it's one of the things you even said you're working on is taking literally four weeks completely out of the business off, completely unplugged, which you're having a baby so that's going to be great. But even if you're not, this process teaches you how to step out of your business to that level and I think you've given us so many tools for that.

But what about for the people that are listening that want to get there, they're still on the treadmill, maybe they're even still solopreneurs, or just have a part-time assistant and they just can't get their head around how to afford this. So as they're kind of getting there, they're starting to believe you and us and this conversation, what can they start to do when it's just them to move in this clockwork direction?

Do they start the processes and documenting things? How do you go – I can see where so many people would just sort of be stuck there of I want to go over there where she's telling me, I see it, I see it on that island over there, but I'm over here on the other side of this ocean. I don't know how to get over there. I don't know what to do. So what's that first step or shift to start going from the solopreneur treadmill to a business that runs itself?

Adrienne: So the first thing that I want people to do is number one, you have to have that 4D time tracking to get some awareness of where your time is

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

actually going because whether you have zero team members or 38 team members, there is an improvement available for you once you know the data.

So that time is our data. Just like we look at our financial reports, our time is just as valuable. It is money so we need to be looking at it. So when you look at where your time is going, the first two things that I want you to do as a solopreneur or even someone with a small team who's just trying to move in the right direction is you're going to identify what you can trash.

So these are the things that you just do not need to do anymore as a company. So not that you need someone else to do it, but really the company doesn't need for it to happen. It's not a value add to the customer when we really think about it.

And sometimes these are challenging for people to think about because they're like, I have to keep doing everything. But I really want you to call that into question. I really want you to think, do I have metrics to support that this is really valuable for me to keep doing? Is it really something that my customer would essentially pay for? And if not, is it really a value add? Because that's really how we would quantify a value add to the organization. It would have to be a value add to the customer.

So even if it's like, a recurring meeting that's been on your calendar for years that you're like, why do I keep going to that? Or like, maybe that's not as valuable as it once was in the beginning. So calling that into question because the worst line that I hear from number one, when I used to work with corporations and I still hear it with small business owners is like, I do it because we've always done it.

Tobi: Exactly. The industry has done it, everybody who's anybody that's in this industry does this, it's just the way it works. I hear that all the time too. And people are shocked when I question the fact that something they just identified in their mind as part of their industry or their role, they can't fathom that it could go away. And then they dig in and they're like, oh my gosh, you're so right, nobody even cares.

Adrienne: Nobody cares. So that's like, a really good example of you don't have to fully – because sometimes we get all wrapped up in our head of like, but I can't trash this forever, what if it is really important? So I like to play a

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

game with our clients. Just trash it for three weeks and see if anything changes.

Tobi: Exactly. You can always go back. I tell people that too.

Adrienne: And most of the time what they find is a lot of freedom in the release of it because it was something that was taking them a lot of either actual time or emotional time. Any time you're splitting your energy throughout the week on multiple things, which we all are, the more you can reduce that and eliminate that, the more efficient you will be, the more valuable your time is going into the right places, and so it's a value add for the entire company.

So start to question and even have someone else, like whether it's a coach, spouse, a friend, a colleague in the business, have them look at your time tracking and help you identify things that you can trash because you are way more attached to things than someone else is from a third party perspective.

And the same thing like you were saying, everyone else in the industry is doing this so I must need to do it, I would actually argue that's a really bad reason to do something. You should probably be looking at what would make me different and maybe I need to think of removing some of these things because everyone else is doing them. What's the point?

Tobi: Let's be a little progressive and innovative here. Let's just not get on the same treadmill they're on and keep doing it the same way.

Adrienne: You're trying to change the industry, not just be a cog in the wheel here. So number one, trash. Can you trash anything? Because if you can trash even 30 minutes from this week and reallocate that towards a more valuable work type, like a designing or a delegating, or even a higher value doing, it's going to be a value add to the company.

The second thing you can do is trim. So if you cannot actually trash the thing, if you're like, oh, I can't completely eliminate it, but maybe you could – what we call trim it, which would just be to tighten it up. Slash it in half potentially, or even more than that. We've had clients even trim their actual product line.

So they've gone from like, 60 products all the way to 10 products. They completely trimmed 50 products from their suite, which allowed them to focus

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

on that. The other thing is like, trimming actual doing time, or a meeting time. Because Parkinson's law states that a task will expand or contract with the amount of time that we give it.

So if you have a meeting on the calendar that is an hour, it will last an hour. If you have a meeting for 30 minutes, it will last 30 minutes. If you are working on copy for your website and you give yourself all day, it will probably take you all day. If you give yourself three hours, it will take three hours.

So this is the way our brains work. So if you can trim by actually giving yourself some constraints, you can find so much time in that calendar whether it's a couple hours a week or even a couple hours a day. I've seen people do just by constraining and trimming certain things. And that's something you can do.

These two things, trashing and trimming, you can do those whether you have another team member or not. Just start reallocating that time either back into your personal life if freedom is what's most important to you, or number two, back into the business in a more valuable work type, which is going to grow the business and probably give you more cash flow so that you can hire that next team member.

The other thing I want to say about being a solopreneur and thinking about that first hire is don't think of this as an all or nothing. So many times I see people that wait way too long because they think they have to give someone 20 or 40 hours a week when you could find someone to even free up five hours of your week.

An hour a day where they're getting five hours off of your plate, what could you do with five hours to again, reallocate it towards a more valuable work type and then three months down the road, because they've given you those five hours, now you can increase their hours to 10 hours a week. And now it's a snowball effect.

So even if you could stop thinking of like, either I have to have them full time or I can't have them at all, start thinking about maybe I could bring someone in for a few hours here and there just to free me up from some of these maybe more monotonous or support style tasks, or things that are easier for you to transfer off of your plate.

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

So that will give you the trashing and trimming first, and then thinking about okay, now can I potentially start to transfer in the future. Even if it's not full time, it will be a snowball effect once you get started.

Tobi: I love – gosh, and those who know me and know that I teach so much in my own program about time management, time blocking, scheduling, and until you put it in that schedule you don't even know how you're spending your time, this just fits so perfectly into that. It makes me so happy to hear it. I mean, honestly, it's freedom. Just the concept. Which is why I related to this book and this concept so much.

And I'm so thankful that you have shared so much for people, and I know they're going to be – if they haven't already stopped if they're driving or whatever they're doing listening to this, and order the book or reached out to you and see what you offer, I know they're going to be so excited about this. So why don't you tell them where you are, what y'all are offering. I know you have some cool things coming up with Clockwork and how do they – if they want to know more about this concept, how do they know more about it?

Adrienne: Yeah, so if you go to runlikeclockwork.com, all of our free series that we run, webinars that we do, so we do a free QBR webinar every now and then as well as our RLC, our run like clockwork accelerator program, which is a 12-week online training program where we deep dive into all the pieces of Clockwork, which also includes a two-day live event with myself and Mike to really kind of capstone your experience and get you and your team clockworked.

So all the information for everything that they could possibly want, even the book, free resources, podcasts, et cetera, it's all on runlikeclockwork.com. So whenever you're listening to this, that will be there for you.

Tobi: Perfect. Well thank you again so much and I know you're going to soon be relaxing with your four weeks completely unplugged now that you run your business.

Adrienne: It won't quite be like a vacation but...

Tobi: It won't quite be like a vacation but being a mom is the best thing on the planet. I have a 14-year-old daughter and it's just – not that it's all easy, just like running a business, but it's so fun and so worth it. So I know you're going

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

to have a ball with that. And like you, I wish back when I had Elison 14 years ago, I think I took maybe two weeks out of the business but not unplugged and it was brutal. And so I wish I had Clockwork back then and it's going to be so helpful I know to you and to so many other people.

So thank you so much for just really kind of unpacking, unboxing, clarifying a lot of this for us. It's been just fascinating and so helpful and I'm just super grateful you are here.

Adrienne: Well thank you for having me. This was really fun and I think that even if people just implement one of the things that we talked about today, it will start moving you in the right direction. So I know we were joking at the beginning that you might not love me at the end of this but I promise, this is work that is worth it, like you said. So this is the building of the future. This is the foundation. This is how you get to that big vision that you have for yourself and your company, and this is like, CEO stuff. We got to put our big girl panties on.

Tobi: I agree. Well thank you for teaching us how and good luck with the baby and I hope to talk to you and maybe have you back again on the show soon. So thanks so much. Bye Adrienne.

—

So I hope you enjoyed that just as much as I did. Gosh, there were so many amazing takeaways from this episode for me. And this is something I'm really putting to work and to practice in my own business right now. I mean, I don't know about you but the idea of being able to take four whole weeks away from my business and everything not fall apart, the money not stop, the clients not get mad, just the thought of that is maybe the most exciting thing ever.

So if you want to learn more about this concept of Clockwork and running your business like clockwork and more about the courses and the classes and the tools and the free resources that Adrienne mentioned then head over to runlikeclockwork.com and check it all out.

Okay friends, you are welcome. Absolutely, you are welcome. I hope you put this stuff to work in your life like I'm putting it to work in my life, and maybe we can meet up when we're on that four-week vacation pretty soon and have a

Ep #78: Run Your Business Like Clockwork with Adrienne Dorison

toast to Adrienne because she changed our life. Okay, I'll see you next week. Bye for now.

Thank you so much for joining me for this episode of *The Design You Podcast*. And if you'd like even more support for designing a business and a life that you love, then check out my exclusive monthly coaching program Design You at tobifairley.com.