



## Ep 109: Lessons Learned After 12 Years Of Entrepreneurship

[00:00:00] Welcome to the pimp your brilliance podcast with Monique Malcolm. A show about leveraging your existing knowledge, unique skills or passion to build a thriving, creative business. I aim to show you what's really possible when you stop letting fear have all the fun and start taking action towards your goals.

[00:00:21] You can learn more about this show and subscribe for updates by visiting [pimpyourbrilliance.com](http://pimpyourbrilliance.com).

[00:00:28] Thanks for tuning into this episode of Pimp Your Brilliance. I'm so glad that you're here. This is episode number 109, and you can find show notes at [PimpYourBrilliance.com / 109](http://PimpYourBrilliance.com/109).

[00:00:40] Today's episode is pretty special because 12 years ago. I filed the articles of organization with the state of Florida and made my business official by making it an LLC, a limited liability company.

[00:00:56] And I did that all the way back in April, 2009. And here we are fast forward to April, 2021. A whole 12 years has passed since I started on this journey to entrepreneurship. And it has been a wild ride. There are definitely highs and lows. I'm just really excited and really thankful.

[00:01:18] And I thought the best way to celebrate this milestone in my business in my entrepreneurship journey would be to do what I think is best, which is to share [00:01:30] to teach. And so I sat and I thought really, really hard about. What do I feel were the most important lessons that I have learned along the way?

[00:01:39] What would I want to share with someone who is just getting started or who has been on the journey, but not as long. And I came up with 12 lessons, 12 things that I would want to share with you. If we sat down for some tea or sparkling waters, and we just had a conversation, this is what I would share.

[00:02:01] This is what I would tell you. And so. It's going to be 12 lessons. So this episode may be a little longer than normal, cause I need to get through all 12 points. But before we get started, I do want to say thank you. If you have ever purchased anything from me, any of my brands, if you've ever shared it on Instagram, if you've ever tweeted, if you've ever posted on Facebook, if you've ever emailed me, if you've ever said something nice or shared my work with someone else.

[00:02:33] I just want to thank you because you don't get to do what I do for as long as I have without support without other people believing in your message and your vision, and wanting to invest their hard earned time and money into it, or wanting to share with

someone else. And so I really appreciate that. I wanted to make sure I said that first and foremost.

[00:02:56] I try to express my gratitude for you, dear listener, as much as possible, but you don't make it to 12 years without people supporting. And so thank you first off, and now let get into these lessons because again, 12 it's kind of a lot, but I want to start with the lesson, the piece of advice that I'm always giving.

[00:03:18] I'm always giving this on podcasts, interviews and things like that. But lesson number one is to start with what you have. I think that this is really the premise behind pimp your brilliance. The idea of leveraging what you already have. And a lot of times people approach problems from the perspective of what they don't have.

[00:03:43] And I have learned along the years that there's not a solution there for you. If you approach your problems with just so much of a focus and emphasis on what you don't have. It's really hard to find a solution. It's really hard to see the possibility that is there, but when you reframe that and you shift that perspective and you start with what you do have, maybe you have time, maybe you have resources, maybe you have unique skills that you can leverage for the thing that you need.

[00:04:15] You start to see what's possible and what you can do and what is really available to you. So I always give that as advice to just start with what you have focus really intensely on. What do I have right now that I can leverage that I can give, that I can loan, that I can do whatever to someone else to get the thing that I need.

[00:04:39] So my first lesson is always going to be start with what you have. Lesson number two is the work you do as a beginner is never going to be the best work, but that doesn't mean that it isn't worth doing. And I can tell you after 12 years, I mean, I'm looking back 10, five years ago, and I'm cringing at the work that I did.

[00:05:06] Some of it is ugly. You know, if you know anything about my story, I got started in apparel crafts. I was. Selling t-shirts and things at craft shows. And sometimes I go back and look at those photos of my booth display at that time. And they were ERG Lee, just not great, but at the time I thought the work was worth doing.

[00:05:31] And I was so proud of what I had done. And so to look at that now, obviously I'm looking at it through. 12 years of learning design and 12 years of honing my eye and 12 years of practice. But at the time that work was good enough. And if you think to your own self, whether you're a beginner or you're someone who has been doing this for a few years, the work that you're doing right now, you're going to look back on this work and you're probably going to cringe, but the reality is no one starts out creating amazing work on day one.

[00:06:09] A lot of the work that we're creating is good enough for right now, it's a start and you're going to improve. You're going to create something better and it's going to be good enough for the season that you're in. But that doesn't mean that it isn't worth doing. You still need the practice. You still need to show people what you can do.

[00:06:30] There are going to be people who buy that ugly work. They're not going to think it's ugly. They're going to invest in it. And you just have to get really comfortable with that

and know that you will improve, that you can't beat yourself up for being a beginner for creating work. That's good enough for the season that you're in.

[00:06:52] And the best example I can give of this is my friend Ursula, my friend Ursula. We have been friends for years from the very early days of my business because she found me on Etsy because I was selling t-shirts at the time. And I made this shirt that was. The cupcake thief, you know, I'm obsessed with cakes.

[00:07:10] So I had this whole line of shirts that was based on the cupcake thief and the cupcake kid. And at the time she was a cupcake Baker. So she saw the design and she liked it and she bought it and then she reached out and she asked me to design so many other things. And when I look back at some of that work, I'm just like, Ooh, like it was not great, but.

[00:07:34] It was good enough for the season that I was in and I never turned down the opportunity to create the work. I just kept creating it. And I thought it was good. I mean, at the time that was what I knew. And so I thought it was good and I kept making, but if it wasn't for me taking that step forward and continuing to create that work, I would not be the designer that I am today.

[00:07:58] That basically was the catalyst for me, eventually learning how to use. More advanced illustration tools and learning the entire Adobe suite and doing the visionary journal. All of that came from that one opportunity. So I say this again, the work you do as a beginner is never going to be your best work.

[00:08:23] Okay. It's not, it's just not, but that doesn't mean it isn't worth doing. You just don't know what kind of opportunities. We'll come just for you taking that step and doing the work, even when it's an ugly stuff, lesson number three, forget trying to be, yeah. An expert focus on being a resource. And I feel like there are so many people who have really great information and like things that they can share, but they are so caught up on this idea of needing to be an expert.

[00:08:58] I don't feel expert enough. I don't feel like I have something to contribute because I'm not an expert who cares experts are not the only people with opinions. They're not the only people with experience. They are not the only people with skills or insight. You don't have to be an expert to be able to share, but I know this is a really big hangup for some people.

[00:09:22] So I want you to reframe that and don't even focus on trying to be an expert. You can be a resource and as a resource, you're sharing your knowledge. You're sharing your information. You may even be creating resources because you realize the way that experts are doing it is hard. And it's hard for the common person who doesn't have that expertise.

[00:09:45] I'm saying that with air quotes, it's hard for them to understand. So as a resource. You are standing in that gap and helping translate the experts information into a way that is digestible for the everyday person to understand. And doesn't that feel so much better? Doesn't that feel more approachable and don't you almost feel excited to be a resource versus an expert.

[00:10:09] So don't worry about trying to be an expert. Love, be a resource. Lesson number four, be aware of the sunk cost fallacy. Feel free to change your mind or pivot when you need to. Some cost fallacy is when someone continues a behavior or an endeavor as a [00:10:30] result of previously invested resources. So we're talking time, money, energy, whatever you have sunk cost fallacy is real and it keeps a lot of us.

[00:10:42] Very, very stuck. I can think in my own experience about times where I have created something, I invested a lot of time in it. Sometimes I invested a lot of money in it and I did not want to leave that thing behind because of the sunk cost fallacy. I had already put resources into it. So I felt like I needed to stay that path to make it work, but sometimes it doesn't work.

[00:11:08] And sometimes you recognize that. But you let sunk cost fallacy get in your head and you think, Nope, I can't abandon this because I spent too much money on it or I spent too much time on it, or even I've already announced it to people. And so they're going to be expecting me to do this thing. Well, you can change your mind.

[00:11:28] You can change it a thousand times and yeah, some people may have something snarky to say about it, but ultimately. You know, if that thing was in, right. You know, when it's time to pivot, you know, when it's time to move forward. So don't get trapped by thinking, because I've already invested or resource into this.

[00:11:47] I have to continue on this path. You can change directions, you know, what's best for you. So don't let sunk cost fallacy, keep you stuck. Keep moving, keep changing. Keep pivoting lesson number five. Dedicate twice as much time to promoting your work as you do creating your work. And this is one of those things that I'm constantly having to remind myself, and I'm not even the best at it, but I want you to adopt a two for one promotion strategy, which is basically if it takes you two hours to create that work, you need to be spending four hours promoting it dedicate twice as much time to promoting your work.

[00:12:31] We tend to over create and not do enough promotion. And you need to try to spread your work out, get your message out as far and as wide as you can. And the only way that you're going to do that is by investing more time and energy into the promotion piece, do not neglect this. Okay. It doesn't matter how many podcasts episodes I create.

[00:12:55] I can create hundreds of them. But if nobody is listening, if nobody is engaging that I'm not achieving my goal, because my goal is to make sure my business is profitable it's to share my work is to get paid for my work and my ideas. And if I'm being too shy to promote, then I am not meeting that goal.

[00:13:16] So whenever you create two for one, for every hour of work, you put in, make sure that you are allotting twice as much energy into the promotion of the work. Don't just focus on the creation. The promotion is really where the magic happens. Number six, find what works for you and do that. And I know this may sound contrary to a lot of the messaging that you hear online, but here is the thing, you know, how you work best don't override, what works for you to follow the advice that you see online.

[00:13:51] Sure there are best practices and a lot of people are touting best practices. And there are occasions when maybe you want to follow the best practice. However, the best practice may not be the best practice for you. So you're going to slow down your progress

and you're going to waste a lot of time trying to fight against your natural tendencies and the ways that you work best.

[00:14:14] So do what works for you, even if it's unconventional or it goes against everything the gurus say. If this is truly how you work best, if you are, you are at your absolute best in those circumstances, do that. Don't override it. Don't try to downplay it. Just roll with it. Number seven, kindness is the rule, not the exception.

[00:14:42] And when it comes to the online entrepreneurs ship circles, they are small. Even more. So if you are a part of a marginalized group, so as a black woman, entrepreneur, trust me when I tell you almost all of us know each other. And if we don't really like one or two degrees of separation away, because it's small, it's a very small space.

[00:15:07] So you have to know upfront that kindness really is the rule. It's not the exception because no one likes an asshole. Don't be one. It's hard enough being an entrepreneur, you don't have to contribute to the ugliness. And what I have found is, as I mentioned, the circles are small people talk and almost everyone knows everyone else, or know someone who knows everyone else.

[00:15:31] So you don't want to be that person who has basically sullied your reputation because you're not nice. That doesn't mean that you have to let people walk all over you or take advantage. You can. Be kind and still be in business. You can have boundaries and still be kind. However, kindness is what you should lead with.

[00:15:53] Be kind to everyone you don't know, who knows, who you don't know, who is saying your names and rooms that you're not in. You just need to make sure that you treat everyone with respect and you do your work with dignity and, and really in the way that you want to represent yourself. And just be kind, honestly, just be kind that's that is the bottom line.

[00:16:18] Being online is difficult. A lot of people are seeing a lot of things. There are a lot of trolls. It's just easier to be kind, uh, lesson number eight, define what success means to you and hold on to that. And this is one that took me a long time to realize, and I'm still trying to. Define exactly what success means to me.

[00:16:45] And I have learned that without a clear definition of what success looks like, what it feels like, what it means to you, like your personal definition, you're always going to be searching for success and nothing that you do will make you feel like you're successful enough. Because you don't know what it looks like.

[00:17:05] You don't know what it looks like for you. You don't know what it feels like for you. You haven't attached any meaning to it for you. And it makes a lot of difference in the way that you show up online and the way that you feel about your business and your confidence when you know what success looks like.

[00:17:23] I know that there are many people online. I see them all the time on Twitter who feel like success is being able to. By themselves, an expensive bag. And if that's you great, I'm not knocking it, do it, do what you like, but that doesn't feel like success to me. I don't really care about bags. I'm a purse minimalist and I, I tend to favor like a specific style of bag.

[00:17:51] So I purchase a lot of my person's from a very specific place, but. If, if the bag, if having that ability to buy yourself an expensive, bad bag, feels like success, then run with that. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that, but I think really defining it for you is what is going to make you feel good about what you're doing, the work you're doing, how far you've gotten.

[00:18:18] And it's also going to help, you know, when you've gotten to that place for success. For me, one of my personal definitions for success is being able to show up for my family. So with my son, when he is doing events at school, or even during swim season, the fact that I can say, Hey, I can volunteer at the swim meet today.

[00:18:42] I can volunteer for the swim-a-thon. I can do whatever that feels successful to me. When my niece was born a few years ago. My sister and her husband both had the flu at the same time. They had the flu when my sister was in labor, which is crazy. And because of that, when my sister had the baby, they could not see their baby.

[00:19:04]The hospital sent my brother-in-law home and the hospital quarantined my sister from her baby for 48 hours. So when I went to go visit my niece for the first time in the hospital, once I got there, first of all, she was. In the NICU, she was fine, but they didn't have a place to put babies in that hospital because they didn't have a nursery.

[00:19:23] Babies normally stay with their moms. And so since she couldn't stay there, they asked me at the hospital, would I stay with my niece. So I ended up saying yes, and I had an, my sister didn't live close at the time. So it was like over an hour away. So I went to target, got some supplies, some pajamas, some snacks.

[00:19:42] And I came back and I stayed in the hospital with my baby niece for two days. And that for me is success because I didn't have to worry about calling into someone and saying, Hey, my family has a situation I need to handle it. Can I have time off? And I didn't have to worry about having to get that approved.

[00:20:04] I could just say, you know what, my family needs me and I'm going to be there for them. And that's what I did. And so that's a really, really big. Piece of what success looks like to me, obviously I want to make sure I can pay my rent and I have lights on and I have groceries, but it's more than just the money.

[00:20:22] At least for me, it is. It's more than just the money. It's not just how much is in my bank account. It is how much I can have a real impact for my own family. And so I'm sharing that with you, because I want you to make sure that you really think about what success is for you and hold onto that.

[00:20:40] Don't let anybody else tell you that it's not good enough or let comparison online cloud you and make you think that it looks like something else. Define it for yourself.

[00:20:52] Lesson number nine, find your tribe. And I think that this is another really important one because the early days of my journey were very, very lonely.

[00:21:04] It took me several years to really find people who. Understood what it was to be an entrepreneur because we were doing similar things. And that's one of the reasons why I really started loving, going to conferences because I was able to meet other people who

were building their own businesses and kind of having the same challenges and the same struggles and the same triumphs that I was having.

[00:21:28] And that felt really refreshing. But before I got to that place, it was very, very lonely. I didn't know anybody else who was doing the type of work that I was doing. And I didn't know where to go to find that things are different. Now, a lot has changed in the past 12 years. So I want to encourage you to explore places and spaces that have like-minded people that you can connect with.

[00:21:53] You're going to need support at all stages of business building from. The very beginning stages too, when you're in the trenches, making it happen too. When you're going to scale, you need friends, you need mentors, you need clients, you need cheerleaders. So try your best to find those people and build relationships with them.

[00:22:14] Conferences have been an amazing way for me to do that. Even the podcast interviewing people on the podcast has been an amazing way for me to do that. Before I started pimp your brilliance, I had a previous podcast idea that never actually happened, but I had started interviewing people for it.

[00:22:31] And my friend Amber talked to Amber who has been on the show many times, her and I met through the podcast. But initially she found me because she was a customer of. Antisparkle when I was selling t-shirts and she had bought several items for herself and her family.

[00:22:49] So you never know where you're going to find people, but I will say that, you know, use what you have. If you are really big online doing social media and things like that, find your tribe there. Reach out to people, jump in people's DMS. Don't be afraid to say, Hey, we've been following each other for awhile.

[00:23:06] You're always commenting on my stuff. I'm always commenting on your stuff. I think you're cool. Do you want to grab a virtual coffee? It's not weird. It works. I've done it so many times, no join communities, whether they're free or they're paid, find some people who are doing similar things when you're, if you are a crafter and you do craft shows, say hi to your booth neighbors and like offer to watch their booth or grab them a cup of coffee, do what you need to do to find those people and make those connections.

[00:23:40] Lesson number 10 set boundaries so that your work doesn't take over your life. And this is another big one that took me a long, long, long time to really understand, because I would work, set up and sundown and all weekend and through events, I would be traveling with my computer. I would just work and work and work.

[00:24:05] And it was because I felt like. I never got enough work done and I didn't have good boundaries. And I didn't in the beginning, I wasn't as skilled with systems and understanding project management and things like that. And so the work just really took over and, you know, I have some regrets about that when my son was a lot younger, he would be like, you just always work.

[00:24:31] And I just thought, well, this is what you're supposed to do. But the reality is no, I just didn't have good work boundaries. And I can think even specifically a time when I chose work, overdoing something with family that I really regret, a few years ago about a year.

Well, it's been, it's been a number of years now, but about a year before my, my father-in-law passed away.

[00:24:57] He had called a family meeting. He wanted everybody to come together cause he had something that he wanted to share. And I think I was getting ready for like a craft show or something and I had so much stuff to do. And so I didn't go on my husband's like, but he wants everybody to come. And I was like, it's not a big deal.

[00:25:13] Like you can tell me what he wanted to share when he came back, when you come back. And so I did not go. And I found out after the fact that he was basically sharing with family like that, he had. A terminal illness and he was gone like a year later. So I do feel bad about that sometimes because I just feel like man, you know, maybe I should've gone.

[00:25:36] I don't know what difference it would have made, but it is something that I hold on to. So you really have to set boundaries and you can't let your work take over your whole life. You did not start your business to spend it all working. You probably started it because you wanted some time, freedom and more say over your life.

[00:25:57] Basically, don't give yourself another job that takes over your time. You want to have good boundaries.

[00:26:04] Lesson number 11, don't be afraid, afraid to find the proper support systems. And I feel like in this episode, I'm just telling y'all. Everything, but, I wasn't sure if I wanted to share this quite yet, because it's still very, very new for me, but transparency and it is something that I want to talk about once I understand it a bit more.

[00:26:27] However a few weeks ago I went and did an evaluation to see if I had ADHD, adult ADHD. And, it turns out. Probably more than likely, very strongly. Yes. Wasn't a definitive thing because there is no true test for ADHD. Basically, they asked a lot of questions and you kind of look at your symptoms and I couldn't quite pinpoint if I felt like this, the symptoms transpired in childhood, but in hindsight, a lot of it.

[00:27:04] Makes a lot of sense. Just in the way that I have described the way my mind works and my creativity, and I'm noticing a lot of things now, that's like, Oh yeah, that was kind of a flag. However, I bring this up as an example about not being afraid to find the proper support systems, because for the last six months, I have really, really struggled with being able to focus.

[00:27:32] And this probably comes as a shock to people because everyone's always looking at my output. Oh, but you're able to do this and Oh, you created this and you've done so much and you've accomplished so much already. You're just looking at my results. You don't really know the struggles behind the scenes that I have had with being able to focus.

[00:27:51] And I can think of times where there would be weeks and weeks and weeks where I wouldn't be able to focus and I would get barely anything done. And then there would be times where I would write 4,000 words in format of book and submit it to Amazon in three days, which. In hindsight, definitely the hyper-focus part of my ADHD, but at the time I didn't know that.

[00:28:20] And that's really not how things are supposed to work. And so I did not realize how much I was struggling until I started listening to other people, share their experiences



and their symptoms with ADHD. And then I started to realize, Oh, maybe this is not normal. But I would not have pin that on myself without people sharing those experiences and then taking the next step to see if this is something that I also have and wanting to seek some support.

[00:28:55] So at this time I'm trialing some medication. It's going really, really well. and I'm learning that I have to make some adjustments to the way that I work in and create some new routines and new structures. But man learning that I don't have to work so hard to focus and get my brain to do what I need it to do is like crazy and also thinking, wow, if I was able to accomplish what I was able to accomplish with a heavily distracted mind, what could I do with the ability to focus when I need to so.

[00:29:33] Don't be afraid to find the proper support systems. Maybe yours is not ADHD. It could be other things, but if you notice that something is wrong and it keeps coming up, even if you've shared with other people, things that you are noticing, it's not right. And they're just kind of dismissing it. Don't be afraid to seek out other support systems.

[00:29:57] Yeah. You know, get, get the support that you need to be the entrepreneur that you want to be. And then my final lesson is don't let fear have all the fun. I've said this many, many times, and I, I always like to close out when I do conference talks, like with this last point, because fear is a dream killer.

[00:30:24] And it will suck the joy out of every experience if you let it, but you are only going to go as far as you dare to go. So you have to be bold. The only thing that's holding you back is what you currently believe you are capable of. So you always have to continually seek to push your own limits. You have to challenge every single limiting belief or negative story that you're carrying around with you.

[00:30:47] And you have to let go of the stories that don't belong to you. Because this journey is not easy every day, but if you're having fun more often than not, you're probably on the right path. And I don't want you to let fear stop you from doing the things that you feel called to do. So do not let fear have all the fun.

[00:31:07] I want you to have all the fun. I don't want you to live the life that you want to live, and you can only do that by being a tiny bit fearless. Just to John doesn't even have to be a lot, just a little bit, and really only it's only needed during that moment during that decision piece. And then you do the thing and then you realize it was amazing, but that's, those are my 12 lessons.

[00:31:36] I'm not going to go back through all 12 because who those 12, that was a lot. But, um, Yeah, I hope that you listen to this and you take one of these lessons or two or all of them and apply them to your own life, to your own creative business. And I hope that, you know, it, it helps you in some way, once again, I want to thank you for just, you know, hang out with me if you've been here since the beginning of this podcast, which is almost four years.

[00:32:09] Oh, my gosh. Thank you so much. You have stuck out the last four years. You have stuck through my ugly start. Cause sometimes I go back through those old episodes and I'm just like, Ooh, I wish I could record this. So you have been here for my ugly start until now. And I really appreciate you. If you are newer here.

[00:32:28] Hey, welcome to the party. You can go back to my ugly start and you can compare and contrast. Beginning to now. And you know, you can definitely see some growth, but I do appreciate you. And I thank you. I would love for you to share this episode. If you found value in it, if you found a lesson that you really think other people need to hear, share it, share it far and wide, please screenshot and share it on Instagram.

[00:32:53] You can tag me at pimp your brilliance. I'm also very active on Twitter. My name over there is Monique E Malcolm. And of course, if you just want to reach out and say, Hey girl, Hey DM, or send me an email hello at pimp your brilliance. I love when I get messages from you, it makes me feel really good. It lets me know that I'm doing my job, but that is all I have for this week.

[00:33:20] So until next time, go out there and pimp your brilliance.