

Ep #91: Business Breakups



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With Your Host

Brooke Keeling

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Want to have it all? Well, the best day to get started is today. Welcome to *Love Your Living*, a podcast for ambitious women who want to take their life and business to a whole new level of success. I'm Brooke Keeling, multiple six figure business owner, passionate entrepreneur, and your host. Welcome to another episode of the *Love Your Living* podcast.

Hey everyone, and welcome to the *Love Your Living* podcast. I am your host, Brooke Keeling, and today we are talking about breakups, business breakups specifically. Something that I have been around the block with a few times in my own world and my own business, but we can look at this as being relevant in any area of our life as well.

So, business breakups, it can be so incredibly awkward. I am such a firm believer in growth and empowerment and surrounding yourself by incredible people. What happens as we grow, and you're at average of the five people that you spend the most amount of time with, so, for me, I am always looking at who my associations are, who I'm surrounding myself with.

As I've built up my businesses, I've implemented some pretty clear expectation standards, I know who I'm hiring, and when I'm looking to hire someone, I'm hiring for more than just what they can do, the task itself, how good they are at the task, are they a good culture fit?

When I look at culture fit within my businesses, they have to have the right kind of mindset when it comes to growth, when it comes to work ethic, when it comes to their attitude, when it comes to what they are bringing into the culture of our business, if they're going to be a good fit there, if they're bringing positivity, or if they're disrupting it with negative thoughts, habits, behaviors, patterns.

All of these things make such a massive impact in our business, because our businesses are a reflection of who we are. I talked a bit about values

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and mission statements as we neared the end of 2019, and how values and mission statements, they drive your business, they drive your life.

And so, it's really, really important to get clear on those things, within your personal life and within your business life, and being able to share them with your team so that you can build upon them.

Let people know why they're there and what's important for the business and what those values and that mission statement is, what you stand for and how you can articulate that to your clients and the people that you're serving. When we look at that, and having really good fits, it's just as important to look at who isn't a good fit anymore, who isn't a good fit in your life, who isn't a good fit in your business.

I was having a conversation recently, and I said, "You know, I think that a lot of people have this perception that I can be kind of a bitch," and I can be at certain times. I have a very strong personality, I have very strong opinions, and if something doesn't click there, I have a very strong admiration for the people that I love.

If I have people that are close to me and something is happening, I have mama bear claws that come out. I want to protect them, I want to protect – Like I protect my kids, I could protect my family. However, I have a very soft heart and I'm very compassionate as well, and so sometimes I think that people can think that business breakups and these hard conversations are really easy for me, but they're not.

I don't think that they're really easy for anyone. Hard conversations and breakups can be hard all around, and especially when you care about someone. Those are the hardest conversations, and those are the hardest breakups, right? When you really, really care about somebody and you don't want to hurt them.

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I think some of this is black and white in business, and the first couple times you have to go around the block with this type of a situation, it is really hard, and it is trying to separate your feelings and your emotions from what business is.

A couple of the big aha's that I had while I was out on maternity leave is my team was coached by my coach while I was out and it was really interesting seeing the types of struggle that was coming back, and what my teams were being coached on and what my leader was being coached on too, because I remember feeling all of those feelings when I first started out and was learning how to become a better leader.

As really incredible leaders and as women in a leadership role, I think one of our superpowers is, is we feel so deeply. We care so much, and it's what makes us good at selling, and at sales, and at building a client base, because you're able to connect easier with people. But, it also is really hard because you want to be liked, and when you're attaching being liked to what the outcome is in your business, there's so much more emotion that's involved.

Throughout some of the conversations and some of the feedback that my coach was giving my team, was, "Look, this is business." Much more hardcore than I would say, and I think that, again, it's easier when you're an outsider looking in and you don't have the relationships and you don't have the emotion attached to it.

But, it's very true. When we're looking at our businesses, we have to be incredibly smart about who we are, who we're letting in, because of the strength and the role that it can play within our culture, but it also limits our ability to grow businesses if we have the wrong people in the wrong places, whether or not you have a team.

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So, within my online business, and, you guys, I could throw out a bazillion examples of this. I've had so many breakups in my business and when you're going through it, sometimes it feels like, "What did I do wrong? What's wrong with me that I can't make this relationship work?"

It's even harder at times, as you grow your business and you grow your network. A lot of the people that I tend to work with – So in my real estate business, I have people that are part of my team in a different way. I see them, they're here, it's brick and mortar business, we hang out.

And I have in my online business and in other areas of my businesses, I have people that I contract out, and it's still a very personable relationship, but I don't meet with these people face to face. I'm meeting with them weekly on Zoom calls or whatever, but I'm still putting together a team where they can all jive.

And so, in a brick and mortar business, you have people a lot more traditional ways. You have people that are seeing each other, that are going to a weekly meeting, that are going out and doing team-building activities, versus a lot of businesses now, we're starting to contract things out. We're starting to outsource different tasks and hire out experts in different areas of business.

In that sense, you're piecing together strangers that you're having to building to build the culture without all of these people really being able to meet each other. It's a whole different aspect of team-building, because whatever business you're in, everybody has to jive and click. It has to work.

In a lot of areas of my businesses, when I'm contracting work out, if they're not an in-house team member or someone within my brick and mortar business or I'm hiring an expert in certain areas, it makes it even more complicated for everybody to jive and be on the same page.

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However, a lot of times when I hire these people out, I'm getting referrals and recommendations of who some of my friends, or my mentors, or my coaches have worked with, or do work with, that work really within their business. So, when they're not working for me, it's kind of like, "Wow, what's wrong with me? What's wrong with me that this doesn't work?"

Or, if something isn't working in your business and you do have team members, or if you're not seeing the results that you want, or people aren't seeing eye to eye, it creates a lot of drama too because it's a he-said/she-said, this person's not good at this area of their job, this person isn't good at this person of the job.

You can't figure out what's not working, but you don't have a unit that is all working together to come to the end goal, having clarity on the end goal. As a business-owner, it's our job to be able to clearly articulate what that end goal is and getting everybody in the right lane and communicating the way that we need to communicate, and organized the way that all of the things need to be organized in order for everybody to run together.

When one thing doesn't work, all of the wheels start falling off. When one person isn't a good fit, you're not going to see the results that you want. When one person isn't a good fit, whether it's within a contract type role or if it's within your right hand, if you have the wrong fit, or you've outgrown a relationship, you are not going to see the results that you want.

What happens all too often is first, we start asking ourselves, "What's wrong with me? What am I not doing right? What information am I not giving? What have I not trained on properly? Why am I not a good leader? Why can't I see the same results that this person is seeing? What's wrong with me?" That's the first thing that comes up. And then we try to fix the problems. We try to fix the people.

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We try to make things work that aren't working, whether it's a, I've done this a ton of times, it's a time issue. I want to move things so fast and I have so many moving pieces, but if I let go of this person that at least knows the in's and out's of my business and has an understanding of the basics, even though they're not a good fit or I know deep down, I know they're not a good fit, I don't want to have to deal with onboarding and finding someone new.

It's just easier to put a band-aid on it, and to just try to make it work. So, number one, we start to think, what's wrong with us? "Why can't I make this work?" You have all of these thoughts around – And I think these are really good thoughts, because it allows us to analyze are there areas that we can grow within us?

"Have I done everything that I can do?" versus just saying, "Oh, no, it's you. It's not me." Because we can learn from everything, whether you have a good fit or not a good fit, or a good relationship or not a good relationship. However, we tend to hold onto things a bit too long because it's easier. This is something that, in my real estate business that I've had up and running for, I believe now 10 years this summer, 9 or 10 years this summer.

I know, it's so clear to me. I know someone can be in the office for two weeks and I know whether or not they're going to make it or they're not going to make it. And in other areas or if I have newer businesses in my online business, when I'm piecing together different contractors or different experts in different areas, that is something that I still have to wait out and figure out, "Okay, what is working and what's not working?"

It's a really good check-in for us to do as business-owners. So, we start asking ourselves what's wrong with us, which sometimes you can always learn from yourself. Whether it's you or them, whatever it may be, but we don't have to judge ourselves on it wasn't a good fit or something's with it because it didn't work for me and it worked for my friend.

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Number two, we hold onto things for far too long, because we think that's going to take us so much time, or it's going to slow us down towards our end goal if we have to bring on someone new, and the opposite is actually true. If we just rip the band-aid off, and we figure it out, because everything is figure-out-able, if we just do that and do the hard things, we're going to be able to move so much faster because we have the right fits in the right places and everybody moving in the right place.

And so, hiring slow, firing fast is huge, but if you have a newer business or if you're hiring for the first time, sometimes it's really a gray area in understanding who is a good fit, what is a good fit, and also knowing too, that's also part of the process of you figuring out what your business is, you growing into a business that you really love, and you building a culture that you love.

Last week I said, "Sometimes, the easiest way for us to find out what we want is by first figuring out what we don't want." Sometimes, figuring out what works is easiest by figuring out first what doesn't work, by making the mistakes, by learning from them, and then moving forward. And then once we figure out that aspect of it, it's the drama that goes into actually breaking up with people.

Now, again, whether this is a friendship or personal relationships, it's kind of the same concept, but I'm talking directly business aspects of things and having these hard conversations. For me, in my business now, I've really built businesses that I love. I love my people so much, the people that I have.

And so, whether or not I'm having a hard time with someone, it's really, really difficult still to have conversations with people that are just not a good fit anymore. Here's some of the tools that I've used, that I've gathered over a period of time, that have helped me overcome some of that. It takes bravery, it takes strength, but there's also other areas too.

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We don't look forward to going into some of these conversations, and it's because we're human and we have emotion. So, breaking up, business breakups, this is a really, really great time of the year, by the way, to do an evaluation, if you haven't done an evaluation in a while, of what is working within your team and what isn't working.

We're still at the beginning of the year, and being able to take an assessment of, "Do I need new expectations set with my people? Do I need clear boundaries? Do I need some firm goals? If we're not able to accomplish this, or if we don't get to this, or if you're not showing up and doing your work every day, then we need to have a real serious conversation."

Setting those expectations, so it's not a total catching someone out of left field, I think, is incredibly powerful, because you're not just trying to make an excuse in your own mind of, "Well, this person doesn't produce," or, "This person isn't doing their job," or, "This person sucks," but you haven't had the conversation with them to actually let them know, "Hey, this is our plan."

I had someone last year that I brought on that was really, really, really sweet, incredibly sweet. Not 100% a culture fit, but I saw a lot of promise in her and I gave her a chance. I had a feeling pretty quickly that it likely wasn't going to work out, and it wasn't because she wasn't trying. She was trying really hard, but she couldn't keep up the pace.

She just couldn't handle the capacity and the workload that was coming to her, and it was slowing down our entire team. Rather than just saying, "Hey, there's the door," I really gave her the benefit of the doubt and I had some real open conversations and sat down and said, "Look, this isn't working," or, "We can't be sending this out to clients," or very, very specific examples of what we needed to work on.

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And then I said, “Over this next seven days, these are the things that you’re going to need to be working on, and these are the things that you need to show me. We’re going to train on this, this is our plan, and then we’ll reevaluate.” So, it’s not just saying, “Bye, there’s the door,” it’s actually giving someone the chance to show themselves and to prove themselves.

Whether they don’t show up, that’s a very clear and easy one to say, “Okay, it’s not working out,” but if they really are trying and it’s still not working, it’s not fair for you or for them. So, being able to have those conversations up front and try to work through it, I think, is really, really powerful, but one of the other tools that you can use if you have a really hard time with these conversations is saying, “It’s not you, it’s me.”

So, I had someone on my team – Again, I had a lot of transition towards the end of the year this last year, and I was really okay with it because I saw it as a place of rebuilding and growth and letting some things go that I was hanging onto, and I just didn’t have the space for them anymore.

And so, I just had a conversation. I said, “Look, I’m going a different direction. I’d so appreciate xyz, and wish you the best of luck. Thank you so much,” and I ended it on a note that wasn’t, “You fucking suck at your job and I’m really pissed off, and I paid you x amount of money and I’m really frustrated with the results, and da-da-da-da-da.”

So, I was able to maintain composure, which sometimes is hard to do when you feel like you’re being taken advantage of, or if you feel like you’re not appreciated, that’s when anger and rage comes up, and usually that’s when it’s gone a little too far without a conversation.

So, being able to say, “Look, it’s not you, it’s me,” being able to just suck in your own pride, whether it was you or not, and be able to just move on and wish each other the best of luck. So, “It’s not you, it’s me.”

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The second route you can go, like I've mentioned, is being completely honest with someone. I was having this conversation with my husband recently, and it was, again, a conversation around going a different direction with a service provider, and I'm like, "These are all of the reasons I'm really struggling with this. It's on my mind. I just don't think it's a good fit anymore. I don't enjoy this," all of these things that I was telling him.

And he's like, "Why don't you just have a conversation?" And so, for him, I so appreciate his ability and his honesty to take the emotion out, and I think that this is more common for men than it is with women, but he can go into a conversation and just lay it out there, of this is black and white, this is business, or this is how I feel with something, and not bringing all the drama into it, of, "Oh, this is how they're going to feel," or, "Oh, I don't want to do this. It's going to rock the boat. It's going to," whatever.

But for him, when he has those conversations, it's such a different outcome and a different feeling that both people are having because it's just like, this is what it is, man. Hey, this is what it is. So, if that works for you, it's another area to just be open and honest and have a conversation.

I promise, too, as you grow and you have these conversations, it's so much easier. You have to take your feelings out of it in the way of being a victim, because in business relationships, if you're letting someone go, if you're having to fire someone or maybe someone is firing you, whether it's your decision or the other person's decision, know that everybody is instantly going to protect themselves.

It's your instinct, it's your lizard brain, essentially, trying to protect you to make you feel good about something that doesn't feel good. It's you feeling like you're being attacked, you feeling like you're the victim. So, if you can take that aspect of it out, of you're not the victim, and this is just life and business and we can grow from it, it's so much easier to not feel like you're ruining someone's life, basically.

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So, having these open conversations and taking that emotion of victimization or feeling like you have to protect yourself against something, and just asking questions. I say this to my team all the time, about losing business or getting beat out by competition.

Rather than being like, “Well, f them, I went with this person. I’m way better. I don’t know, they’re just f-ing crazy,” I’ve had this type of reaction as well. “They’re delusional, they didn’t tell me this, its all their fault.” Rather than feeling like you’re the victim and you’re trying to protect yourself from being hurt, allow that to come in and ask questions and learn and grow from it.

So, on both aspects of this, whether it is an employee or it’s you on your end too, like, “What could I have done better? What questions could I have asked? What would have helped me place this person better? What can I learn from why it didn’t fit, and what is a good fit moving forward so that I don’t have to do this over and over again?” It’s all a learning lesson.

As long as we can learn from all of these things, that’s the biggest key and the biggest point, because you don’t want someone that’s a wrong fit within your life. If you’re feeling something, it’s likely that someone else is feeling the same thing. Being able to be open and honest and both being able to find more happiness is so much more powerful than just continuing to truck along because it’s easier, or because you’re making money from it, or whatever it may be. It’s baggage.

The third tool that I have used in the past, that I had a coach and mentor share with me as well, when I was letting someone go that had been with me for years, and I avoided a conversation for a really long time, because I didn’t want to hurt them. It’s going into a meeting or a conversation clearly with the intention of how you want them to feel.

So, how do you want them to feel? If you don’t want them to feel hurt and broken and so emotional and so whatever, how do you want them to feel?

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And when you go into a setting or a meeting like that, everything that you're saying and the conversations that you're having are going to be based on how you want that person to feel.

Do you want them to feel that you have deep appreciation for them, that you so appreciate all the hard work that they've given, that you really enjoyed the last amount of months or years or whatever it is that they've worked with you, what do you want them to feel, and being able to come from that place as you're having that conversation.

And the last thing that I'll leave you with on this topic is not allowing these conversations – Like I've said before, we wait, and we wait, and we wait, and we wait, and we hold onto things far longer than we ever should, but being able to be brave enough to have these conversations using some of these tools.

The, "It's not you, it's me," having open conversations with people and also how you want them to feel, taking those into a meeting or a conversation with them, but not waiting so long that there's anger and rage. What happens when we feel like there's an end to something and we're too scared to go in and have a conversation, you start looking for reasons and examples and situations to get really mad and angry.

So, you start tallying up even the smallest things that you never have before, and you hold them, and hold them, and hold them, and hold them, until you just blow up. And when you blow up, that's when the anger comes, and that's when it's like war, and you're like, "Fuck you. Get out of the office. You're fired."

That's really like, how many months of build-up does that take? And I see this a lot in people's personal lives as well. I used to be this way in my personal life. I used to be this way in my marriage as well, where it's like, everything's fine, everything's fine, you just hold it in, hold it in, hold it in,

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and then all of a sudden you just blow up and you have the laundry list ingrained in your head of the last six months of shit that they did wrong.

Like, “You left a fucking fork on the kitchen counter three months ago. I remember that shit and you didn’t wipe it up.” This the reality of what so many of us women do. It’s like you hold it in, you hold it in, you hold it in, and then you blow up, and you’re like, “Oh, okay.” So, think about all of that drama, all of that baggage, all of that emotion that you’re incurring every single day.

I know for me, when I have business relationships that are no longer working, I resent having conversations with them, I resent talking to them and having meetings with them. I start to avoid different things, and it’s like, “Is that good for my business? Is that truly what’s going to allow me to get to my goals quicker?” And it’s not. It absolutely isn’t.

And so, us being able to have these conversations a lot sooner is so incredibly powerful, and we can have them with empathy, we can have them with compassion, we can have them with an understanding of what can we learn and how can we grow from it, and how do we bring in even a more powerful connection with other people?

Because the more you clear out, the more you’re making space for something that is a much better fit, and that’s when you start to really feel like, “Wow, this is incredible.” So, if you’re holding onto something or someone that you just know isn’t working, I highly encourage you to have the hard conversations.

To step into that place and be able to clearly communicate and let go of some of that, whatever isn’t working, and make space for more of what is working, and just see how powerful you feel after you do that. It is like all of the things you try to avoid in your life and put blinders on, where it’s like if

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we just do it, if we just look at it and we stop giving it our power, because that's all you're doing, is you're feeding it your power.

If we just look at the things that we don't want to look at and acknowledge them, we take our power back. So, hopefully those three things will help you if you have a relationship in your business. Maybe you have a team member.

I talk to a lot of people that are building different MLM businesses too where you have a crazy amount of teams, team members, but you have 90% of them that aren't doing shit, and they're taking away the 10% that are that need you.

So, being able to let go of some of the things that are no longer working, that are sucking your energy, or that are on your mind, or that are coming to you and saying, "I need more help," or, "I need more of you," but they're not doing the work for themselves, let go of that shit. Make space for more of the things that you do want and the people that are going to build up your business and build up your culture and your life.

This is what creates a healthy foundation of a business, is it's all based on what you tolerate within your world and what you're willing to do that's hard so that you can build more of all of the things that truly work for you. Once you've experienced an incredible culture and the right fit, it is incredibly powerful.

And it's magical too, because you enjoy the people that you work with every single day. So, thinking about that too, do you have anybody in your world that you really are like, "Oh, man," if they call you, or if they text you, or if they email you, you avoid them like the plague.

It's kind of like, "Oh, man what do they need now?" versus some of the people within that realm that you're quickly answering the phone, helping

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them out, “Yes, absolutely. What do you need? How can I help you?” That’s a pretty clear indicator too of maybe where you need some more boundaries or a conversation, or someone that maybe isn’t a right fit anymore.

So, three tools to help guide you through that, to make it a little bit easier. If you’re someone that has experienced some of this, or maybe it’s new to you, “It’s not you, it’s me,” having honest, open conversations, taking the victim out of it, having to protect yourself.

And the third one is being able to really intentionally go into a conversation with clearly being able to know how you want them to feel after having that conversation with them. So, hopefully that helps you guys. Breakups, they’re hard. The month of love, February. It’s all about love, right?

But, astrology-wise, it’s also a month to really slow down and be present, and also we’re in Mercury retrograde, which we’ll still be in Mercury retrograde when this episode releases, and it’s a time for us to really be more sensitive within our relationships and have a little bit more compassion.

So, I hope you all found this a little helpful. You can take this into your personal relationships, see if there’s anything that needs to be cleaned up, conversations that need to be had, and your business relationships as well. So, have an incredible week and we’ll see you next time.

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You can also check out this link in the show notes. I cannot wait to hear from you.