

Ep #255: The Wisdom of Strategic Downsizing

Full Episode Transcript



With Your Host

Simone Grace Seol

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Hey there, I'm Simone Seol, *I Am Your Korean Mom* that you didn't even know you needed, and I whisper encouragement and slap down the unnecessary bullshit that keeps you frozen and disenchanting. Let's do this!

Let's talk today about intentional strategic downsizing of income, of followers, of visibility. We are rarely taught to do this. We are rarely taught about it. The only thing that we are taught in the world is that down is bad. You know, growth is good. The opposite of growth, I don't know, recession is bad. It's going backwards, you're not supposed to let it happen. You always have to be going up, up, up. You always have to be growing.

People who do downsize aren't necessarily held up as models of success that are worth emulating, and that has to change. Let's first define the terms. What I'm calling "intentional and strategic downsizing" is not the same thing as just struggling to grow.

It's not the same as just giving up. It's not the same as downsizing is happening to you and you just being like, "I didn't want this," and you're surprised, and you're resistant, and you're resentful. That's not what this is.

Intentional strategic downsizing is either holding your growth steady or reversing your growth, minimizing... Is that the right word? Minimalizing? Making things simpler, lesser, on purpose. To heal, feed, sustain, or cultivate other aspects of you, your life, or your business.

Intentional and strategic downsizing is leaving money and opportunities on the table to safeguard other things. To tend to other things. To respect and honor other things like your dignity, your quality of life, your joy, your creativity, your freedom, your mental health, your physical health, your family, what it means to do right by your people and your community, to the culture of your containers, the integrity of your leadership, and your own sustainability.

Because guess what? Money and these quantitative metrics are not the only things that matter. Because when they are held up as what matters most, and the only thing that matters, companies will do what they have

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been doing, which is abusing and exploiting and recklessly discarding humans and the earth.

And they will even shoot themselves in the foot. They will even fuck over their own long-term financial health to keep up the quarterly growth, one quarter after another for the shareholders' sake. Bigger numbers, growth at all costs, justify all means, those are the rallying cry of malignant capitalism. And that is dangerous.

We're not really taught to recognize it when it creeps into our business. This year, I've spoken about this before, I'm intentionally and strategically downsizing. Or as many people have actually pointed out, maybe I want to call it "right-sizing," in a big way.

So, I'm intentionally cutting my income by a lot. I'm intentionally turning down or sitting on, certainly, hugely profitable projects that would allow me to make just as much or more income, as I did last year. I'm intentionally doing things that are going to slow down, if not reverse, audience growth. I keep doing things to see if my audience numbers are going to go down or if they're just not going to grow as fast, if it's going to be slower, because my aim is certainly to simplify and shed.

I'm intentionally diverting my energy and creativity to non-income producing non-"productive" activities like writing about my family, and Korean recipes on my Substack. I'm making a lot more art. I'm spending a lot more time with my family.

And of course, I'm very aware that I'm in a position of massive privilege, where I can afford to do this. Where I can afford to intentionally downsize without putting myself or my family in any kind of danger. But have you ever seen big leaders and entrepreneurship talk publicly about making less money? And actually, doing it and showing it?

Not as a sign of failure or burnout or something going wrong. Not as a kind of strategic move of, we're going to slow down for now, so that we can restructure and scale even bigger later. But have you ever seen big leaders

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and entrepreneurship, just be like, “Yeah, I'm just making less money because it's the right thing to do for my soul and for my spirit. It's the right thing to do for our customers. It's the right thing to do for our values. It's the right thing to do because I just want to, and it feels good, and that's it.”

I don't know about you, but I've seen this almost never. I could be forgetting, but I don't, I think, almost never, right? I think that costs us. I think we're paying for it, all of us. When there's no leadership, there's no frame of reference for intentional and strategic downsizing, it makes people not even be able to entertain it as an option.

It makes people feel scared to death of slowing down, for any reason. If you're like, “I'm nowhere near being able to intentionally make less money, because I'm just starting out and I have to make money. I have to get to consistently profitable.”

Even if you're an early-stage entrepreneur like that, it makes people like that feel like they're doing it wrong if their trajectories aren't consistently up, up, up, up, month after month, year after year. Because guess what? Nobody's journey looks like that, ever. It keeps people continuing to skip out on sleep, vacations, and time that they need to feed their own body and spirit.

Do you know how many conversations I've had with entrepreneurs who are making multiple six figures, seven figures, who are just like, “Yeah, I really need this three-month vacation, and there's no way I can do it, because blah, blah, blah.” It makes people feel like they have to push and grow through grief, catastrophic events in their lives, mental health issues, and health issues. They're like, “Oh, I got to keep growing.”

It makes people so scared to take time for even those things. It keeps people locked in a state of perpetual nervous system dysregulation, where the only temporary reprieve is higher quarterly numbers. And then, once you hit it, back to the grind, you've got to hit a higher one again.

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It keeps people who have taken steps towards intentional and strategic downsizing, kind of perpetually second guessing themselves. Like what they did was just kind of like weird and off, and not really an example of success. It incentivizes people to treat other human beings like disposable resources that only exists to serve their bottom line.

That's what it creates, when we have a culture where there is no conversation, no frame of reference, no modeling, no teaching about intentional strategic downsizing. It makes us sick. It makes us sick.

Now, I am trying to be, for now, as loud as I can about this using the platform that I have. I'm inviting you to participate in intentional strategic downsizing, too. And what I'm doing right now, the exact way that I'm doing it, making less money on purpose, that's not right for everyone.

However, there are many, many really useful, healthy, smaller ways where you can practice strategic downsizing, even when you are actively growing. You can do this in parts of your business, parts of your life, so that you can actually grow with more ease.

For example, turning away incongruent clients, not really well aligned clients, when you can just take them and deal with it later to boost your numbers for now. For example, you can intentionally not do marketing strategies that will probably bring in lots of new eyes on your stuff, but it just doesn't feel good to you.

You only do what feels good to you, that is another form of strategic downsizing. You're downsizing your marketing in a certain way. You can decide that you're actually going to take the weekend off. You can decide that you're going to create a business plan based on the cycles of your body; you're going to honor the cycles of your body. That's downsizing, the amount and the velocity at which you produce productivity.

You can let it be okay to set your business aside for a while and let yourself quote "lose" momentum because something else in your life really needs attention. Or maybe you just don't feel like it for a period of time.

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I think people are so scared of leaving their businesses alone and kind of pausing activities, because they're so scared of not growing. They're so scared of losing momentum. But every time you are too tired to, you're like, "I don't feel like it," you just feel like you have a blah, you just can't do it...

I've talked to so many clients over the years, and there's always, always, always, always, always a reason, an intelligent reason; either their body or their spirit is asking them to look in a different direction and focus on something else. People think, "Oh, I'm just being lazy. I don't have the right mindset. I don't know, I think I'm self-sabotaging. I think I just need to work harder. I just have to be more committed. I just need a stronger 'why'."

People make up all kinds of reasons to shame themselves out of being able to see what in their lives, what in their bodies, what in their spirits, need their attention. What needs tending. What needs a healing. What needs nourishing. Or even just loving attention, without even having to do anything.

What is asking for those things in their life, that you are not paying attention, you're not giving them, because you're telling yourself you should be productive, you should be working on your business, you should be growing your business? And then, making up all these stories about what's wrong with you that you don't want to.

I honestly think that if more of us took more intentional strategic downsizing opportunities, if more of us did that more regularly, in ways that are truly in sync with and honoring the evolving, shifting, multi-layered realities of our body's intelligence, our spiritual intelligence, I actually think that in the end, we will all be way more abundant.

I think, in the end, you will make more money in the long run. And you'll be healthier and happier, and more abundant in general, in the longer run, if more of us took strategic downsizing more seriously. You know, I've always been a very energetic and ambitious person. My message is never going to be 'let's just all sit at a beach and chill and not worry about work, not worry about producing, not worry about making big shit happen in the world.'

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I love working. I love making big shit happen in the world. I love my drive. It's all a big part of who I am. And I think that this many years into business, I still love what I do. I'm so challenged by it in a really good way. It never ceases to be a product of joy and love. And it always feels like this loving partner to me, my business.

I think the reason for that is because I never miss opportunities to strategically downsize when I need to. Whether it's on a certain offer, or whether it's on my rhythm of life, or whether it's, for right now, it's my business plan for the year, in terms of how much money I'm going to bring in.

If this episode lands to you like a big fat permission slip for you to do the thing that you wanted to do, to make the decision, to make the call, for you to have your own intentional strategic downsizing moment, then let this be the permission slip.

And if you already have made this move, and you're loving the result, you're basking in it, then let me take this opportunity to praise you and say that I admire you. That what you did takes so much wisdom and courage and clarity that is sorely lacking in the general culture.

If you're in the camp where you're like, "Oh my gosh. I get what Simone is saying, but this is scaring me," I understand. I have totally been where you are. I want to offer that what I've shared with you today can be a prompt to go explore what this means for you.

You know, I rarely think that when I offer you an idea, it means you have to turn your whole life upside down and make really scary decisions in one hour. Go sit with it. You can still grow and be consciously strategically downsizing in certain areas to make sure that all of this is more joyful, more ease filled, and more sustainable for you.

So, here's to a culture of recognizing and celebrating intentional strategic downsizing. I'll talk to you next week.

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Hey, if you're looking for a one-stop shop where you can find the best of my teaching, all organized into a beautiful and actionable sequence, guess what? I got you. I took the best of my podcast episodes and created a whole damn workbook around them. It's called *The Simone Starter Pack* and it's the ultimate marketing cheat sheet.

I got countless emails from folks who downloaded it, saying, "This free resource is worth more than all these courses I paid thousands of dollars for." So, what are you waiting for? Go grab *The Simone Starter Pack*. The link is in the show notes. I can't wait to see what amazing results you'll get from it.