



# The Business Success Center Helps Small Business Owners

This is The Struggling Entrepreneur podcast, episode 18, an organization designed to help the entrepreneur after launching their business and keep it from going astray - an interview of Jan Triplett of the Business Success Center.

---

*Welcome, and you're listening to The Struggling Entrepreneur, the podcast where we address the challenges that you face when you're a struggling entrepreneur and where we try and assist you with experienced and successful small business owners who share their lessons learned as well as resources to help you become successful.*

**Fred Castañeda:** Welcome to this special episode of The Struggling Entrepreneur. This is Fred Castañeda, your host, and I'm here at the Business Success Center in Austin, Texas with Jan Triplett. Jan, welcome to this episode of The Struggling Entrepreneur.

**Jan Triplett:** Thank you, Fred. It's so nice to be here with you.

**Fred Castañeda:** Jan, before we start, I wanted to let our listeners know that this happens to be an episode that deals with an organization that is designed and helps entrepreneurs become successful or helps the small business individual become successful. But before we get to that, I wanted to let them know where they could go to get information about your organization. Can you tell us the name and the website, please?

**Jan Triplett:** The name of our company is The Business Success Center. It is a virtual incubator. Someone who is looking for information and links that they would find helpful as a business owner can find this at the [bscusa.com](http://www.bscusa.com).

**Fred Castañeda:** [www.bscusa.com](http://www.bscusa.com).

**Jan Triplett:** That's correct.

**Fred Castañeda:** Okay. Before we go into The Business Success Center we'd like to know a little bit about you. Can you tell your listeners about your educational business background? What led you into addressing the pains of the small business owner?

**Jan Triplett:** I got my Ph.D. from the University of Texas and went to work for the state, and I worked for the state and they were a great organization but working for the government has its own challenges, one of which is that you're not your own boss. I'm not a control freak, Fred, but I do like to put out a quality product the way that I think it needs to be done, and when you work for the government sometimes you don't get to do that. So I took my toys and joined a company that was in existence that was started by my partner, Dan Deener, and we're both focused on small business because we felt that that was where we had the greatest sense of urgency.

It was also the area that we felt, because we had tried to find opportunities for support ourselves had the greatest need, and where we found the greatest personal reward in terms of a sense of fulfillment of actually seeing businesses make progress towards stability, towards profitability, and towards transference. They really weren't doing more than just substituting one job where they didn't have to do much for a job that has lots of areas, six area that we've identified, and very little reward.

**Fred Castañeda:** Okay. And I -- for our listeners I did meet Jan about 12 years ago when she and Dan were in this enterprise called The Entrepreneur's Association here in Austin, Texas.

**Jan Triplett:** That's correct.

**Fred Castañeda:** Is this the organization you're talking about or was it another one that led to it?

**Jan Triplett:** One of the things about small business owners is that according to the statistics -- and I hate to bother your listeners with numbers, but it's kind of interesting -- is that when you look at the evolution of a business owner is where they start and ten years later they're usually not where they started. And we started doing communications and bringing companies and products to market. We bought The Entrepreneur's Association as a way to provide services to more people and to reach out internationally.

**Fred Castañeda:** So you acquired that firm? Okay.

Jan Triplett: We did acquire it, and we actually morphed it into a virtual incubator so that we don't provide space to people but we do work with them in a very structured program that helps them determine the priorities that they need to work on in the six areas of business at the right time in the right way to make sure that that business, as I said, is stable and profitable and transferable. So we're always looking at the end result, and that to us is the reward. It's not just a short-term fix.

Fred Castañeda: Okay. Tell us about these programs in The Business Success Center. I remember, for our listeners in The Entrepreneur's Association, you were taking people who were the dreamers who had an idea that they wanted to be their own and then you were also taking the newbies, the people who had just hung up their shingle and said, "I'm an entrepreneur. Oh, my goodness. What do I do now?" And you were helping them to get either to the initial stage of launching their business or taking them from the stage of just a newly launched business and making it successful, and you took a different approach here now with The Business Success Center.

Jan Triplett: We did.

Fred Castañeda: So we're interested in these programs. Can you explain what they are? Let's say I'm a business coming to you.

Jan Triplett: You are.

Fred Castañeda: What would you do with us?

Jan Triplett: Well, because your business is 12 years old it would be very different than when we first met each other.

Fred Castañeda: Correct.

Jan Triplett: And we found that people who have been in business a period of time have a history that they can look at and make some decisions about, but they don't know which decision to make. Is this the right decision? Is this the right time? And you as the time expert know the importance here. And so consequently, what The Business Success Center focuses on is really not people who don't have an idea but are people who have got about six months into it; they've discovered that they don't have all the answers, and they are looking for a way to go past what we call the survival stage as quickly as possible -- where I'll do windows, whether it's on your computer or on your car or anywhere to a situation where the business is stable and they can count on it; they can make sure that they make sure that they have a life as well as work.

So our focus is on later-stage businesses than when we first met, and that's an area that gets forgotten. There are a lot of things for start up businesses. There are many free programs through people's local organizations that are called SCORE, Service Corp of Retired Executives from the SBA, the Small Business Administration.

Fred Castañeda: We had a podcast with Mr. Yancey there. He explained what they did.

Jan Triplett: And that's great. And there are cities that have programs. But there is very little that really helps somebody who's down the road a bit and really wants to work with businesses that are more advanced. We've been in business 25 years. We have worked with businesses from accounting firms to zoos, really from A to Z, and even though they are unique in their own needs there are some things that are similar to them when they get past those early stages of "How do I set up a bank account? How do I set up my books?" And there really have a need for more advanced things that nobody provides, and that's why we made a decision to really address that market.

Fred Castañeda: Okay. So it looks like these aren't newbies. They're not dreamers. They're flounders. They've started their business and all of a sudden they reached the stage where they're going, "I need help. I'm floundering here." Like you said before, they get to the stage of saying, "Wow. Do I become an affiliate and start selling everything I can? Do I go on eBay? Do I go here just to rake in the revenue and survive?" like you said. So the flounderer who is at the survival stage and doesn't know where to turn; is that your key customer?

Jan Triplett: Absolutely. And they are the ones where they are in the most danger of doing the wrong thing, doing nothing, which is almost as bad, or simply giving up.

Fred Castañeda: Becoming a statistic again.

Jan Triplett: And becoming a statistic. I know that most people think small businesses fail because lack of capital. That certainly is an issue. The second issue that we find that is very significant is when there is some trauma within the group. Somebody dies, there is a recession, something happens and there's no plan in place, no process in place and people are overwhelmed. They're trying to make sense out of the chaos of what's happening economically, what's happening in technological challenges and political challenges and social challenges, and they just look like deer in the headlights and there has to be some way to get that organized.

**Fred Castañeda:** Okay. So we've seen the type of customer or the type of client that you would have, and now you have programs that you've created to address these. What are these programs and what kind of pains do they address for the customer? I know there's one in particular I want to talk about a little bit later on because that's a key one.

**Jan Triplett:** There are two different kinds of programs depending upon the owner and where they're coming from. One is a guided program which is based on our 380-point matrix which looks at the six areas of business and the five levels that one goes through from startup to growth. That is a guided program where we work with the client to assess where they are and where they want to go and then set some specific things for them to do to accomplish that. We monitor that particularly in the areas of finance, marketing, operations, and administration.

The other side of the house are for people who are what I would call DIY-ers, do-it-yourselfers. "Don't be there to guide me. Just be there to answer my questions when I need you." And that falls really more into our consulting areas and our assessment areas and it is not a structured program like the first one. The first one we measure progress, we give awards. We just had an awards night last night where we recognized the four companies that we've been working with that have made the most progress. We call them our On Course awards because they are on course for getting to stability and growth.

And then as I said, the other side of the house is really for people who just be there to answer specific questions or deal with specific problems, and sometimes we step in to act as a virtual financial officer or a virtual marketing officer or administrator. We have specific systems that we have developed on hiring processes and things that will really cut down --

**Fred Castañeda:** The floundering.

**Jan Triplett:** -- the floundering and getting the wrong person in the wrong place, which we do a lot of, or the wrong pricing or the wrong customers. And so sometimes people just come with a very specific problem that we address. So it's really designed for an owner who wants somebody there along the voyage or somebody who really wants to take off on their own and go the back country and see what happens.

**Fred Castañeda:** Okay. So those are the two programs that address two different types of audiences. I could see the first audience you talked about maybe somebody coming out of the public sector or the corporate

world where they're used to a very structured environment and they want to continue that structured learning path or that structured environment and they don't want to completely feel like they're on an island, and so that would help.

Jan Triplett: That's very accurate.

Fred Castañeda: And the second one would be for the individual who probably was more of a maverick in the corporate or the public sector world and had successful things to do just like yourself. They just couldn't take the environment of such large organizations where they never allowed them to really roam free. So they're roaming free but they don't want to get lost and go over the edge and so they need help and they will raise their hand when they need the help and you will probably give them a nudge as they're getting close to the cliff.

Jan Triplett: And that's true. That kind of person we describe as a rebel.

Fred Castañeda: A rebel. Okay.

Jan Triplett: And that does not come originally from us. There was a wonderful book out which is still available called *Neanderthals at Work* and the two authors describe this as believers, rebels, and competitors. Most of the small business owners that we have worked with in the 25 years are either believers or rebels. The competitors have usually gone on to become a .com -- and sometimes a .bust -- but they were really in it for a power issue and other kinds of things and they're really not interested in a guided program from anybody. They really want a quick return, and that's perfectly fine.

The believer really is community-focused, family-focused, long-term growth but not necessarily tomorrow, and they enjoy the process of getting there. The rebel is not -- doesn't care about the process but --

Fred Castañeda: He's impatient; right?

Jan Triplett: -- but is impatient, wants to do it their own way. Just tell me how to do it. Let me go, and they're very different.

Fred Castañeda: Okay. Those are two programs, and you have other programs that deal with, especially on your website I saw the MBA; right? Can you tell us about that one and other programs?

Jan Triplett: We call it the Owner's MBA. It derived from a program we created for a community college here in our area. It won some national awards; and we call it the Owner's MBA because it deals with the six

areas of the business, and it is actually part of our guided program. It's built in as part of -- people working with us go through that, and it gives them a common vocabulary, etc. The people who wish to do it on their own can certainly take that as a separate class, and we are about to put that online.

One of the other things that grew out of that is we have an Owner's Dictionary which is not -- it's not like a dictionary that you would expect to see exactly because it's done and divided by the areas of business, but it tells you about concepts and how they work.

One of the ones that people seem to resonate with the most is our concept of the gold customer versus the lead and concrete customer. In between there is a silver and bronze, and having been an ad agency for a number of years and worked to bring companies and products to market, what we find is people want to spend their money with people who have already decided to buy with you. That's what you would call a gold customer, instead of spending it with the silvers who are undecided or they try to convince the bronze, leads, and concrete whom you wouldn't want on a promise, that you'd rather send down the road.

So this particular dictionary, which is available both to our guided people and available to the listeners, is an online product and it is a dictionary with these concepts and it groups them together so that they make sense and gives them examples. So we're very proud of it. It's probably got about 1500 items on it, and it's easy to read. It's not complicated, but it is very thorough.

- Fred Castañeda: So it gives them the terminology and the concepts --
- Jan Triplett: It does.
- Fred Castañeda: -- that they need in order to be able to see a vision of where they want to get to.
- Jan Triplett: Or if somebody throws a word at you like "social networking," what the heck is that?
- Fred Castañeda: Okay.
- Jan Triplett: And so it really tries to make sure that entrepreneurs and business owners can be as up to date as they need to be so that they're using the words correctly the way that they're commonly understood in finance, in vision, etc.

Fred Castañeda: And they don't go down the wrong road because of their ignorance that they refuse to admit they have --

Jan Triplett: Yeah.

Fred Castañeda: -- as is always a humbling and shaming experience, but you want to keep quiet. You want to accept what's there and you may be falling into the wrong trap.

Jan Triplett: You do. One of the areas that people fall into the most when they are growing is in hiring practices. And one of the terminologies that a lot of the people who are involved in employment use is called a BFOQ, and if you don't know, that stands for a Bona Fide Occupational Qualification. You may feel that you've sort of been left out, and what it means is that you don't ask anything that is not directly related to that wonderful thing we all love, the job description.

Fred Castañeda: Right. Okay. And one of the things that you mentioned here, you said you were going to be taking this online. You are right now helping to develop businesses for the clientele that you have in the south central Texas area, Austin in particular, but do you have a reach that's nationwide? In other words, could you be a virtual consultant, a virtual teammate to these entrepreneurs that need help?

Jan Triplett: We already are.

Fred Castañeda: Okay. Good.

Jan Triplett: We have been for a number of years. We actually also have a sister office in Tokyo, Japan which we were going to open 9/11, and 9/11 hit and we had to kind of regroup. But we do a lot of things by phone and by fax and by e-mail. So we're just beginning to get into this area that you are so skilled in, podcasting, and we're excited about doing that in the first quarter.

Fred Castañeda: Podcasting in coaching and webinars and things like that?

Jan Triplett: Right, but we have been doing a lot of things by phone and by e-mail probably for about eight or nine years. Obviously, our emphasis has been as we're building our own company -- and this might be something that people might be interested in -- is how can you teach vision and focus on transference if you don't have an idea. Our mission is to set up with people who would like to set up a Business Success Center in their area and have their own clients, and that means we have to practice what we preach and to create

processes that anyone can do with a certain level of business expertise to work with their own set of clients.

And that's why we think it's so important, the new media that's out there and to do this outreach on an international basis. We've actually had 108 countries who have sent advisors here to learn how we do things. We're just now beginning to export it.

Fred Castañeda: Okay. So you're actually going to be expanding your reach, almost franchising what you've got; right, into different areas?

Jan Triplett: Yes. To use the correct term, we're going to license. Because if I franchise, I have to go before Securities and Exchange Commission and I would rather make it possible for people to use the intellectual property we've developed.

Fred Castañeda: I stand corrected, and that's something that I would like our listeners to understand, that this dictionary you have would explain the difference between licensing --

Jan Triplett: It does.

Fred Castañeda: -- and a franchising agreement; right?

Jan Triplett: Yes, quickly. You don't have to read a whole book about it.

Fred Castañeda: Right. And that's one -- you will give our listeners one of the benefits right away in just our discussion. So licensing Business Success Center elsewhere is going to be something else that's going to -- that's going to be extending your reach.

Let's talk about our own listeners now. I'm a small business. I go to your website. I see these programs. What types of issues or problems that I am facing would be the key considerations that you would look for when you're interviewing me to see if -- what kind of assistance you can give?

Jan Triplett: I would be really looking to see if you have the attitude of taking the time to work on this. And you know, here I am talking to Mr. Time himself, and if an owner is really a shoot-from-the-hip person and will not take the time to sit down and work on and write out in some fashion the processes that they want to use and really think through the implications of what they're doing, that person is really not appropriate for us.

We do have a little, on our website, a little free quiz. It's called the Success Quiz. You can find it if you go to our website and go to the

newsletter. It's one of the links, and it will kind of give you an idea of the things that we look for in a successful entrepreneur.

When we say this is somebody who can benefit from our incubator, it's somebody who can think in small steps even if they need to have some help, but they can make their mind stop going and taking action but stopping long enough to figure out how I want it done, not just this time but next time, a month from now, a year from now. And they have a process or are willing to put a process in place to monitor it; and when it comes to some entrepreneurs the ability to say to an employee, "You're not doing it right and you're out of here."

They have the ability to see the business from what we call the 40,000-foot view. And a good friend of ours and I think yours also, Gus Cardenas, gave us this concept, because when he looked at what we do he said, "You help people stand up here on top of their business from the 40,000-foot view and look at the business as a whole instead of getting mired down into the little pieces," and we recognize -- and we are a small business ourselves -- that you have to look and you also have to be able to do the things from time to time.

You have to act as a manager and create things where you're looking at the past for your markers, and you have to be an employee from time to time. I have cleaned sinks and I have washed out toilets. As small business owners that's part of what we do, and so the person that we want is somebody who really shares that perspective, is that I will do what it takes to make my business successful for myself, for my family, for my community, for my employees, and of course, most of all for my customers.

**Fred Castañeda:** And what I enjoyed hearing right now is that you take the clientele, the perspective client who is willing to invest the time to take a look at themselves and willing to explain that to you so that they're aware of their own problems and not expect some -- and make that investment, investment of time, investment of resource to improve. If they don't have that investment, they expect something to happen automatically just because they sign up for a program and they expect to consume it, as we say in the new media world, and then something happens automatically. That's not the type of individual you want because they're so caught up in the operation of their business and not the management of their business.

**Jan Triplett:** That's correct. Or they are so busy selling things that they think that all business is about is sales. Just as you provide a free consultation

to get people started to see if they're appropriate for you and vice versa, so do we.

Fred Castañeda: So our listeners can call you for a free consultation too?

Jan Triplett: They can. They can.

Fred Castañeda: To see if this is for them. Fantastic.

Jan Triplett: Absolutely.

Fred Castañeda: Okay. Please explain.

Jan Triplett: There are certain things that will help them decide, "Is this an appropriate method for them to move forward because not everybody is cut out to have a guide?" Some people simply need to read about it or to take a discreet class in their local area, and we try to refer people to places where they might get it for free or for a reduced rate or they might be able to capitalize on certain kinds of grants that are available for veterans and for people with disabilities and sometimes for various minorities. So part of that is really seeing, "Is this the right thing? Is this a good way for you to spend your time and your effort?" If not than we certainly wish you the best and we want to see if we can at least send you in the right direction.

Fred Castañeda: Fantastic. So that's one of the things that I would definitely encourage our listeners to go and take that exam.

Jan Triplett: The exam online is just a fun thing. It is not statistically significant. It's just a fun little quiz to see if they have what we have found to be success traits.

Fred Castañeda: Right, and then to go and contact you for the free consultation --

Jan Triplett: Right.

Fred Castañeda: Now let's talk a little bit about your own business, The Business Success Center, from your own experiences and from the experiences you'd had with all the other customers, clients, and small business and entrepreneurs you've dealt with. What kinds of recommendations or words of wisdom would you be able to give this individual who just launched their business, scared as could be, shaking in their boots, because now they see this whole avalanche of different action items, different requirements, different sales marketing operations, and personnel, all of these things now hitting

them? What words of wisdom or recommendation would you give them to be able to help them at this stage?

Jan Triplett: Well, I think the first one -- and I keep going back to time because it is so important to -- to organize your time in a fashion that you leave time to get some R&R because if you don't have balance in your life, the rest of it doesn't make any sense. So thinking that you should work every hour of every day and think of nothing else but the business is a certain way to end up in your favorite center for people who are bewildered.

Fred Castañeda: They'll be overwhelmed and then they'll burn out.

Jan Triplett: They will. And we have seen it happen where the owner had to make a choice between his family or the business, and we never want that to happen. There should be some mechanisms built in from the get-go to make sure that that is not happening.

Fred Castañeda: So they could free up their time in order to be able to balance their work load along with their family life and have a successful business and at the same time know that they're getting the most important things. They're being able to do more in less time with better quality and reduced stress. And that's a plug for Gain Control of Your Day, which is the other podcast that I have that addresses this.

And for our listeners, when Jan was referring to me as the Time Master, it was because I have a personal productivity seminar that's available on [gaincontrolofyourday.com](http://gaincontrolofyourday.com). But regardless of whether that's the method or that's the program that you choose, you have to get that organizational and personal productivity management behind you. That's number one priority you set.

Jan Triplett: You do.

Fred Castañeda: And the others?

Jan Triplett: The second is you really have to have a clear vision, and that means you have to get as much input in that early stage as you can. We encourage businesses not -- n-o-t -- not to do a business plan, not to do a marketing plan, not to do a financial plan until they're about six months to a year down the road.

That doesn't mean they don't plan, but they do what we call a strategic plan. This is what I think is going to happen. This is who I think is going to buy. These are what I think are going to be the numbers, and then monitor it. Look at and gather the research that you're getting from customers, from employees, from the

community, and really put that into the mix and make your next decisions based on what you learn; not what you think.

**Fred Castañeda:** Yeah. So this is a different take than most of the other programs that other people have been talking about or looking at where they develop the feasibility of the business plan first, will launch the business, and then they are looking at the forecasted results with the actual results and scratching their heads and wondering what went wrong.

**Jan Triplett:** Yes. I think in the 25 years we have never found a feasibility study done at that level at that stage that was anywhere near being correct. So why spend your time doing that? But do spend your time creating four to five pages that give somebody an idea of the world in which you think things are going to operate, the way in which you think the business should be positioned to get to that gold customer that you want.

**Fred Castañeda:** And you can help them to create this type of roadmap?

**Jan Triplett:** Absolutely. And we do that and we also do an assessment to see, "Okay. Have you done all of the things that you should do at the start-up stage? What's missing and what should be the priorities in each area? Now, what are the top three out of all those that need to be done?" So you're not jumping the gun and getting ahead.

So really this idea of time, the idea of vision, and what are you going to do to make sure that you have enough capital? Absolutely capital is an issue, but if you don't have a clear vision and you haven't thought of opportunities, the capital's not going to be there either.

**Fred Castañeda:** You're right. You may have a successful set of customers waiting for something that you can't deliver.

**Jan Triplett:** That's correct.

**Fred Castañeda:** And that's always been shall we say the worst kind of success failure --

**Jan Triplett:** Yes, yes, absolutely.

**Fred Castañeda:** -- when you -- you're doing the right things, but you don't have enough resources or money in order to be able to satisfy the customer.

**Jan Triplett:** Or you have pricing that is going to not make you profitable. You can have lots of customers like the watermelon salesman who sold

every watermelon and lost only two cents on every one. He thought he'd make it up in volume. It doesn't work that way.

**Fred Castañeda:** Jan, we want to know for our listeners if there's any upcoming events that the organization is going to be participating in so perhaps maybe they can be aware of.

**Jan Triplett:** There is going to be a Cedar Park Expo, I believe, in March or April. There is an organization in the Austin area called The Austin Independent Business Alliance. They do a very interesting event in May, and then there will be an Innotech show which is specifically for technology companies but not -- a lot of people come who are not necessarily --

**Fred Castañeda:** Small business owners for Innotech. Okay. So perhaps maybe we'll see you at the show.

**Jan Triplett:** I hope so.

**Fred Castañeda:** I know that I'm following the Cedar Park, Texas Expo for Entrepreneurs, so we'll see each other there probably at different booths.

**Jan Triplett:** That would be great.

**Fred Castañeda:** Okay. Are any final gems or words of wisdom that you would want to give to the listeners, especially those people who are dreamers, right now because we have a lot of them that are listening to this thinking, "Should I or should I not get into it?"

**Jan Triplett:** My word or wisdom would be "Do it." No matter what, do it; because you will always regret that you did not, even if you do it part-time. At the latest count there are 90 million part-time entrepreneurs. They are adding their expertise and their passion to their communities and it is invaluable. None of us want to live in a world where everything is the same. So if you're a dreamer, try it, even on a limited basis. If you're already in business, celebrate it, because you are the ones who are creating all of the net new jobs since 1973. You are the ones who are more innovative dollar per dollar than any big business.

**Fred Castañeda:** For the dreamers, pursue it, and for those involved in business celebrate it.

**Jan Triplett:** Absolutely.

Fred Castañeda: Good words of wisdom. From Austin, Texas, I'd like to thank you, Jan, for the time that spent with us sharing with our audience here of what The Business Success Center can do for them, especially for the people who are struggling entrepreneurs and want to become successful entrepreneurs. I think your organization can help them quite a bit, and we'll have links in the show notes to all the links that we talked about for The Business Success Center and those. Jan, thank you very much for sharing this time with us.

Jan Triplett: Thank you so much, Fred, and keep up the good work.

Fred Castañeda: Okay. Thank you.

*You've been listening to The Struggling Entrepreneur at [www.strugglingentrepreneur.com](http://www.strugglingentrepreneur.com). Now if you listened to this podcast episode through some click-to-play option, well then thank you very much. But do consider subscribing to this podcast show series so that you can have all the future episodes delivered directly to you the moment that they're released.*

*Until then, we'll see you next time.*