

Rai Cornell 0:01

Welcome to the SOAR Podcast the place for creative entrepreneurs with limitless dreams and unconventional stories. I'm your host, Rai Hyde Cornell founder and business mentor at Chiron consulting and CEO and senior copywriter at Cornell content marketing. My goal is to bring you stories of what's possible. So you can never tell yourself that your dreams are impossible.

Rai Cornell 0:31

All right, so for today's episode, it's just going to be you and me and what I want to talk about, especially because we are entering a new year, new opportunities, new challenges, I'm hoping that you have a strategy for your business in place and hoping that you have your annual goals lined up and hoping that you also have your quarter 1 plan in place. And if you don't, if you're listening to this in time, you can join us on January 4th, for our quarterly planning workshop, just go to the chironconsulting.us website, and you'll be able to find that link on the workshops page.

Rai Cornell 1:10

So for today, what I really wanted to talk about was how to know when it's time to break up with a client. And the reason this feels so timely is because the New Year is in many ways, it's not that different from the change from March to April, or June to July, or September to October. But it's symbolic, right? December to January, there's no real difference there. December 31st to January 1st, there's no massive shift, there's no delineation, it just flows one day into the other. But symbolically, as a culture as a society, we have decided that the new year means something. And so with that decision that we have collectively bought into, there's an energetic weight that comes with it. And you can use that to your advantage. And what I want you thinking about is, what things do you want to leave behind? In 2021? What do you not want to take with you into 2022? What worked in 2022? I'm sorry, sorry, 2021. I'm going to do that a lot. What worked in 2021, that you want to take with you into 2022? And what didn't work in 2021. Now, if you joined me for business building week, at the beginning of December, you did a deep dive exercise in this with me. If not, you can go to our website and go to our Thinkific page. And you can still access that five day long workshop that will walk you through this process of really analyzing the past year, and deciding from an energetic standpoint as well as a practical logistical standpoint. What do you really want to be carrying with you into the new year? What personal goals do you have for yourself? And how does your business need to support those goals?

Rai Cornell 3:26

And oftentimes, it's during this work. It's during this process, this reflection, this introspection, this projecting forward, this visioning what we want our lives to look like that we realize some of the client engagements, some of the projects, some of the relationships that we're in right now. We can't possibly see those still existing in our ideal future. There's just no room for them. They don't fit in. And you have a decision to make. It's either you're going to stay in that relationship, stay in that client engagement, keep working on that project, out of obligation, out of fear, out of desperation mode, or what's the word I'm looking for scarcity, out of scarcity mindset thinking, well what if I break up with this client? And I can't find a new one? What if I break up with this client and I can't find anyone better?

Rai Cornell 4:37

How do I say goodbye to this revenue in my business? Maybe I need to continue sacrificing my energy and my health and my happiness in order to continue having that revenue come in. But what happens when you do that? Is you're making a decision and you're signaling to the universe, that this is something that you are willing to accept, you are willing to tolerate this level of misery, and it may be minimal, or it may be severe. But something about it is not making you happy. And by you choosing that engagement, that money, that project over your happiness, you are lowering the bar for yourself. And by doing that, the universe will continue to deliver those lower bar circumstances. Now, this is easier said than done. And so I want to give you a few illustrations.

Rai Cornell 5:48

Breaking up with clients is something that I have gotten very good at, over my now 15 years of freelancing, of running my own business, of running my agency. And even though I've gotten very good at it to the point where I can end a client engagement, stay on really good terms with that person, make it a seamless process for everyone involved, make sure that the client feels like their needs are being met, that what is in their best interest is still the priority. And they don't just feel like I'm dropping them off a cliff. Even though we've gotten good at that, it's never easy. It is always hard. It is always emotional, it is always stressful. For example, in December, so just this past month, I broke up with two clients, two big clients. And we came to this decision within the business after doing our own version of business building week. So business building week was on December 6 through 10. And we met on December 3rd, to do our own version of this. We look back at the past year, we see what worked, what didn't, what do we want to take with us? What patterns are emerging? What are we learning about ourselves in the business and the clients? And how do we also get to where we want to be? What is our big picture vision, what is our ultimate goal, and is what we're doing now going to get us there.

Rai Cornell 7:33

By doing that, what we noticed as a team was that the client engagements that are working for us are subscription based businesses. They are ones that fall within a set of five specific service categories. And they're ones that we can really templatized, they are ones that we have systems in place. We have processes, we have standard operating procedures that are documented. We have trainings for these projects, we have everything that we need to deliver on these projects with the highest standard highest quality of service, but also in a way that doesn't demand extra time and energy from us because it's so templatized because it's so systematized we have these step by step by step by step by step processes in place. And so we then looked at our client roster, and we noticed that there were two clients in particular, who didn't fit into these line items of what worked.

Rai Cornell 8:50

One of them is a company that I have been working with their CEO for three years. He has brought me along to three of his companies. And I have so so enjoyed working with him. He's

become a great friend. He's been a great source of referrals to other businesses that have been great clients for us. And yet, this current company that we were working out together, the projects were erratic, they were unpredictable, they were unsteady. I had somehow fallen into this role of if there's anything words related, Rai'll do it. And that's not what I want. For the agency to run in a way that is profitable and energizing and easy. We need services that fall into the five categories that we outlined. And this client would hand us everything from copywriting a sales page, which is great all the way to translating copy from their German side of their company, to English for their American based audience, and everything in between. We were doing social media, we were doing blogs, we were doing email marketing, we were doing website copy, we were doing SEO. And a lot of those things did fit into our preferred service categories, which is why one of the reasons why we stayed with that client for so long, that plus the fact that I had a great relationship with the CEO.

Rai Cornell 10:35

But because the company was so erratic, also, their projects were constantly changing. We couldn't systematize, we couldn't predict anything, we couldn't foreshadow what was coming down the pipeline, it was extremely difficult to predict revenue coming from that client, we always knew it'd be something we didn't know if it would be \$700 a month or \$5,000 a month. And this was one of our two clients that required a weekly meeting. And I am very protective of my time. I know how to be incredibly efficient, incredibly productive in a short amount of time, as long as I have full control over when I do what. And because part of this company is based in Europe. Our weekly meetings were at 9am Central my timezone on Thursdays. That was a complete outlier in my schedule, which meant that my Thursdays were my weird days, they were my off days, they were my, I don't get to go to my workout at the time that I want to, I don't get to do my communications with my team at the time that I want to, I don't get to do my writing at the time that I want to. It threw my whole day out of whack. Now, looking back, I can see good reason for why I stayed with that client.

Rai Cornell 12:07

But as the New Year approached, as we put our plan in place, as we set our goals for not just the next year, but the next five years, I realized that this client didn't fit in with that plan. So I had to have the conversation. Luckily, I say luckily, but I really shouldn't say luckily, because it's by design. When I approached this client, to let him know, hey, I'm going to have to end our contract at the end of December. Not only was he completely understanding, but he also was having concerns about the way that the company was running.

Rai Cornell 12:56

Because of the very things that I brought up, he shared my same concerns. And by me communicating those to him, not only did I get what I wanted, which is to not work within that company anymore, and not have to do the Thursday morning meetings, not have to deal with the erratic and unpredictable projects and revenue. But also, we got to bond over the fact that we were both struggling with the same pain points. And by the end of our conversation, I let him know, you know, I'm really going to miss working with you. I've enjoyed the past three years. It's

always been a blast working with you. And he said to me, Oh, don't worry, we're going to work together again. Even though I was so afraid to go into that conversation, thinking I'm going to lose a client, I'm going to lose a friend. I'm going to deal with conflict. Even though those were my worries going in, I was making the decision based on my gut, based on my intuition, based on the fact that this piece of my business, that this client, the space that this client was taking up, did not fit into the big picture of the entire puzzle that I'm assembling here within this operation. I trusted that and I knew it had to be removed. And it went my way.

Rai Cornell 14:24

Now you might think that that's just a fluke. But this has happened on numerous occasions. Another one that I broke up with in December. This was a client who we broke up with for very different reasons than the first. This was one who and I'm sure that as you're listening to this, you can think of a client who's made you feel this way or an experience that you've had that similar. Anytime this client's emails popped up in our inbox, myself and my operations manager we just dreaded seeing that name pop up. We had this sense of weight and heaviness and dread. For a number of reasons. One, the client was downright disrespectful, disrespectful to me, to my assistant, to my operations manager, to my writers. And that just struck me as something that I could not tolerate. This client was also very low tech, needed a lot of extra hand holding, had some very difficult to describe communication barriers where I or my operations manager would say something very clearly. And the client would misinterpret it or read between the lines or not read it at all, but still respond in a way where we would say, if you would just read our email, you can't possibly misconstrue this.

Rai Cornell 16:10

And so the constant communication barrier, the constant, this negativity that would come through these emails from this client made it so energetically demanding. And the fact that this client was also very low tech, and that we had to do a lot of support work just to make our projects doable. We put in so much extra time, that after looking back and doing a profit analysis of the past few months, we noticed that despite the fact that our contract was getting longer, and therefore things should get easier, things should become more streamlined, things should be more templated, flow easier. We were actually spending more and more and more time supporting this client to the point where it was no longer profitable, at least not to the standard that we set for ourselves. And so yet again, I had to go into a conversation where I was expecting conflict, I was expecting defensiveness, because you're sure as hell that I was going to point out the fact that our writers were being disrespected in the process. I went into that conversation, knowing that this was going to be a big blow to this client's business. So I went into it with a solution. I didn't just go in and say, Hey, we're done. At the end of the year, we're done. And drop them off the cliff.

Rai Cornell 17:49

I said look, this is what I'm noticing. This is why I think this is going wrong. This is what I think would actually be better for your business. Here are a few solutions to get you what you actually need to where these things won't be a problem. Not only was this client incredibly receptive, but

also incredibly grateful that I had already done the thinking and the "heavy lifting" of figuring out how this problem could be resolved for the company.

Rai Cornell 18:30

Now, here I am on December 17th. I now have broken up with two clients. And now I'm thinking okay, I have anywhere from 2 to \$6,000 probably 2 to \$8,000 a month that I need to replace in revenue for our company. By December 24, I had signed three new clients. Why? Because the energetic lift, the weight off of my shoulders of knowing that I wasn't going to take these two client engagements with me into the new year allowed me headspace and allowed me to be more positive. It allowed me to have an optimistic outlook as opposed to a pessimistic or cynical outlook. It allowed me to start daydreaming and fantasizing and getting excited about what's to come. I was grateful for the time I would have back in my schedule. I was grateful for the fact that our new although smaller client roster was going to be so much easier to handle. That energy, that vibe, that attitude, attracted in three new perfect clients. Two of which are subscription based businesses, which is exactly what our team decided that we wanted more of going into 2022. So all of this is to say, I could give you so many more illustrations, I probably have a half dozen of these from just the past three or four years, in addition to the two I just shared with you today.

Rai Cornell 20:30

When you make a decision that is based on what future you would want, what future you is willing to do, what future you has the wisdom and the discernment to choose, not past you, and not present version of you who might be afraid, who might be in scarcity mode, who might be looking at your bank account and going, how the fuck am I going to make this happen? When you set that aside, and you look at what do I actually want in the future? And does this thing that I'm doing right now help me to get there? If the answer is no, if the answer is future me, the me that I want to become, that business minded, savvy, relaxed, confident, profitable, prosperous, financially free, financially comfortable, working only 20 hours a week, whatever it is, that version of you that you want to become. If that version of you wouldn't stay with this client, wouldn't put up with this client's bullshit, wouldn't bend and flex and sway and just do everything in your power to accommodate, then present you shouldn't either. Because the only way that present you is going to become future you is if you start making the decisions, that future you would, that's how you become future you. That's how you become the person that you want to be. Alright, so I'm going to leave you with that.

Rai Cornell 22:28

As you head into 2022, as you start the new year, think about what is not serving you. And that might mean making some difficult decisions, might mean having some hard conversations. But I guarantee you. One, there is a way to have those conversations, to where you get everything that you want. And your client doesn't feel abandoned, doesn't feel snubbed, doesn't feel like I said before dropped off a cliff. And I also guarantee you number two, that you will attract in more of what you want, more of the high bar high standards that you're setting for yourself and that you're signaling to the universe that you will only accept and tolerate the very best, the things

that fit perfectly with the way you want to be living your life and running your business.

Rai Cornell 23:38

Now, if you know that you need to be making those difficult decisions, and you just don't even know how to go about it. You don't know how to start the conversation, what to offer that client how to problem solve, how to make sure it all goes smoothly. Let me know. That's what I'm here for, that's literally what I'm here for. We can hop on a one on one coaching session, you can hop in our private Chiron community on Slack, you can send me a message, you can post in the q&a channel and get the entire community's input. Reach out. You do not have to do this alone. Make a decision for yourself that in 2022 you are going to do whatever it takes even if it's uncomfortable to get to future you, to become the person, the business owner, the freelancer, the man, the woman that you want to be and sometimes oftentimes involves.

Rai Cornell 24:40

Alright, I hope to see you in our Q1 planning session on January 4th. I hope to see you in our Energy Align Success Schedule Workshop on January 20th. I hope to see you in all the places and all the things that we do on Instagram, on Facebook, in Slack in our private Chiron community. I hope to see you there. Cheers to an amazing 2022

Rai Cornell 25:17

Hey, it's Rai again. Thanks for listening. If you liked this episode, please subscribe and rate us on your favorite podcasting platform. We're on iTunes, Stitcher, Podcast Addict, YouTube and more and want to be a guest on the show or know someone who has an amazing story of entrepreneurship, apply on our website at www.chironconsulting.us/podcast