

## Ep #251: Business is Never a Straight Line



**Full Episode Transcript**

**With Your Host**

**Stacey Brown Randall**

***Roadmap to Referrals* with Stacey Brown Randall**

## **Ep #251: Business is Never a Straight Line**

Stacey Brown Randall: It doesn't take long as a business owner like maybe 24 hours for you to quickly realize running a business is not going to follow a straight line. That the business owner journey will give you amazing clues of what to do next if you're paying attention.

Hey there, and welcome to episode 251 of the Roadmap to Referrals Podcast, a show about helping you build a referral business. I'm your host, Stacey Brown Randall.

So, on last week's episode, episode 250 (I hope you enjoyed it), I had my husband on and I was asking him a number of questions; 10 questions to be exact, just to see how well he's been paying attention over the last 10 years of my business journey. It seemed like a fitting way to celebrate episode 250. I hope you enjoyed it.

Well, one of the questions that I asked my husband was actually how many business models I have had. It really wasn't a fair question because I'm not even sure I could have told you then the exact answer. So, neither one of us really knew the answer of exactly how many ways has Stacey worked with clients over the last 10 years.

But in thinking about that question later after he and I were done recording, I realized that I actually answer that question a lot by sharing my business journey. And I've done it every single time somebody asks me, "How are you doing? What you're doing?" Like it's just a common question that people ask.

And in fact, earlier this year, I was having coffee with one of my alumni clients who is also a friend and we were just catching up, and she asked me how things were going. I was telling her about the shift that I had made in my business when I created and launched my coaching program, Building a Referable Business or BRB.

And she asked me, "Well, how did you land on that model?" And then, of course, I'm answering the question because it's hard to answer that

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question if you don't have the context of where I came from before I landed there.

So, let me just go ahead and say this because you guys all know this — landing on the model, the coaching program model that BRB is didn't happen. Well, I mean it just didn't happen because I was following some perfectly planned straight line of how exactly I was going to grow my business. I did not know 10 years ago that BRB would be the model that I would eventually land on.

And I also had no idea 10 years ago that I would shift and change so many things in the meantime in that 10 years of getting there from where I started. I mean nothing in life follows that perfectly planned straight line. It just doesn't exist. And for me, it was far from it. There was no perfect straight line. So, for this episode, I thought I would share that journey with you guys, like I shared it with my alumni client and friend.

So, here's the thing about this episode. For some of you, this is going to sound like a nice story about how Stacey went from point A to point Z with her business over 10 years and it'll be a nice little journey of hearing how another business owner went through it.

But what I'm hoping for most of you is that you are going to be able to see how and why I made the shifts and the changes that I made. And my hope, my goal is for you to be able to start recognizing those moments in your own business by maybe hearing me talk about when I was recognizing them in my own business.

So, let's get started. Way back in the day, like as I've said, 10 years ago I started out as a one-to-one productivity and business coach. Basically, I sold hourly coaching packages and like in the very beginning, I actually would drive to each of my clients' offices. Yeah, like the mileage and the time. Oh my gosh.

And as you can imagine, that also meant that my business was very, very local to the Charlotte area and even very, very local to like basically as I

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would tell folks, staying inside our 485 loop and even closer into that, if I could help it. If I couldn't get from one client to the next client in 20 minutes, it wasn't happening. So, well that's how I started and I literally sold hourly coaching practice.

Now, I will tell you, I didn't even last an entire year of driving to my client's offices because it was less than a year later, I had rented my first office space. And then, I basically told my clients, "Hey, if you want to keep coaching with me, you got to come to me." And I became very quickly the queen of appointment stacking and figuring out how to work with that.

I pulled that from my days of being the queen of coffee stacking when I would meet people for coffee. I pulled that same type of idea into how I handled my coaching clients. And that's also how I allowed myself to not be coaching five days a week at all times based on to be honest, what worked best for my clients, but making space available when I knew I would have the right energy to show up for them and making those appointments available.

And then, them taking what was available based on what fit for their schedule as well. So, that's how I started. One-to-one productivity and business coach, I'm selling hourly coaching packages.

And when my clients were coming to me and I had been doing that for a little bit, that's when I realized that the referral methodology that I was using to grow my coaching practice would actually become the most scalable part of my business.

Now, you guys know I have the privilege (I call it a privilege now, I didn't call it that then) of actually having a business fail. I am a card caring member of the business failure club, and the lessons that I learned from that really gave me a unique perspective on what I was looking for, for this business, my second business.

It really helped me figure out what I wanted and what I didn't want, and what I was going to have to do to be successful and do things differently

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and try things differently. One of those big lessons learned that I talk about all the time, of course is like you've got to be able to touch business development like in an ongoing way, and in a way that you enjoy because that's how you're going to bring in clients.

You need to figure out what that way is for you. For me, that became referrals. The other piece for me is that I knew I needed to eventually figure out a scaling model. So, my first business, of course, for those of you who know the story, it was a consulting firm. I did project work. When you run out of hours, you run out of hours. It's no different with coaching. When you run out of hours, you run out of hours.

And so, for me, I was always with starting this business, my second business, I was always on the lookout of what do I have that as scalable. Now, in theory, the productivity pieces that I was teaching could have been scalable, but I had been certified by somebody else and she already had that scalable piece in place.

And to be honest, I didn't want to compete with her, and I was super grateful that she had actually gone through the process of certifying me and it just wasn't where I wanted to take my business. So, when I realized that what I was doing to grow my own business with referrals, which would become my referral methodology and how we generate referrals naturally ...

When I realized that using that to grow my coaching practice would be the most scalable part of my business, that is really when the first of many shifts in terms of what I offered and how I offered my services would start to happen. I was always on the lookout for what can I scale. That was an important piece.

Now, I thought I knew exactly what it meant to scale years ago, and now I'm like, "Wow, that looks totally different today." But again, we learn lessons as we grow a business. And so, I didn't plan out any of the shifts that would eventually happen, but I was always paying attention to what

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could I have that could scale that would allow me not to sell my hours or trade dollars for hours.

So, as I made decisions of how the shifts would go in my business, and I was listening to my clients in terms of what they wanted and I was listening to myself in terms of how I wanted to show up — I just made the best decisions I could at the time.

That's really, when I look back over the last 10 years, it was just about taking in the information and making the best decision I could at that moment. And that is really actually the big lesson here. Yes, I came with some interesting perspective, having a business failure and knowing some things that I needed to change in my second business to make it successful.

And one of those being let's have something to scale. But everything else really just came from me being mindful of how did I feel? How was my energy? How did I feel when I looked at my calendar? Was I excited for the day or dreading the day? Now, we all have those days, but a lot of those in a row are not good. Like we should be paying attention to that.

But then also, where was I getting the biggest wins for my clients? Where were they having the biggest aha moments? What was happening? What was that looking like? And when you start paying attention to all of that, you can start shifting and making decisions. It doesn't make any of those decisions less scary.

In my personal opinion, they're still scary decisions, but you're making them with the right information, the right data because you're paying attention.

So, if you take nothing else away from this episode, take that lesson, which is just start paying attention to the shifts, the feelings, everything about what's happening in your business and make the best decision you can with the information that you have at the time.

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When I talk to business owners like in their first year (and I've always done this), I always tell them, "Your business will not look the same in three years as it does now in your first year." Like I was just talking to an attorney who's gone out on his own, he's six months in. He's talking about some of the decisions he's having to make.

And I was like, "Yes, all those are good decisions to make." I was like, "And keep in mind, three years from now when you and I have another conversation, your business is going to look different." Yeah, it'll still be a law office, it'll still be a legal practice, but it's going to look different. And he was like, "What?" They don't always believe me, but many have come back to tell me that I was right.

Because the truth is, growing a business is all about growing as a person. Whether you do it happily and with open arms or sometimes we do it kicking and screaming. You just don't have to have it all figured out all the time. And that is important to like sear into your brain. I don't have to know everything right now to still make a decision to move forward as long as I'm gathering the information that I need that will help me make the best decision that I can make at this time. It took me eight years to finally find a model of operation that I love, and here's what it took to get me there.

So, as I mentioned, I started out with one-on-one coaching packages. At first in the beginning, I sold them at three months and then you could buy.

And then, I was like, "Nope, now everyone's got to buy six months." And then I eventually had the guts to tell everybody when you coach with me, it's a yearlong contract and that was my first taste of reoccurring clients.

And I was like, "Oh, I like this." I like knowing that you're now with me for the next 12 months and that I can count on that, those dollars in the bank every single month. I didn't have that with my previous consulting business. But when you sell dollars for hours, you're going to run out of hours to sell no matter how much you raise your rates.

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And so, over that first year, the coaching was focused on productivity, but then it eventually, as I started having more business conversations and then eventually more referral, like we'd have business development conversations and then we'd have more referral conversations as a part of that business development strategy. And I started talking about what I was doing to grow my business.

And so, really, it was one-to-one coaching, productivity and business. And I was starting to coach people on this referral methodology. I didn't teach it then the way I teach it now. I mean, there's some pieces that are still the same. But obviously, I got better at it and I evolved over time.

While still offering the one-to-one coaching, I also started offering workshops specifically on my referral methodology. And I did a couple of workshops, like there were 30 to 50 people kind of in attendance. I did a couple of them and that showed me that I could teach the process one to many.

And at the same time, I was starting to learn about the online course, the online learning, the online course, the online program space, like as an industry and what it looks like to operate a business that basically takes your knowledge, takes your intellectual property and packages it up and sells it, because you're basically selling your information. Like that's effectively what it is when you are selling an online program where people are going to come and learn how to do something.

They are buying your intellectual property. They're buying your information. And so, I started learning about that as well, which was really important for me to understand that everyone tells you give away your content, tell everybody everything they could need to know. The concept actually behind all that is there's also a part of your intellectual property that should always be protected and that should always be behind a paywall because that's how you run a business.

If you are an infopreneur, I think is like a word that was used to describe like 10 years ago — like infopreneurs, like they sell their information.

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There's some information that you can find on Google and there's some information that you actually have to pay for and understanding how to build a business and programs and services and offerings around that, that was a learning curve for me. And understanding what that looked like.

So, again, started out with the one-to-one coaching packages, I started offering workshops, then I realized, wait, I can actually teach this methodology to the 50 people sitting in the room from different industries and have them be able to apply it and have success. And that one to many was really important for me to like recognize that moment. Because again, I was focused on what could I scale.

So, then, because now I'm learning about the online course space, in December of 2015, I took my signature strategy, which is still available to this day, Growth by Referrals (you hear me refer to it as GBR). It is the strategy where I teach you how to identify your existing referral sources and then build a plan with the right language and all the right pieces in place to actually generate more referrals from your existing referral sources.

It's the strategy if you have referral sources, you should have that plan in place every single year and you should be operating from it like clockwork. So, I took that strategy, which was the first strategy I ever taught and it became like the signature one I constantly taught, and I turned it into an online course, an online program.

And then, I quickly followed up with turning what is now Referring Machines, which is how you take clients and contacts who've never referred you and get them to start referring you. So, we took that concept of Referring Machines. I quickly turned that into an online program.

And then, also did what it is now a retired program called Sticky Client Experience. We retired that and actually we have Referable Client Experience, which is different from Sticky Client Experience because we kind of ... I changed the methodology of how I teach it.

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As I was teaching the client experience piece about being referable, there's just a lot of pieces that I started to switch and change and bring more of the referral piece into it, than just having like this amazing client experience.

So, we retired Sticky Client Experience. So, if you go looking for it, it's not available. But eventually other online programs, online trainings came to be, and Referable Client Experience is the one we have now for client experience.

But once I got GBR out there and I sold, like people bought the program, that was pretty amazing. I quickly followed with Referring Machines and some of the other ones we have now.

Building and selling an online program, I will tell you takes an entirely different set of skills. I had to embrace technology, which if you are a long time listener of this podcast, you know me and tech, we are not besties.

And I had to embrace how to sell by not talking to each person who might consider joining an online program that like way back in the day may have been a few hundred dollars or a few thousand dollars. It's just different. Everything about it is different. Not complicated, not complex, not hard, but it is different than what I was used to doing.

Rarely would I bring somebody in to do coaching with me where we hadn't had an initial phone call, where we figured out here's how my coaching works and do I think I can help you? Like do you want to work with me and do I want to work with you?

When you move it to like an online model and maybe someone's paying you like \$1000, \$1,500, \$2,000 to buy an online program, you're not selling to those people with 30-minute calls like consulting calls or 30-minute discovery calls. Like it just looks entirely different. And then, of course, you have to embrace the technology piece.

I mean, 80% of my business now is run by technology. I mean it's crazy. Even when I show up live to do my weekly question and answer like pop-up

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office hours so to speak. They don't pop up. We actually know they're coming, they're on the calendar.

But like our office hours where I answer questions for my BRB members every single week, I'm there live and it's me answering those questions. But we're still doing it through Zoom because they're all over the world. So, from that perspective, there's a lot of things that have to be learned and there's a lot of decisions that have to be made in terms of deciding to go in that direction. But that's where I was headed.

Hey, pardon the interruption. Quick question: how many more episodes are you going to listen to before you take the plunge and join me inside Building a Referral Business? BRB is my coaching program and I'd love for you to consider joining me.

First step is to submit an application to see if you are the right fit and if you're accepted. If you are approved, you'll receive all the details plus a training video that you can watch that explains how we work with our clients, which means how we double, triple or quadruple our members' referrals in a year. Then you can decide if joining now is the right move for your business.

Go to [staceybrownrandall.com/referable](https://staceybrownrandall.com/referable) to learn about everything you receive inside BRB, like access to the weekly Q&A sessions with me, access to all 18 referral strategies that I teach and customized roadmaps to follow. Again, the link to the application, which you'll need to complete to see if you can be accepted, is [staceybrownrandall.com/referable](https://staceybrownrandall.com/referable).

So, where I am in the journey now is for a few years, I kept the one-on-one coaching going and I continued to launch or like open the doors, so to speak — open cart, close cart to the online programs GBR (Growth By Referrals) and RM (Referring Machines).

And I reached a point for a few years, kind of in like 2016 to 2019 where the shifts I made in my business became much smaller. I went from a big shift of doing like productivity and business coaching, which was one-to-

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one, you buy hours of packages, you're signing up for yearlong contract, to then adding in, taking the referral strategies and doing online programs with them and selling those, and going through the launch model kind of to sell ... like people coming into those programs.

And then, I would make smaller shifts after that. And one of the smaller shifts that I made that was much more in line with what I was doing is like I added a one-on-one option for the people who were considering the online program. It was then known as like the VIP option where you would actually learn GBR and Referring Machines from me.

And then I would like basically be with you on a quarterly basis as you're implementing and answering questions and keeping you on track. And we would do these quarterly check-ins after I had taught it to you in that first quarter.

And so, I just started paying attention. Like people would be like, "Wow, I really want to learn this methodology. I really want to learn this training, but not necessarily through an online program. Do you have anything where I can work with you?"

So, I started listening, I was like, "Okay, test it, test it out." And I did add in a VIP option where people could learn a couple of the trainings right from me. They didn't get all the trainings, but it was a couple of trainings from me and then have access to me to kind of hold them accountable.

So, I had like the online program and then an up-leveled version, which is like the VIP. And at that point, I'm also now stopping offering productivity coaching. And then, 2021 hit and I found myself tired, and like hitting a roadblock, but I couldn't exactly explain the roadblock.

And I've done episodes on this before. I'm trying to think of the number, I should probably know that number. But it was the sweet spot episode that I did last year and it was at the beginning of like 2022 when I did this because I was taking into account the journey that I went through in 2021.



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2021 was like a really big transformational year for me as a human, as me figuring out what do I want to do? How do I want to do it, how do I want to deliver it? How do I want to show up? Where do my clients get their best results working with me? Where do they find their most success? What are they looking for? What am I looking for? Like all the things.

Like I was going on like hour-long walks and talking to businesspeople in my mastermind group. I was having conversations with other people, I was checking out other people who had this model that I was starting to get interested in. And it was a journey and it was all of 2021.

And I remember towards the middle of 2021, I was talking to one of my business friends and I said, "Hey, I have figured out the model, this is what I'm going to do." And she was like, "Great, you need to launch it by fourth quarter of this year."

And I was like, "No, this is a 2022 launch." She's like, "No, it's not, launch it." So, I did. I launched in November of 2021. So, it was a fourth quarter launch and everything changed. It just totally became a game changer for me. It's now my signature offering.

Yes, I still have the online programs. But it is the signature offering, it's my favorite offering and it's going really, really strong. And I can see it foregoing for years and years and years, because we keep the group small, I get to know the people in the group. I make sure the people who come in to BRB are the right fit and are of the right industries so that the conversations we're having, fit.

I mean there are people that do get declined when they submit an application to BRB. It's not my favorite thing to do, but I always personally reach out and tell them why. Because I think that's important. But it is the thing where when someone comes into BRB, they are willing to go through the trainings to learn the stuff.

But then also, know that every single week they can come ask me questions. And every single week I can review what they're working on and

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they've got to email access to me as well, and they're making progress. And it's also allowing me to show up the way I love best, which is you've learned it. I didn't have to teach it to you, you watched a video, you've learned it.

Now, what do you need to know about it? What questions do you have? How do I help you get over the hump? How do I get you out of your own way? Do we need to talk about mindset? Do we need to talk about tactics? All the things, I love it. It's just so fun. And that's where I landed where I am today.

So, if I look back at my one-on-one coaching, and then kind of shifting that into doing workshops and then shifting that into an online program, and then going back and adding a one-on-one option to those online programs, and then shifting yet again, and building out what is my group coaching program, Building a Referable Business (BRB) ...

I could never have told you then that BRB was going to exist in the future. I could never have told you 10 years ago that BRB was going to be a thing. But I listened and not only to my clients, which is important, but I also listened to myself, like how do I want to show up? What do I want my calendar to look like?

What kind of wife do I want to be? What kind of mom do I want to be? What kind of business owner do I want to be? How am I going to define success which will totally slap in the face of how everybody else in society usually and typically define success? And can I get okay with that? Like all the things transpired through 2021, and only strengthen my resolve throughout 2022.

And now, here we are in 2023 and I'm like, "Yes." If you need to come into an online program because that is what your budget allows or that's what you can buy into the online programs exist. But if you want to work with me, I want to work with you and we do that through BRB.

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And that journey to arrive here — 10 years, my friends, I did not know this is what I wanted. I would've loved to shorten the curve. That would've been amazing, but that's just not how it was planned out by the big man upstairs.

So, this is where we are, and I'm sure I did things to slow this thing down, I am sure of it. But I'm here and I'm working with clients the exact way I want to. Because business, my friends is never a straight line. And what you need to do is to be open to seeing how your business is going and paying attention to how you're feeling through it and what your clients are telling you.

And sometimes what your clients tell you they want isn't 100% what they need. There's something underlying there and you've got to do a little digging to figure it out. But going on this journey has been one of the most powerful things I've ever experienced because I truly believe that the best way to grow yourself is decide to start a business.

If you want to grow as a person, you should definitely start a business because having that business is absolutely going to grow you as a person. Because here's the thing, you're going to learn so much, you're going to realize things that you never thought you would do, you do.

Like when I used to do the one-on-one productivity coaching and I moved to the like selling the online programs, when people would call me a coach, I'd get all bit out of shape. Now, I'm like embracing the word. I like come full circle my friends. Like, “Yes, I will be your referral coach. I will show you all the ways of things that you need to know how to do it. You just got to meet me halfway and you got to do your part.”

So, like if you want to grow as a person, you should absolutely start a business or just recognize, “Hey, you want to start a business, you're also going to grow as a person.” The two are together. You can't not grow when you decide to become a business owner. Okay.

So, of course, if you are interested in joining Building a Referral Business (BRB) our coaching program, I will link to it in the show notes as we always

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do. The show notes to this episode is [staceybrownrandall.com/251](http://staceybrownrandall.com/251). That's [staceybrownrandall.com/251](http://staceybrownrandall.com/251) for episode 251.

And next week is episode 252, and we are going to embark on a journey of hearing from clients who are having success with their referral generation. And I can't wait for you guys to meet these folks. Over a series of weeks, I'm going to introduce you to folks who have had success with their referral generation and what that has meant for their business. And I can't wait for you to meet them.

That's coming up next week with episode 252, but it's going to run for a number of episodes moving forward.

Until then, you know what to do, my friends: take control of your referrals and build a referable business. Bye for now.