

Announcer (5s):

Welcome To the Maximize Business Value Podcast. This podcast is brought to you by Mastery Partners, where our mission is to equip business owners to maximize business value so they can transition their business on their terms. Our missions born from the lessons we've learned from over 100 business transactions, which fuels our desire to share our experiences and wisdom so you can succeed. Now, here's your host, CEO Mastery Partners, Tom Bronson.

Tom Bronson (36s):

Hi, this is Tom Bronson, and welcome to Maximizes Business Value podcast for business owners who are passionate about building long-term sustainable value in your business. In this episode, I'd like to welcome our guest, Susan fema. She is the c e o that's Chaos eradicating Officer at Beyond the Chaos, where their mission is to empower business owners by providing the best operations, consulting and management tailored specifically to each client. Now, Susan and I have gotten to know each other recently through business navigators, the Servant Leadership Organization. You've probably heard me mention a time or two on this podcast.

Tom Bronson (1m 19s):

Building a smooth, efficient operation is one of the keys to building a transferrable business. And today we're gonna learn from the best. So welcome to Maximize Business Value. Susan,

Susan Fennema (1m 33s):

Thanks so much, Tom. I am thrilled to be here and excited to impart some brilliant wisdom to people.

Tom Bronson (1m 39s):

Awesome, brilliant wisdom. I like that. So, chaos Eradicating Officer. I love that title. So tell us a little bit about Beyond the Chaos. And by the way, if we took my camera, you'd see chaos here. You just can't see it.

Susan Fennema (1m 54s):

Don't show me. It'll distract me the whole time. So beyond the chaos helps small business owners, and when I say small, I mean really small companies of 25 people are, are fewer, where the owner is very much the operator of the business. And we jump in and help that owner figure out how to get all of those day-to-day operations off their plate and forgive the cliché so they can work on the business instead of in the business. We want them to get their lives back because many times they have given up personal lives, their marriage is suffering, their kids are missing them, and we want them to impact American society in a positive way.

Susan Fennema (2m 44s):

And if you've ever dealt with an overwhelmed person, you know, they are not their best self and they're interacting with team members, clients, vendors, all sorts of people who they could have a much better impact on. And so we see part of our mission as being impacting American society positively, exponentially.

Tom Bronson (3m 5s):

I think that's a brilliant mission, and I love that because so many business owners are overwhelmed and their business is completely dependent on them. Owner dependency Yeah. Is one of the biggest reasons why businesses can't transact. And I see it all the time, every day. And frankly, of the 33 million businesses in America, 95% of them are less than 5 million in revenue. And so you've got a, a big potential market that you can help out. So what's your background and why did you start this business almost 15 years ago?

Susan Fennema (3m 40s):

So I came from always being the right hand to a small business owner working in businesses since my very first job of fewer than 20 people. I've worked for one major corporation for one year and it was not fun. And I also worked for an advertising agency for 10 years as the ops director, which then got bought by a bigger agency, which was part of why I departed there. I love how small business can do things quickly, they can make fast change that has great impact.

Susan Fennema (4m 22s):

And once you get into the larger companies, all that slows down and there's politics and there's bureaucracy and that's not my thing. So I started Beyond the Chaos as actually a personal organization, company as a side gig. And then in 20 20 16, when I left my last job, I'm doing this in quotes, if you're just listening, I decided that I wanted to stop helping one business owner at a time and go to the masses and help multiple business owners. And there was no reason why the Beyond the Chaos brand could not transition from helping women clean out their closets to helping owners, you know, clean up their acts, so to speak.

Susan Fennema (5m 15s):

So we, we jumped into, you know, changing the, the background more to, to business to I guess business to business instead of business to consumer. And that is what drove me. I I added team members after the first year, my first hire was a project manager because that was part of the services that I as beyond the chaos offered and realized I can't keep growing the business if I am in the day-to-day of trying to manage projects for my clients. So that was my first hire. And now we have 10 people.

Susan Fennema (5m 56s):

I only have, nobody works for me full-time. I have two part-time employees and the rest are contractors. But we very much interact as a team and because I've hired this way, man, do we have some amazing talent on our team. Very experienced people who can come in and give these business owners this vast experience that they would never get if they were just trying to hire, you know, themselves.

Tom Bronson (6m 24s):

That's amazing. That's ama Do you still do any of the personal or is it all just business to business now?

Susan Fennema (6m 31s):

We changed it. I'll do so if, if somebody needs me, I'll go, you know, I've, I've done a couple of side gigs, I call 'em side gigs now where I'll go help some somebody one-on-one. But the, the rate on that has gone substantially higher. Yeah.

Tom Bronson (6m 51s):

Yeah. We hired, we hired somebody years ago because my wife wanted to kick me out of my office. Now my office is pretty nice. I have a, I have a fireplace back here, I've got a private bathroom, I've got a exterior entrance, and she wanted to kick me outta my office and take it over and the, and the, and I was nervous as heck, and where am I gonna go for my stuff? And this person who does, you know, personal organization came in and, and spent the day with Karen. And then I came home from my office and to be with baited breath to hear the results of this. And this organizer said, Tom, Karen, I know wants your office, but seeing that you have a wife and three daughters, that is your man cave and we're not going to touch it.

Tom Bronson (7m 40s):

And I said, right, I love you. How much money do you want?

Susan Fennema (7m 45s):

We always try to respect that, you know, just expanding into other areas. And this applies to business too. Yeah. Just taking your stuff and making it in putting it in more places does not solve your organization of problems.

Tom Bronson (7m 59s):

I don't know why we haven't been like fast friends for a long time because some of our experience is the same. Whenever I've sold a company to a big business, I, if I work for them, it's a disaster because I, I can't work in, in a big company environment because they just don't move fast enough.

Susan Fennema (8m 15s):

I need 'em to move fast. I wanna see the change, I wanna see the impact. I don't wanna wait a year and a half for it.

Tom Bronson (8m 22s):

I almost derailed my last sale of a company in 2018 because I said I would not go to work for the, for the buyer. Hmm. Although I had a strategy for how they were gonna run and manage the business, and, but I know I learned two things about myself way back in my career that I'm a pretty decent c e o maybe not the best in the world, but I know what I'm doing and I'm a terrible employee. So, so yeah, you have to do this. And I owned an, an advertising agency that was one of the first

Susan Fennema (8m 57s):

Really

Tom Bronson (8m 57s):

Businesses I own. So you and I have lots and lots to talk about. We do. But we'll, we'll get, let's get back to the, to the subject at hand. You know, what are the first three things that a small business owner should do to get beyond the chaos?

Susan Fennema (9m 12s):

So we suggest three things, and that's what you asked me. So you're dead on, right? On the three, well,

Tom Bronson (9m 18s):

There you go. For two it this,

Susan Fennema (9m 22s):

Right? The, the first is to wrangle your project management. And so that's the fulfillment part of whatever you're delivering to your client. That's how you go about delivering the, the product or service that you sell. So project management needs to be the first thing that you tackle, because if you can't deliver it systematically, then stop selling it. It's just, you're, you're selling something that is just making bigger and bigger messes. So tackle that project management area first, and then we wanna step into process development. Now, sometimes these things cross over, but that process development is how you do things systematically over and over.

Susan Fennema (10m 9s):

How are you repeating your successes? How are you preventing mistakes? And how are you delegating that process without process? It's all in the owner's head. It can't be pushed out to someone who comes on board. There's no way to train. You're just expecting them to read your mind. And that applies to how you want it delivered too. So part of project management, the project management part is also developing process around that. When I say project management, I'm not talking about, oh, we went and we got a sauna. So the problem solved, that's a tool.

Susan Fennema (10m 52s):

And you know, just like if you had a hammer and a nail, the picture doesn't miraculously get hung on the right wall in the right room at the right height. You have to have some direction around how you're doing it. So there is process development around the project management as well. But then we wanna get that process development into things like you're onboarding, you are off onboarding of people. So these days onboarding's important, but off boarding's more important. You give everybody the keys to the kingdom now with all the software. So making sure that you're reflecting that, making sure you have a sales process, making sure you have a handoff between sales and fulfillment.

Susan Fennema (11m 35s):

All of those processes are what I'm talking about. And this does not have to be invasive. I know a lot of business owners feel like, oh, the bureaucracy, this stuff sets you free. It does not weigh you down. I'm not talking about, you know, i s o 9,000 or, or lean, we're talking about, just get the stuff out of your head. And then the last step, the third step is managing your interruptions. And so many business owners are interrupted all day with things that they do not need to be interrupted with. And so they're not able to focus on the big picture things that they need to be digging into to, to drive and run the business.

Tom Bronson (12m 21s):

I I love that. I love all three of these components. I mean, the process development, we'll get into that in just a second, but process development is one of the, I'd call it the top 10 things that business owners need to really think about to get themselves, you know, get rid of that owner dependency. In fact, in my new book that just came out, I talk about developing processes here. And so I think that that is wildly important in every business owner who's listening to this. If you don't have great dedicated processes that you can follow relentlessly over and over again and achieve the same result, you probably need to call Susan.

Tom Bronson (13m 1s):

So,

Susan Fennema (13m 2s):

And Tom, they need to be written processes. Yes, yes. I wanna emphasize the written part.

Tom Bronson (13m 10s):

I know, I, I always say when I, when I'm interviewing a new client and we're doing our assessment, that's one of the things we ask. And I said, do you have, you know, we ask about sales process, about cash handling process, we ask about finance process. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. We have all those. I said, okay, where are they? Can I see them? Oh, they're right here, baby. Well,

Susan Fennema (13m 28s):

Doesn't count.

Tom Bronson (13m 29s):

It doesn't count. Yeah, it doesn't count. Sorry. So, and of course, the interruption management, the psychology of, of getting back to work after you've been interrupted, you know, you, if you are in the zone working thinking, and, and by the way, to me, maybe one of the more important things the c e o needs to do is spend thinking time. Yes.

Susan Fennema (13m 50s):

Working for

Tom Bronson (13m 51s):

Sure. And once you get interrupted from something, if you're working on a project or thinking it takes, you know, a couple of hours sometimes to get back into the flow of what you were in. So interruption management, that is, that is huge. Those are three great things. But let's hone in on that whole process development. What are some examples of processes that most business, most businesses might need?

Susan Fennema (14m 13s):

So I mentioned the onboarding and offboarding for sure. That's important with your, and, and I'm talking about your team onboarding and offboarding your team, but there should also be onboarding for your clients. How are you teaching your clients to work with you? You know, are you, you are the one who gets to set the expectation. So if you set the expectation that every time they call, somebody's gonna jump and do their thing immediately first, that's fine, as long as they're paying you a lot of money and that's what you want. But if you're just reacting all the time, you're not able to plan, your team's not able to function. So being able to set boundaries with your clients is part of your process.

Susan Fennema (14m 59s):

And that can be things like, we don't answer emails, you know, after five and before eight. You know, we, we don't, you know, I don't actually pretty much ever answer my phone, for example, I'll respond to a voicemail if I get a voicemail.

Tom Bronson (15m 17s):

No, I know why you won't answer my calls. No,

Susan Fennema (15m 19s):

I know. Well, Tom, you're blocked.

Tom Bronson (15m 24s):

I wonder why I goes straight to voicemail, never dawn on me.

Susan Fennema (15m 28s):

But, but does learning that, you know, email's not an emergency. If it's coming to you from email, you can read it. Tom and I were talking before we started recording about how I don't really look at my email maybe a couple times a day for the things that my assistants left for me that I need to handle, but otherwise they're handling it for me. The big part of that that's important is think about what your mentality does when you get into email. All of a sudden you're responding to emails and you feel like you're so productive and you're accomplishing all this stuff, but you're not, you're taking time away from the important things that you could be focusing on.

Susan Fennema (16m 14s):

So I try very hard, but my, my team will, if, if something's urgent, they'll notify me in Slack and I will tell them how to respond. So there's some ways to avoid interruptions like that. If one of the things I run into a lot with my clients who are software developers, they will say, oh, but my team needs my help with support. You know, as far as guidance as to how to create something fantastic. Put some office hours on your calendar. So you answer questions for them between two and three every day. They're welcome to jump in if they don't jump into your call, you can just do busy work during that hour that you have.

Susan Fennema (16m 54s):

That's, that's your admin time. But that helps prevent those interruptions. And it would also amaze you as to how many of those problems they can solve themselves if you're not just reacting to their question immediately. So those are the types of interruptions you can prevent.

Tom Bronson (17m 13s):

I, I love that. I think that that's so important. I, there was a time in my last company, we had 350 employees. I had, I had, we had three different operating divisions, so food, so restaurant retail and winery. And the GMs of each of those divisions reported up to me, but also the functional head. So VP of sales and marketing, chief operating officer, chief financial officer, all kind of reported up to me. I had something like 12 direct reports and one day I, I just had this, what I call A B G o, a blinding glimpse of the obvious how many times I was being interrupted by these very high power, high paid people on a daily basis.

Tom Bronson (17m 59s):

And I was not able to get my work done, even despite the fact that we had a meeting every Monday morning that typically ran an hour or so. And, and, and I said, okay, here's what we're gonna do. Thursday is my one-on-ones with each one of you and I, we started at seven o'clock in the morning, 30 minutes you bring the agenda and I will have my own agenda. And I ran my entire day. It was a beating. But, but, but imagine how much time I got back Yeah. During the rest of the week without those owner, because I said, look, if, if you know the building's on fire call me. But otherwise, if it

Susan Fennema (18m 38s):

No, why are they calling you? Call 9 1 1, they don't even need to call you then.

Tom Bronson (18m 42s):

Yeah, well call me after you call nine one one because I do want to know if I, if I smell smoke, I do.

Susan Fennema (18m 47s):

You wanna get out,

Tom Bronson (18m 50s):

Don't leave me behind, is what I'm saying. So, so yeah. So yeah, that's, that's, it's getting that kind of setting

up that expectation. I think it's wonderful. What do you, what do you mean? You say a lot when we talk about process driven businesses, what do you mean by that?

Susan Fennema (19m 9s):

So my opinion of a process driven business is that it's really people driven. So when you establish clear process with your team, they know what to do. The expectations clear, there's a method to hold them accountable. There also needs to be a way. And so here's another process for you. The process of process, I know that sounds redundant and bureaucracy bureau bureaucratic, bureaucratic, but, but the, how are you rolling out your processes? How are you storing them? How are you making updates? How do you get input from your team when something isn't going well?

Susan Fennema (19m 53s):

That this, this keeps being a sticking point that helps you improve your business. So you are driving your business by process. When something goes wrong, you have this beautiful management tool of saying to your team member what happened in the process that this did not render the outcome we expected. And now you're working with your team member to fix and solve the overall process, not just the one right in front of your face. So fix the current one and then let's go back and let's fix this so it doesn't happen again.

Susan Fennema (20m 37s):

And when you get into that man, your team's now working together, they don't feel berated. They feel like they're part of the solution and they feel like, like their input is valued. You get 'em to stick around a lot longer and be very committed to executing against what you, what you as the owner want to be the expectation and vision of your company. So that's kind of what I mean about process driven business. The other thing too is you, your whole team needs to think that way. My team is great when they say things like, Hey, I'm noticing we're we're that it would be good if we did this thing, or we are doing this thing every time we repeat opening a new project or something like that.

Susan Fennema (21m 26s):

I'm going to add it to the project template. I'm going to add it to the process. They always run it by me because I am the keeper of the process at our company, which as a C E O, maybe I shouldn't be, but I'm also the c o o of my company. We're small still. So that's the other thing, you gotta, you gotta manage expectations of what your c e O should not be doing when you're still small and growing. You can't outrun your financials, so to speak. But you know, that's something that I'm actually training somebody on my team to take over for me. And so she'll start making the decisions.

Susan Fennema (22m 6s):

But you do need somebody in charge of that decision making so that you don't have your team willy-nilly making changes without recognizing the impact it has overall. But you do want to make sure that they have the input and give them the power to execute it themselves. And then also how are they rolling it out to the

rest of the team to make sure they know.

Tom Bronson (22m 32s):

So what I'm hearing from you is that process driven, driven businesses can use that to better manage their people. Is that what I'm hearing?

Susan Fennema (22m 40s):

Yeah. To better manage their people and to continue to improve the way they do business always if they're keeping that front of mind.

Tom Bronson (22m 49s):

Wow. Sounds like we might have a little owner dependency issue on the processes there, Susan, but

Susan Fennema (22m 54s):

Well, we'll get that later. But I, I already got a plan. I already got a plan for that. Good. We're working on it.

Tom Bronson (22m 60s):

Yes. Good for you. Yeah, in fact, I was, we talked before we started recording here about the book Who Not How, which is a great book. You need a who for those for doing that. So I'm glad that you're training somebody to do that now. That's, that's very exciting. So it's, but we're up against a break. We're talking to Susan fema. Let's take a quick break. We'll be back in 30 seconds.

Announcer (23m 22s):

Every business will eventually transition some internally to employees and managers and some externally to third party buyers Mastery partners equips business owners to maximize business value so they can transition their businesses on their terms using our four step process. We start with a snapshot of where your business is today, then we help you understand where you want to be and design a custom strategy to get you there next. We help you execute that strategy with the assistance of our amazing resource network. And ultimately you'll be able to transition your business on your terms. What are you waiting for? More time, more revenue. If you want to maximize your business value, it takes time.

Announcer (24m 3s):

Now is that time, get started today by checking us out at www.masterypartners.com or email us at info@masterypartners.com to learn.

Tom Bronson (24m 18s):

We're back and we're talking with Susan FEMA about getting beyond the chaos in your business. So for virtual or hybrid companies, how do you suggest that the owner establish a sense of culture?

Susan Fennema (24m 35s):

That is a great question cuz that's a big buzz right now, right?

Tom Bronson (24m 39s):

I, I ask nothing but great question, Susan. Right now,

Susan Fennema (24m 44s):

The, the, the issue that came up, of course it of course it came to a head during Covid, but there were virtual companies before that. My company has been virtual since 2016. I've been virtual since 2010. I've worked with tons of different virtual companies that never had an onsite presence. But during covid, the whole concept of having to work virtual came to light. And I think we discovered some people saying, man, the culture's just gone downhill. But I think that a lot of what came to light during that was that probably you didn't have a great culture to begin with.

Susan Fennema (25m 28s):

And stress just brings up those issues more. But there are plenty of ways to establish a culture when you have, when you don't see people. Most of my team I've never met in person. Some of them worked for me for a long time before I ever met them in person. Wow. Okay.

Tom Bronson (25m 51s):

That's, go ahead. No, that's amazing. You've never met some of your people. Wow.

Susan Fennema (25m 56s):

Never met them in person. Okay. But we have a very big sense of team, and I will tell you what helps us establish it more than anything is Slack. The way that we use Slack intentionally to be the water cooler in the business and also to talk about, you know, important things. We have different channels for fun, you know, that kind of thing. But one of the things I run with my team every morning is when they check in, now they're contractors, right? So they're, they don't have a set start time, but whenever they're ready to work, I don't care if it's midnight, whatever time they're working, they're, they, the first thing they do is answer three questions.

Susan Fennema (26m 38s):

The first question is, what did you accomplish yesterday? The second question is, what's your highest your biggest priority to accomplish today? And I am not looking in those questions for every little detailed step of what they did. I just wanna know a big thing. You know, what, what val value did you bring to the company yesterday and what are you intending to bring today? And then the third is something fun, like what's your favorite Thanksgiving side dish? You know, it could be something like that. It could be something more serious. Like what's your best childhood memory?

Susan Fennema (27m 24s):

One of the questions

Tom Bronson (27m 25s):

Do, do you set up a question every

Susan Fennema (27m 27s):

Day? I do not. Okay. My v my va schedule, my VA writes all the questions. Oh. And she writes 'em a quarter at a time and then she schedules them to go live inside.

Tom Bronson (27m 38s):

Okay. So, but somebody is asking a specific question on a date. Yes. Okay, got it.

Susan Fennema (27m 43s):

And it, it's funny sometimes when, if my, if for some reason that that question didn't go out, one of my team will actually, it cracked me up. The first time she did this, she just answered the question she wished had been asked. And so everybody just chimed in and did the same thing because the question was missing that day. Oh yeah. So that was, that was, it was funny. It was fun to see that they're taking part in that. But we have a channel where we support each other of, Hey listen, I've got this client and they're, they're struggling with this.

Susan Fennema (28m 23s):

What has been your experience using this particular software? And so the rest of the team can chime in and help support that person. So there's, there are, there are channels to support that. And I am in so many different teams, slacks and you can tell the culture from being in their slack. So the, the point is not use Slack, you can use teams. I mean you gotta have some communication tool. Do not use email please, but some sort of communication tool, but use it intentionally, right? So that you are intentionally bringing that about.

Susan Fennema (29m 3s):

You have a one client who has developed a team of, of, oh, I forget what they call them, but essentially contractors that they don't work with all the time, but they want to have them there if they need their skillset. And so they're bringing value by having a monthly meeting where one of them gets to share some software, brilliant technique. And the rest of the people wanna come because they wanna learn that. And there's a spirit of comradery among these consultants that are not part of the employees of that team. So they're able to tap into them when they need them and they're keeping them close.

Susan Fennema (29m 48s):

So there are some brilliant ways to do this remotely. I we also have a monthly team meeting where we have

a, an agenda and we run through it. It's only half an hour, but it gets everybody where you can see their faces. And the last thing we finish up on that is we round robin of, give me a quick example of how you fulfilled our values within your clients or within our team over the past month.

Tom Bronson (30m 22s):

And your team meetings are monthly.

Susan Fennema (30m 24s):

They're monthly.

Tom Bronson (30m 25s):

Okay. Got it, got it. Alright. I have to answer the question cuz you said favorite side dish. I mean, Thanksgiving is Turkey and pumpkin pie. You not say anything more. I mean, you know, but you have to understand, my wife has spoiled me. We've been together, we've been together for 35 years, married for 32 of those. And my grandmother may made a pumpkin pie. I've never eaten pumpkin pie from a can.

Susan Fennema (30m 57s):

Good

Tom Bronson (30m 57s):

For you. We, we always do you know, pumpkin, my grandmother did pumpkins, my mom did pumpkins and my wife, it's a labor of love cuz it's tough. Yes, it's a lot of time, but she makes the pumpkin pie. So I mean, gimme a Turkey and gimme pumpkin pie. What else? And

Susan Fennema (31m 13s):

You're set. Nice.

Tom Bronson (31m 14s):

I'm set, I'm set. Totally a whole pumpkin pie by the way. That's, that is really great that they answer these questions every day and, and what, you know, I'm a big fan of the Ivy Lee method, so you plan your day, you know, the night before. I kind of

Susan Fennema (31m 33s):

Oh, me too.

Tom Bronson (31m 34s):

Yeah. And then it's, and then it's super easy to get started. In fact, that's one of my productivity rules is that once I've decided the Ivy Lee, I don't open email until I've done at least two of the Ivy Lee things, right? And so then I can go often do that. It's a, it's a, it's about productivity. So you've talked about Slack and teams.

What other kinds of software tools do you recommend for businesses to help them thrive?

Susan Fennema (31m 59s):

So every, every business should have a project management tool for sure. And that whether, I mean, even if you don't deliver projects, if you're selling, you know, a product, you still are running internal projects with your team, you're still figuring out what's your marketing schedule, what are the topics that you're gonna talk about on your blogs, you know, whatever you're doing there. And it could be bigger things. How are you keeping track of maintaining your processes? For example, you should be looking at those annually. So how are you remembering that, that, how are you spacing that out?

Susan Fennema (32m 42s):

I highly recommend teamwork. It is a software tool that for project management, specifically targeted agencies. So, but it works great for software developers, architects, you know, any of the, the people that have any sort of a creative aspect and flow to their work. And it's great with time tracking, if you need a little less, Asana is a great tool.

Tom Bronson (33m 10s):

So Sona

Susan Fennema (33m 11s):

Asana, a s

Tom Bronson (33m 12s):

Oh As, oh, okay. Asana. Yeah. I haven't heard it now. Yeah. Okay.

Susan Fennema (33m 16s):

That's a great tool there. And, and, but it, it does do less. The other tool that all businesses need is a C R M A place to track your sales, a place to track your contacts, a way to build lists for marketing. We're huge fans of HubSpot there, huge fans. And the more you can find these tools that work together and that connect up, the more smooth your process can go. So Hub HubSpot can connect to teamwork to open a project. We use Panda Docs to send out proposals.

Susan Fennema (34m 1s):

That's another important software tool. If you are writing proposals, if you are writing something where you want your client to read something and sign it, please do not send them something in Word that now they have to figure out how to print out, sign, scan in, send back, make it easy for them to say yes. So a tool like Panda really lets them do that easily. And it's a great method as, as the creator, it, it, you can build templates for your proposals in there and so you can just kind of click through quickly and get something out quickly.

Susan Fennema (34m 40s):

The other tool that I recommend if is, is some sort of financial software. QuickBooks online is standard. You can invoice your clients through that. You can receive money through that, you know, all of those things. That's the other, make it easy for them to pay you. Right? Give them a link where they can give you your money right now, don't make them mail a check.

Tom Bronson (35m 7s):

Yep.

Susan Fennema (35m 8s):

So those are the specific ones in the specific areas that we usually recommend.

Tom Bronson (35m 13s):

That is a great laundry list of, of different products. And so I, I'm not familiar with Panda, I'm gonna go look at that. And I am a big fan of HubSpot. We use that here at Mastery. So, so if you had to give one tip, a number one tip, what would it be? To what number one tip would you give business owners to create structure where there is none?

Susan Fennema (35m 37s):

They have to create it in their workday first. And so my number one tip is calendar. Block your time. And if you can start with the first start with your spirit. So how are you taking care of your spirit? And, and that doesn't mean you have to go to church, it could mean you're meditating. What it could mean you're reading, it could be quiet time, but get that on your calendar so that you're doing that as your top priority. Then how are you caring for your health? Are you m are you exercising? Are you moving, are you eating healthy meals? Get that on there. Then get your obligations to your family.

Susan Fennema (36m 20s):

Okay? Guess what? Work will fill in the rest. This is absolutely the Stephen Covey approach to put in the rocks, put in the pebbles, put in the sand, put in the water. If you can't take care of yourself, you can't take care of others. If you can't take care of your family, why are you doing any of this? So priorities, right? Yeah. Put that first, then start blocking some time of focusing on your business. So blocks of time to come to really dig in with your business. And then now the rest of your calendar is open for all your meetings and all that, which hopefully you're having in a normal boundary driven world.

Tom Bronson (37m 7s):

Awesome. I I love that. That is, that is some great advice. Although I will tell you that the one thing, you know, I exercise so that I don't have to eat healthy. Okay, Susan.

Susan Fennema (37m 16s):

Okay, fair enough. But it would probably behoove you, Tom, to eat more Turkey and less pumpkin pie.

Tom Bronson (37m 24s):

That is, that is heresy in this house. So, so we've learned a lot of things about how you guys operate and this has been a great conversation, but what kind of sets you apart from other operational consulting firms?

Susan Fennema (37m 38s):

There are two things really. The first is we very much love small business. So 25 people and fewer, most operational consulting firms are working for much bigger groups. It's, you know, a c o O that goes in once a week and you know, does their gig and helps you out. And that's very valuable. But the second part of what we're offering is that we are there with you. So we are fractional, we will do and we implement. So that's the other big thing. We are not just consulting, we're not just telling the overwhelmed business owner, go do this stuff, we will do it for you. And because my team works with multiple clients, fractionally, even though you might only have them for five hours a week, it feels like they're there for you all day.

Tom Bronson (38m 30s):

Wow. Wow. That's amazing. I I think it's, you got, your model is great, the things that you do every business owner needs, especially small business owners, and you think that you can't afford that, but, but you are, you are designed for small business and, and you're bringing like us big business ideas and consulting to small business and making it so that they can do that. I just love it. I I think it's a neat organization, so I'm so thrilled to learn more about it. We ask, you know, kind of one last business question. We ask everybody this, and at the risk of it being the same as the question you answered two questions ago, I'm gonna ask it this way, this podcast is all about maximizing business value.

Tom Bronson (39m 21s):

What is the one most important thing you recommend business owners do to build value in their business

Susan Fennema (39m 28s):

Develop process? Absolutely. Yeah. I mean, are you shocked that that's the answer?

Tom Bronson (39m 34s):

You know, I, I thought you were gonna say something about finances, but you know, interestingly in my, in my new book, I just have to look at the contents here in my new book, there are, there are things that I call the money chapters, right? They're, they're the most important things and developing process. And I put a dollar sign on those, on those in the table of contents and developing processes has got probably \$2 signs on it because so many business owners don't do that. And I agree, developing processes is a, is an incredibly valuable exercise when it comes to improving the value of your business. But I'm not gonna let you off the hook, even though I've had a great time in this conversation.

Tom Bronson (40m 15s):

I have to ask you our bonus question. Okay. So Susan, what personality trait has gotten you into the most trouble through the years?

Susan Fennema (40m 26s):

Truth telling. Truth telling. Yeah. It's something that as I've gotten older, I've learned to be a little more tactful about it. And with the clients that we work with, we have to say some things that are hard, but it's true. And so that is important and, and something I impart to my team too, if they fire us because we're telling them the truth, then so be it. But we do try to deliver it with a smile and with compassion, and that tends to temper that a little bit.

Susan Fennema (41m 7s):

But the truth, I I do tell the truth sometimes a little too bluntly.

Tom Bronson (41m 13s):

I, you know, same. I, I think that I've got developed perhaps a little more tax, maybe people who are around me tell me the answer is no to that. But, but I, I give the unvarnished truth and I, I'm not afraid to state my opinions and, and tell a business owner when they're making a mistake. And I tell them upfront that you're just, if you, if you have a thin skin, you're gonna have a hard time working with us because, because we're gonna tell you the unvarnished truth of why you need to be doing these things. So, so you and I have that trade in common, although I'm not sure that that's gotten me into the most trouble. It's probably gotten me into a lot of trouble though. So how, how can our viewers and listeners get in touch with you?

Susan Fennema (41m 54s):

So I'm gonna give them a free ebook, which is how to eradicate that chaos. We talked about the three steps earlier in the podcast. This book goes into a little bit more detail on that. You can get that@beyondthechaos.biz slash ebook. And if you're an overwhelmed small business owner who feels like I don't have time for an ebook, Susan's in, let's just get started. The contact information of how to Reach Out to me is also on that page. So you can just go there and click that.

Tom Bronson (42m 30s):

Perfect. You make it easy, you make it to engage. Susan, this has been a great conversation. Thank you for being our guest today.

Susan Fennema (42m 38s):

Thank you so much for having me. It was a blast.

Tom Bronson (42m 41s):

You can find Susan FEMA at Beyond the Chaos Biz, or you can find her on LinkedIn. And of course you can

always reach out to me and I will be more than happy to make a warm introduction, take advantage of that ebook. I love that offer. And, and by the way, Susan will be doing our guest blog this week. So look for more information from Susan A. Little bit later this week. This is the Maximized Business Value podcast where we give practical advice to business owners on how to build long-term sustainable value in your business. Be sure to tune in each week and subscribe on whatever channel you listen this to this podcast on.

Tom Bronson (43m 23s):

Because if you subscribe, you're gonna get our podcast a couple days before everybody else does, and you'll never miss another episode. So until next time, I'm Tom Bronson reminding you to get beyond the chaos in your business while you maximize business value.

Announcer (43m 43s):

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Tom Bronson (44m 28s):

That was perfect. I wouldn't make any changes on that.