

WOCAndAllies_EP95

Elaine Lou Cartas: Money. How does that word make you feel? It's such a huge part of today's society. And money is the most shameful topic to talk about. More than even sex. And I have been working on my relationship with money. It is continuous. There are days when I'm like just not feeling it. And there's days like, you looking good.

And money is energy. the word money comes from the word currency. Which comes from the word current so it is like water money moves like water and money is a Relationship every week. I have a money date. I actually Try I say try because I'm just being real and honest with you. Okay, I'm a human I try to do it every day if possible, but I'll be real with you I have been with my parents and in the past five days.

I haven't looked at it. mind you yes, like I look at in terms, I do look at my checking account, but I'm not looking. I track, I use YNAB, which is Y N A B. com. You need a budget. Which stands for you need a budget, but I love using that and I haven't looked at it. But I do look at it once a week and I've talked to a lot of clients and friends who've been in business pre 2020.

I started 2017 or started in 2020. And businesses actually exploded during the time of the pandemic. It's still crazy to me 2020 was four years ago. It's 2024. That's like, when you think about it, that's four years of high school, four years of college, right? But then when you're an adult, it like feels like it meshes together.

So then when 2022 and 2023 hit, and even this past year, it hasn't been the same. For example, for me, I'm just gonna be real with you, right? I'm on my period, so I'm gonna be transparent. Letting it flow out here. Sorry, I know TMI, but in 2022, I did take a hit thankfully last year, 2023 was better. And this year, Oh, thank God 2024 is projected to be my best year in business.

Not just revenue. Cause I know sales looks really great. But that is a vanity metric. what is a sexier thing to track profit profitability? And if I could just say that, but you know what? I'm just, flown here. It's the best business best year in business in both revenue and profitability.

And I care more about profit margins. I recently went on a call with my own bookkeepers, Evolve Finance. I'll put the link to their website in the show notes who work with online businesses. And here are a couple of things they've noticed, and maybe it resonates with you if you've been in business for a while.

2020 was an anomaly for online businesses and coaches. I doubled in revenue when I was stuck at home. And they shared, Oh, it was hard for me to hear, but I get it. Here's a harsh reality. If you want to project your numbers, look at your numbers back in 2018 and 2019, I'm like, why would you say that? But look at that.

And the current landscape, if you are using the internet for your business, right? Here's a reality. When not much people are online is, especially with it being an election year. And also people being more educated about screen time, parents being more educated, not wanting to be on their screen when their kids are with them, right?

Or even not without realizing it is like an adjunct. Drug and addiction. I've even been researching on it, but social media has been able to learn how to hijack our brains, our amygdala to be addicted to be on social media, right? Where it's late at night, you want to rest and instead of, the nighttime routine where you thought you're going to journal and read a book, you're going to scroll through your phone.

I did that last night. I am being honest with you. It was like. Midnight and then I was like, I'm so tired. I can't wait to sleep. And the next thing you know, I scroll for 30 minutes, which is not bad considering that many times before it was like two or three hours of scrolling. So not much people are online or if they are using the internet, they're using social media.

It's because they want to get distracted. And for me, I was getting distracted catching up on the Olympics. Like I'm not looking online because I want to buy something. And then to another landscape, current landscape of online business, inflation, Three, online space is more saturated for ads are expensive.

So in this podcast episode, I am counting and looking at my notes. I actually want you to consider these five tips. So number one, how do you pivot in your business? first up under that is focus on profitability instead of revenue growth. This past year, I have been so focused on my profit margins.

And just in case you don't know what profitability is, it's revenue minus expenses. Right now I'm on track for about 60 percent of profit margins, which is huge. And how did I do this? You're probably going to want to save the timestamp of what I'm about to say to you. I went line by line in my expenses and asked myself two questions.

One, do my clients need this? Does this actually help them directly with their results? And two Does this help with my business with profitability? And if it doesn't meet one of those questions. Then I deleted it. And here are things I got rid of. A shock was my assistant and other contractors. Mind you they were so amazing.

And this was hard to do. And it wasn't based off of performance, but just needing better profit margins. The great things, And so that we've done is automated more systems. And yes, there are some things I also have started to do in my business, but not by much. I actually, this past summer, it is August 12th when I am recording it.

So a couple of days before this episode goes live, I was I've been fixing my systems to make it more automated. Another thing is I used to do two retreats a year. I know, I now only do one retreat. And when it came to, I had to choose, I had to choose between one retreat or having my coaches come in monthly.

I have coaches that come in. I have an intuitive guide slash psychic. I have marketing, messaging, and mental health coach, number two. And then the third is I have the systems that project manager coach. So I have three coaches that come in every month. I was like, okay, do I choose my coaches? Do I choose my retreat?

Because having a retreat does cost money. And I was like, what? I had to ask myself the question. What's helping my client succeed? The coaches. So I got rid of one of my retreats and I still kept one. And I'll be honest with you. I could easily have said no retreat at all. But. And this, I didn't base it just off of, I didn't base my answer off of revenue.

I actually based it off of what I actually needed. As much as I love coaching my clients, Zoom just drains you. I feel like it's this, I don't know. I don't know how to describe it. I feel like it just is like a vampire and it sucks the energy out of you. Then for some reason when you're in person it like energizes me even though I get tired at the end of the day because I'm a projector if you follow human design.

And it's no, this energizes me and I know it helps all of my clients as well. And then another question. What are things you can get rid of? And it can be simple. It doesn't have to be like a big thing where it's an assistant or other contractors you have. But for example, I was using an old email provider.

It was one of the top names back in 2020. I've been hearing more people leaving. And it was charging me 90 a month. In fact, I got this through an affiliate program. And I decided to switch over and now I use ConvertKit, which is only 29 a month. So I save 732 a year. Do you know what 732 can do? I don't know.

Go into my retirement. Go into my savings. I'm not even thinking about what I could spend it to buy, but it could be in my bank account. And then I also used to have a country club membership. Where I meet with clients in person, which is 250 a month within a year, that's 3,000 also going to my retirement.

So I got rid of that too. And as you can see, costs add up. So what can you delete? Another thing to consider is adjusting your offer, your pricing and delivery structure. So back in 2020, 2021, I used to have three masterminds. And I had a membership. I, so one for beginning entrepreneurs, another one for advanced entrepreneurs, and another one for executive career coaching.

On top of those three, I also did one to one coaching. That is four different systems. SOPs and yeah, that was just a lot. I don't have that anymore. In fact, I now have one mastermind called the Business and Career Leadership Mastermind. You could go to elainemu.com forward slash mastermind. That is one system.

I was scared that this was going to be an issue that I put all of my clients into one, Oh my gosh, it has been wonderful having these amazing women of color and ally leaders like together in office hours. Plus, my clients still have my, their monthly 60 minute one to ones with me, but they get to hear from one another their challenges and their struggles, not just in business, but personally, mental health.

It's just been amazing, and my clients still receive individualized accountability toward their three goals. And by having One service. I am promoting one thing out outwardly and it saved so much time mind you I also get other streams of income. I have courses with LinkedIn 30 plus universities and local governments like Penn State Brown University USC Today, I just was facilitating a virtual retreat for a non profit organization.

I just closed one a corporate contract. And you're probably like, Elaine, wait, how did you get all of this? I was like, I don't market this because people approach me and ask me. It's because of my amazing five star ratings and reviews. I have hundreds of them. Check my website, Google business page, Yelp, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, because I focus on one thing and there's results.

Other people are curious and they'll message me and ask, Hey, Can you, would you be interested in coaching our C suite executives? Would you be interested in facilitating this retreat? I'm like, yeah, why not? if it's a good fit. So how can you simplify your pricing and delivery? And then third, how can you simplify and streamline your operations so future growth is easier to manage?

so much. I have SOPs for everything, templates for emails, so I don't, like my team and I don't have to think. I still have a couple of contractors with me, even though I don't have so many more, but we've automated more, even used AI. I have a checklist of what it means to be done and complete. And when there are challenges and issues, hiccups, that happens, I always ask myself, okay, how can I create this into an SOP or system?

Let me just say, I'm just going to emphasize this by focusing externally with one offer. It's just made things easy. All right. That was all under tip number one. How do you pivot? So tip number two. So going back to basics, do you know what your current year to date profitability is? And if it's not where you want it to be, then it goes back to what can you delete?

It's really simple. If you're not making enough, what do you need to cut back on? I cut back on a lot of digital subscriptions as I shared. If you're not making enough, go back to what's making you revenue. For me, it's referrals, renewals, and Google. SEO, the holy trifecta for me. Going back to basics also is which expenses are hurting you the most in your profitability.

What are you spending the most on? For example, for this year, I am spending the most on coaching specifically to get my international coaching Federation professional certified coach certification. That is long, basically becoming a PCC coach through ICF. I'm working with the center for executive coaching and I should be getting it end of This month, August, so knowing that this is the most expensive expense of the year, why am I doing this?

Because I know the ROI. I am starting to work with more corporations, VPs and up, governments, Fortune 100 companies. They've come to me because of my client results. I've also researched. Here's the reality with my industry, and I also want you to research your industry. The coaching industry has changed.

It is a low bar of entry. Anyone could call themselves a coach. Now, I'm not saying people that are not certified through ICF are not great coaches. I have been a client of them. I have hired coaches who are not certified, but this is just the reality of it. And I. My intention and goal is to get more B2B contracts, and with them, they do highly regard ICF certification, so why would I put a block for them to say no to me, when it just puts another checkmark, and yes, making it easy for them to say yes.

And even by telling people that I'm getting the certification, it's made their ears perk and I have leads to it. But not only that, not just the money part. Remember I went back to the question, if you're spending money on this, how does this help with your client results? It has helped tremendously on my client results.

I've, I have clients who have been with me for years where they're like, Elaine, I've always loved your coaching, but this coaching this past year has changed. I've noticed it and I love this better. And so it is worth it. The money. And then another thing, do you have a forecast and budget to help you reshape the financial outlook of your business and not just so your PNL and your QuickBooks or whatever accounting software you use, but creating a realistic forecast and you can have a realistic goal and a stretch goal.

Update it. I update mine once a week. How often do you look at your forecast? I do it once a week. I know what sales calls are coming up. I know what my conversion rate is from sales. Sales calls to qualified from qualified calls to actual conversions. Do you have track of that? I do. And then if I'm not hitting my numbers in terms of the number of leads, I know what my team needs to do to get more leads.

Another thing to consider is, can you prioritize projects and activities to those that are most crucial? just because I'm on my period right now, last month when I was on my period, this is actually really helpful. Okay? Because I want to let you know, sometimes we're just not in the mood to do things.

I am recording this podcast. I think I look cute today, but I am not feeling cute. I'm just being real. So my video is off and I'm just going to honor that. But last month I had a big meeting for a huge corporate contract yet. I put on my to do list because I'm an overachiever. Other things I need to do, but I just was not feeling to do the other things.

I knew I just had to focus on one thing, which was preparing for this meeting. So that week I focused on preparing for that meeting. And I just did my coaching calls that were already scheduled. I did not focus on anything else. And the result, your girl closed that contract. In fact, at the meeting, there were so many people coming up to me like, I want to work with you.

How can you make that happen? And it's because I stayed focused. It's like the Olympics, right? The Olympics just ended. It's staying focused. And what I learned from that, and I told you earlier in the intro that I have a period tracker. I've learned to give myself grace and focus on just one thing per day.

And have a stretch goal of two other things. I don't say extra credit cause people used to call me EC Elaine Curtis, extra credit, get it. And I don't want to, I'm trying to heal from that trauma of doing extra credit all the time. The goal is not to do the most. It's just the goal for me now is to be honest with my body and energy of what I have capacity to do.

So let's take it baby step for you. What can you focus on this week? And can you accept that? You might have to take on responsibilities that you didn't have to do it for a while. I'm starting to do more admin stuff. That is completely okay with me in terms of sending contracts, but that's automated. But I just refuse to do the tech stuff.

So thank God I have a team member doing that. So what can you start doing? Third tip, adjust your offer. Can you lower the price of your offer, but reduce the cost of delivery? Or do you need to go from a low price to a high cost offer. I offer a high price, high quality coaching through my mastermind, which you could check out at elainelou.com.

[com forward slash mastermind](https://elainelou.com). And in fact, as I'm starting to hit my own quota of the number of clients I can work with right now, I'm about to raise my prices. And this was like been a really hard decision to make. In fact, a couple of days ago, I'm like, let me look at the last time I raised my prices.

I'm like, oh, wow, that was 2021. That was three years ago. But in addition to that, I just, I'm such a different coach, not just because I'm getting my certification, but I'm such a different coach. And I have my coaches that support me. I have my client results that are proven, and I also have personal goals, which is, I don't want to work all the time.

I have my own personal goals that I want to accomplish, so I will be increasing my prices in September. So if you're listening to this in August 2024, you have time to get my old pricing, and you can schedule a call with me at elainelou.com [com forward slash call](https://elainelou.com). Now, people have critiqued me and asked me, why don't you lower your prices?

You work with a woman of color, they can't afford you. Yeah, I've had people share, ask me that. To be honest, I do not want, I don't want to play the popularity big audience game because that's how it works. When you lower your price point, get memberships, it's getting a bigger audience. And I am not all about the hamster wheel of trying to be an influencer and posting every single day and playing the algorithm game.

I used to do that. I used to do lives every day. That burned me out. And also by raising my price or having a higher price point. I am also knowing that I'm inspiring and motivating fellow women of color to charge their worth and their price point as well. I give, I gave this example at a free event I did years ago and an attendee who came for free challenged me and she's so you work with a woman of color, why are your prices so expensive?

And I responded to her, why do we never question why tacos are so cheap, like 1 or 2 yet we're willing to spend. On an expensive burger, 10, 15. To normalize women of color getting paid at a higher amount is to showcase that. And she turned off her camera and didn't talk for the rest of the call. And also, if people can't afford me, which I know they can't, and that's okay, that's why I have this podcast to give back.

I have shared a lot of tips in this episode and all throughout this podcast. So you are gonna, this is my way to give back. So what kind of service do you want to create? How do you want to get clients? Is it a big audience with a lower price point, small audience, higher price point? I chose the latter and do you need to update or change your offer to better support the struggles of your customers in this economy?

Like I said, I know that not everyone can afford me. So I've done a couple things one I have this podcast for free accessible education for others. I work with companies in government directly And I have people that have taken my courses on linkedin. You could check it out At [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com) or go to elainelou.com.

[com forward slash LinkedIn](https://elainelou.com). Do you need to be a part of your offer delivery right now? Like for example, I had a friend who quote unquote scaled, hired all these coaches, then she took them out and now she has an 80 percent profit margin. She went back to basics and there's no shame for this. Unreal talk.

I just get really annoyed when I see people online like you shouldn't be doing these tasks like this. Cooking or doing laundry. Hire someone. I enjoy cooking with my boyfriend. It's a special time we have every night. I actually find it meditative to wash dishes in between stuff. So you don't always have to hire out.

And then a fourth tip. Streamline and simplify your operations so future growth is easier to manage. How can you simplify your lead generation by getting clients? Do you track your leads? My leads are renewals, referrals, and Google SEO. And when people find me through someone I ask, who. Also, I believe in karma, so I'm consistently referring all the time.

I've, like today, I referred a podcast, my podcast editor and my SEO strategist to someone. I've referred Monica, my marketing strategist, to a number of my clients. I have my tech VA, Jave, who I referred so many clients and feds for website design technical assistant. I'm constantly referring. So what comes around goes back around.

Who can you refer? I ask why they, and for clients who renew with me, I ask why they want to renew and what to focus on and improve for better service quality. When people go on a sales call with me, I ask them, Hey, what made you decide to schedule the call? This helps me. Another thing to ask is how can you simplify your sales process?

Are you making it easy? For example, it's super easy for people to figure out how to work with me. On my website, you will see my call button throughout. So people go to elainelou.com forward slash call, they schedule a call, they fill out the form. And when filling out the form, my team reviews it. And then if it's not a good fit, we respectfully cancel the call.

If it's a good fit, then we move forward. I know some people do the form first, but here's a reason why I don't do the form first. Thanks. I want to make it easy for people to schedule a call and also I want people on my email list, so it's a good email list generator. Another thing to ask is, what's the best way to get sales?

For example, one of my clients who owns a house cleaning business has scripts for how to connect with leads and has an FAQ. So what can you do to simplify your sales? Like you start seeing patterns of how you get clients, what are the common questions they ask, and then you could put that into a system.

What operational processes are business critical and which are necessary right now? I was thinking about wanting to do YouTube, but I don't have time for that. That's not getting me clients right now. So is there anything you want to do that you shouldn't be doing? All right. Fifth tip is actually my favorite.

Reflect what's been your experiences with these next four questions. One, what has been working well in your business right now? For me, it's my high touch, high quality, my client results. And I only work with 24 clients at one time. And that's what I advertise all the time, Hey, I only work with 24 clients at one time.

I pick and choose who I work with because we care about client results and that's our reputation. So I want you to think about what really works well for you. Two is what are some big shifts you have made in your business this year? And what's been the result? My big shifts is deleting 50 percent of my business expenses and improving my profitability.

And now moving forward, I will continue to ask myself when I do have an expense decision, does this help with my profitability of my business, ROI, and, or does it help with my client results? For example, I just spent a couple of hundred right now on this other certification to work with more government contracts.

It was a whole process. Oh my God. I need 17 documents. It was like I was applying, like I was trying to get a mortgage. I know the ROI for that. What's something that's changed in your business that you are having a difficult time accepting? Why? I was realizing last year in 2023 and 2022, coaching is a low bar of entry.

There is a lot more competition and asking myself, how can I be a better coach? What will make me stand out? And that's why I'm going for my ICF PCC certification. And I have online courses with LinkedIn, Penn State, Brown University, USC, and others. I want to be, no, not want to be. I am. I'm an exceptional coach.

People are coming to because of my client results and service. And that's what I want to maintain. So how can I continue to become better? Fourth, I love, love, love this question. And I'm going to be vulnerable with you. Is your ego stopping you from giving your business what it needs right now? So here's what my ego has been challenging me lately with realizing.

And I said it earlier that I need to raise my prices. Yes, my profit margins have improved. I've deleted 50 percent of my profit margins, but I need to raise my prices. It's been three years. There is inflation and I have high tier coaching clients right now and I will be, you might be in this place.

You're like, do I increase it? But there's voices that come to me. What if people won't want to work with me because I'm expensive, but reality, I did this last night. It's been three years since I raised it. And don't worry, if you are listening to this podcast, August 2024, I want to let you know my prices will increase September of 2024.

So you get on my old prices by scheduling a complimentary coaching call with me at elainelou.com forward slash call to get my old prices. And to my current clients, I always honor the price that you paid to work with me. So don't worry about it. So what do you need to do? Maybe it's one of the things I've done and I've done all the things.

But not at the same time. So just focus on one thing right now. Is it simplifying your service? Deleting expenses? Raising your prices? Just focus on one thing. I thought it was all about hustling to make money, but it's doing this hard work. Working on my relationship with numbers. That's what it means to be a real CEO.

So I want you to reflect. What is one thing you can do after listening to this podcast episode? Can you one, simplify your service, two, delete expenses, or three, raise your prices?