

***Automated transcript**

Cec Busby ([00:03](#)):

Hi everybody. I'm Cec Busby, editor of Flying Solo. Welcome to our weekly podcast where we step inside the minds and lives of soloists and small business owners. Now, if you run a business and the latest tech is getting you befuddled, my next guest will soon have you sorted. Tracy Sheen is a tech expert with decades of experience. Her plain English, no nonsense advice has helped thousands of business owners better understand how they can make the most of their tech. And as KBB's resident tech expert, she has plenty to share on all the latest trends. She's also the author of the End of Technophobia, A Practical Guide to Digitising Your Business, which has so many helpful tips on how you can ditch your tech fears and make digital solutions work for you. Hi, Tracy, thanks so much for joining me today.

Tracy Sheen ([00:59](#)):

Hey, Cec, it's lovely to be back.

Cec Busby ([01:02](#)):

Ah, always a pleasure having you on the show. And on KBB, Tracy's our resident tech expert on Kochie's Business Builders TV show on Channel Seven. So she's always full of enormously helpful advice for our small business and micro business audience. Aren't you Tracy?

Tracy Sheen ([01:23](#)):

<laugh>? Well, I was wondering where you were going with that when you said she's always full of, and then there was a pause. So...

Cec Busby ([01:28](#)):

<laugh>, <laugh>, <laugh> now, since it's the beginning of the year, well, relatively so, most people have only probably started back into the real swing of things in the last week to two weeks. What are you seeing as the trends that are already emerging for 2023 in terms of tech for small business?

Tracy Sheen ([01:55](#)):

A hundred percent. This is the year of AI. It's the year that AI really makes inroads and changes for a small business. And it's really interesting to me because while AI has been around for a while now, anytime we pick up Google, you know, it's really AI or if we use Grammarly or Crisp or any number of platforms, AI, AI. But there's been some great media exposure around, let's say ChatGPT, which is just setting all of the little fireflies a buzz. And I think it's the thing that's gonna be the tipping point that starts to get people familiar with the impacts that AI can have.

Cec Busby ([02:38](#)):

Mm. I think it's really interesting. It's like, Dali or the artists were going, ah, I'll never paint again and <laugh>, and now with ChatGPT, all the journalists are going, my job's over <laugh>. I won't be writing for a newspaper anytime again anytime soon. Like, it's just sort of, there's a lot of hysteria going around, but at the same time it's just, I think for small business owners that it's such a valuable tool when it comes to creating content.

Tracy Sheen ([03:07](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. And look, there's always that catastrophizing, no, that word that I can't say catastrophizing.

Cec Busby ([03:14](#)):

Catastrophizing <laugh>. Thank you.

Tracy Sheen ([03:16](#)):

When something new comes out, you know, I saw it when text messaging happened. We saw it when, you know, fax machines came out, we saw it with the iPhone, we saw, you know, so it always happened. I think the thing for me is AI is not going to take anybody's jobs. It's not going to get rid of journalism. What it's going to do is the people who learn how to manipulate and work with the platforms, they're the ones that are going to see a, a significant increase in growth and in productivity and the way that business is shaped for them. I think if anything, it's going to level up our critical thinking because the output of any of these programs is only good as the input that we give it.

Cec Busby ([04:02](#)):

Mm-hmm. Yeah, exactly. And also I think, in terms of our critical thinking, don't just take it as gospel that what the ChatGPT has spat out for you is actually accurate. Like, do a bit of your own research at the same time as well. Because I think there's been comparisons that have, I've seen where someone's put in a question and ChatGPT just makes up facts. <laugh>.

Tracy Sheen ([04:27](#)):

Yeah, yeah. Not dissimilar to some of the politicians. Right. I think.

Cec Busby ([04:31](#)):

<laugh>.

Tracy Sheen ([04:32](#)):

You are right. I think ultimately we remain the experts in our business and in our industry and it is something that, it's just another tool we still need to sanity check. We still need to double check the facts, the plagiarism, all of that kind of stuff. I do think though it's going to increase productivity, make our lives one hell of a lot easier.

Cec Busby ([04:55](#)):

Hmm. So what kind of business cases do you see for ChatGPT for the average small business owner?

Tracy Sheen ([05:02](#)):

Yeah, I just finished a webinar where it was interesting cuz people were throwing up a bunch of stuff. So we ideated social media content. We outlined a blog, we turned a podcast show notes into an outline for another episode. We came up with interview questions. We discovered the recipe for the best Negroni <laugh>. We wrote some code to plug into a website for a search bar. We came up with a formula for an Excel spreadsheet. What I really want people to understand is that these platforms are, they're a toaster essentially until you tell them what they are. So it's up to you to start playing with them and pushing the boundaries of, you know, can it do this? Can it help me write meeting notes? Can it spit

out a new marketing plan for me? And then start to have a bit of a play with, well, what does it look like if I ask it this?

Cec Busby ([06:02](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So what about because those kind of features have been around in platforms like Hello Scribe and stuff like that for a while now. So, is this kind of levelling the playing field because big businesses have been using these features already? Mm-hmm.

Tracy Sheen ([06:19](#)):

<affirmative>, You're exactly right. ChatGPT right now is free. So there is no excuse for micro, solopreneurs, small business, anyone not to be having a play and understanding how these work. Now, I fully suspect that they are going to be a subscription service sooner rather than later. And by the time you've had a play, it'll be up to you then to decide whether it's worth subscribing or not. But you are right. It's just levelled the playing field. A lot of small businesses couldn't afford the monthly subscription of a Jasper or a Hello Scribe or any of the other platforms that have been around for a while, but they can afford to jump into this while it's still a research tool and have a play with it for free and then make some decisions.

Cec Busby ([07:07](#)):

Mm-hmm. It's fascinating, really. And the machines aren't gonna take over the world, we hope <laugh>

Tracy Sheen ([07:14](#)):

No, it was really funny. Someone in my group said that they asked it the other day whether it was any relation to cybernetics from, you know, Terminator. And it said, no, and I thought, well, that's exactly what it would say. Right? So where I think it's going to get interesting is if we see the work that's being done by people like Boston Dynamics with Atlas, you know, the robot, the bipedal robot <affirmative>, if you can imagine that being married with the power of ChatGPT, that's where I think we start to have some, you know, some bigger conversations around, well what does this mean? Um, but right now yeah, I do think it's interesting that they've limited ChatGPT to a close off date of 2021 and they're acting as a research tool. So I think that perhaps the owners of the platform have recognised that, you know, humanity could skew it for evil if they wanted to <laugh>. So there are some limitations around it, but yeah. Who knows what that's gonna look like when it's let loose?

Cec Busby ([08:21](#)):

<laugh>. Now. What else, what else has been taking a fancy that you think business owners need to know about for this year?

Tracy Sheen ([08:29](#)):

Yeah, I think AI's gonna underpin everything. So I've been having a play with a few of the video tools as well. Things like Pictory is really interesting. I've been using Pictory to take, you know, 30 minute webinar content and run the script through and get it to chunk it down into shorter videos that I can use for social media. So that's saved a lot of time in terms of video editing and faffing about for me with that. Synthesia is another one that's interesting that has avatars and AI built into it, where you can choose the look of the avatar, the ethnicity, the language, and then write a short script that could become, say, your hello on your about page of your website, et cetera. And I've got a mate who's in the

middle of turning himself into a Synthesia avatar so he can create video quickly and easily for his own business. So I think those tools are kind of interesting as well. I think the big play for me that I'm seeing with small business, micro and and solopreneurs is that content creation that seems to be the one area that constantly people are, you know, 'I don't have the time, I dunno what to think about, what do I write', blah, blah, blah. So I think that's where these tools really come to the rescue.

Cec Busby ([09:52](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I think you're right because I think all the business owners have realised now they do, they do need a website, they do need a social presence. Whereas I think before the pandemic, they probably thought they could get away without it. And it's just become, you know, it's a must have for business these days.

Tracy Sheen ([10:11](#)):

Yeah, absolutely.

([10:15](#)):

You know, you can be a great plumber or a great accountant, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you're adept at writing social media content. And I think the big thing for me is to help people understand that these are the tools now that you can just sit in front of the screen and instead of having a blank page with a flashing cursor cursing you to write something, you can at least just pop in. You know, "I'm a plumber that works on, uh, consumers' houses, particularly around gas fitting. Give me three ideas for a social media post."

Cec Busby ([10:48](#)):

Hmm. <laugh> it just makes everything so much more simple, doesn't it?

Tracy Sheen ([10:55](#)):

And that's the whole idea behind it. You know, anything that can simplify our lives or increase our productivity, I'm all for.

Cec Busby ([11:03](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Tracy Sheen ([11:04](#)):

All for. Yeah.

Cec Busby ([11:05](#)):

And, um, your book, uh, that you wrote earlier last year, your Technophobia book. I'm just wondering, do you think people have begun to get over that technophobia since the pandemic?

Tracy Sheen ([11:20](#)):

Definitely. The one thing that COVID did for technology is advances. I think the stats were by about five years. So definitely there's a lot more familiarity now around, oh, I'll just, we'll jump in Zoom or jump in Teams or on a virtual platform of choice. And I think that people are a lot more comfortable connecting that way now. I still think, and this is an issue that all IT companies have, is they set themselves up not

dissimilar to a bank or a telco company where they almost wanna keep people confused. So, you know, I was chatting to a person this morning and she was like, I just went to do this thing in Facebook and it's not there anymore. And I'm like, what do you mean it's not there anymore? And I jumped in and sure enough, it's not there anymore.

(12:10):

You know, <laugh>. So they keep moving things around or changing things that as soon as you become familiar or comfortable with something, it forces you to keep, you know, learning and changing. And if you are a sparky or a plumber or an accountant or something, you know, you don't have time to keep on top of everything all the time. So you just, it, it forces people I think back into that, well, I know how to do Facebook, so I'll just do that. Or I've got a website now so it can stay like that for three years. Um, and I think that the thing is now with the addition of AI this year is it's just really confirming to me how we all need to just be spending 15 minutes over a coffee, browsing the KBB site, watching the show, jumping on the YouTube channel, listening to some podcasts, and just at least being aware of things that are going on. I'm not saying you've gotta pick up everything and have a play with it, but you at least need to be aware of what's coming through the pipeline.

Cec Busby (13:14):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah. I think there is still an education piece, isn't there?

Tracy Sheen (13:18):

<affirmative>, very much so. And that's gonna continue because technology doesn't stand still. So, you know, we just get the hang of one thing and something else comes out and don't even get me started on the fact that education is up in arms about ChatGPT and banning it from schools. I think they've got an amazing opportunity to teach critical thinking, and if anything, they're shutting that opportunity down. So we're creating the next generation that's going to come through somewhat technophobic as well, because they haven't been exposed to it.

Cec Busby (13:50):

<laugh>, that's quite ridiculous how we create problems for ourselves sometimes. <affirmative>, <laugh>. What about in terms of digital transformation? Because I guess you, like AI you're saying is really kind of the buzzword and the thing that's on everyone's lips this year. A few years ago it was all about digital transformation and, you know, automating processes and tasks, taking a lot of that grunt work out of people's hands. Do you think there is still a case for digital transformation in Australia? Do you think there's still businesses that are lagging behind?

Tracy Sheen (14:32):

Ah, absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. I also think that, again, thanks to the pandemic, there was a bit of a realisation that just because we can automate something does not necessarily mean that we should automate something. So there's, there's been a bit of a pushback towards more of this hyper-personalisation. So what I'm seeing with my clients now and what we're talking through is, well, do you really wanna be in a mailing list that goes to everyone in Queensland or everyone in New South Wales when you've got a workshop on in Wagga, but you are based in Byron Bay? Like, are you really gonna travel to there? So how can we segment, how can we make it more personalised instead of just automating something because you fit the demographics or the psychographics? So I really think there's a lot of push back and we're seeing that with, you know, the amount of unsubscribes. Every day I'm

hearing people go, oh, I've just unsubscribed from another two emails or five emails or 10 emails or whatever. It's because we automated because we could, not because we should.

Cec Busby ([15:48](#)):

Mm-hmm. Do you think also there's a bit of that email fatigue though as well, because people have kind of forced in a way to sign onto so many email lists just to get to the service that they want? <laugh>

Tracy Sheen ([16:03](#)):

Yeah, I, look, I think there's a couple of things. One, right? We all have that email address that we use for those situations. You know, like if I really want this report, I've gotta give them this email. So here's this email. So I think there's a bit of that. I think it's incumbent upon us as business owners to create the content that doesn't go on the unsubscribe list. But I'm also a big fan of working with brands and with businesses that offer a lot of value without asking for something. So I'll happily put out, you know, a lot, a lot, a lot of free content, and then probably one in five I might ask for an email in return. So I think we've gotta go back to thinking about it as a relationship. You know, we're dating, essentially, these people, asking them to check out our stuff as decide whether we're the best fit for them. So forcing them to sign on or sign in for something when they're not ready to do so is not the best way to build a relationship.

Cec Busby ([17:10](#)):

Mm-hmm. I guess it all comes back to that customer experience piece as well, and where you were talking before about personalisation, because that's what you want. You wanna think when you're getting an email that it's an email that is super relevant for you.

Tracy Sheen ([17:27](#)):

Absolutely. Otherwise, I'm deleting it. You know, we're so overwhelmed now that if you don't have my attention, first of all in the subject line, I'm not opening your email. If I do open your email, then you've got the first paragraph and I'm making those decisions. And you know, this Cec, from a journalist's point of view, I'm making those decisions every sentence or every paragraph as to whether I continue reading or not. And if I've deleted, you know, five of your emails in a row without even opening it, by the sixth one, I'm kind of going, you know what, I should just unsubscribe for this because the content is not relevant to me anymore.

Cec Busby ([18:06](#)):

Hmm. So what would your advice be to business owners then? Do they really need to be honing those subject lines and what other things can they do to make sure that they're getting the right content to the right person?

Tracy Sheen ([18:19](#)):

Spend the time, spend your time and effort segmenting your audience. So really knowing that if I send this email to Cec, Cec is going to think that she's the only person in the world that is getting this email, that it's written just for her with content that is relevant just for her. And if you can't hand on heart, say that when you send it, probably don't send it and spend some more time, you know, really getting the, the data right in the back end. I'm saying to people now go back to your old, you know, address book and just send an email to three people if they're the three people that need to know if you can't get

your segmentation right in the back end. And that comes down to what CRM platform you use, or email marketing platform or whatever. And that's a whole other, you know, conversation. But, so that's the first thing. Get, get the segmentation right. Spend the time on your subject line, because if you can't even get them to open the email, you're dead in the water. So really a lot of journalists and Cec, I value your input here. I know a lot of journos write their their content first and then save the title or the subject line to last because they know that's the hook.

Cec Busby ([19:30](#)):

Yeah.

Tracy Sheen ([19:31](#)):

It gets you to open. Yeah. So spend your time, you know, getting that content right first and then think about what's gonna make somebody open this, but also think, you know, who's your audience? Does it have to be a written email? Can you send them a video instead? Or would they prefer an audio? Or, you know, what, what, what do they want? So it's really going back to, again, putting the customer at the centre and thinking, well, what do they want? Not what is best for you? What is easiest for you? What, what do they want?

Cec Busby ([20:04](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And so just then you're talking about the different types of content. What are some easy tools then that the business owners can jump into to help them create different types of content? You were mentioning, um, the video platform that you use to help you chunk your webinars into bite size, um, social snack bits.

Tracy Sheen ([20:28](#)):

Yeah, exactly. So that one's, that one's Pictory - P i c t o r Y. Um, there's also Synthesia, which is another really popular one now. Uh, but Canva, you know, just jump in and start playing around with Canva. They've got Magic right now, which is like an AI, uh, programme built in and it's getting better all the time. So you can open up a doc in Canva and say, you know, write me a social media post around this and it'll do it. Um, you can also, if you've got the content, like the ideas written, you can upload an Excel spreadsheet to Canva and it will create the 10, 20 50 tips in a row for you as social media tiles. So most people are already using, you know, Canva, it's a, it's a big programme in Australia, so, you know, lean into some of the ones that you've already got, rather than look for things to add on.

([21:23](#)):

If you have a look, Canva's got a great, um, learning platform built off the back of it. So if you're not sure, you can always jump in there and do a couple of quick lessons about how do I do this? Or how do I do that? And it'll add a lot of value to you. Lean into ChatGPT, you know, get it to ideate some, some things for you around, you know, social media topics or whatever. Um, but when it comes to, to video, again, you can use Canva to create your Reels or you, you quick boomerangs. Um, I'm not a fan really of adding a bunch of new stuff to people's shoulders when they're likely already got stuff in there they just don't realise will do extra things. So that's where you just go back in, spend the 15 minutes in a platform that you're already comfortable with and go, well, what else can this thing do? Let's take it out for a test drive.

Cec Busby ([22:14](#)):

Yeah. I think I've read something like, people only use less than 10% of the capabilities of some of their software programmes, cuz they just haven't dived into what they can do.

Tracy Sheen ([22:26](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. And then we go, you know, then we go out to our, our social media audience or to our friends and say, Hey, I need something that can do this. And they all go, oh, use, use this or use this or use this and this is fantastic. So you go and sign up for another platform or another programme only to find out that what you were looking for is, is a feature of one of the programmes that you already have. You just haven't spent the time to go back in and go, well, what else can this thing do?

Cec Busby ([22:53](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, what else are you finding business owners are coming to you in terms of tech issues?

Tracy Sheen ([23:01](#)):

A big one at the, you know, there's a lot of interest in webinars and podcasts again right now. So, a lot of people are using webinars and online workshops as part of their lead magnets, as part of their marketing flywheels or funnels. So a lot of people wanting to know how to really use virtual platforms like Teams or Zoom or you know, whatever their webinar jam, webinar ninja, there's a million of them, to create those types of either on demand or evergreen platforms. And I think webinars and online workshops are an amazing way to expedite a relationship with a client. So I can see why they're really popular. It's been interesting that Zoom last year updated their software to include online summits. So I think that is now in the reach of small business owners, and really, really great tools. If you've got, you know, a couple of other small business mates that are in business that is similar to you but not in competition, then you've got a great opportunity to collaborate, share databases and grow everybody's business. So things like that, the podcasting and the webinars and online workshops and summits and things are really kind of lifting back up again as interest.

Cec Busby ([24:28](#)):

So is there a piece of tech that you just can't live without?

Tracy Sheen ([24:34](#)):

Don't limit, want just one my head in 30 different directions then? Um, look, I can't live without Xero because I am rubbish at my own numbers. So just knowing that that's there kind of ticking along in the background, giving me a dashboard the whole time of how things are operating, that's a must have for me. ChatGPT has very quickly become something that, you know, I will very happily pay for. It's added a lot of value to my business, my clients, very quickly. My social media platforms obviously, and Zoom and Teams, I use them every single day and I wouldn't have a business if it wasn't for both Teams and Zoom. Just being able to run webinars, workshops, reach out to communities and, you know, be able to be talking to Broken Hill this morning and Albany this afternoon without having to jump on planes has been a game changer.

Cec Busby ([25:36](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So what if you put your futurist hat on and you gaze into the crystal ball a bit, what do you see as being the big thing in tech in the next say 12 months?

Tracy Sheen ([25:50](#)):

Look, it's, it's, I dunno if you heard that sigh then it's kinda

Cec Busby ([25:54](#)):

Like <laugh>,

Tracy Sheen ([25:55](#)):

Everything is just changing so quickly. I think what we're going to see is that ChatGPT will become ubiquitous inside a lot of the platforms that we already use. So I think we will find platforms like our social media scheduling tools and things like that. We'll, we'll get an API that will have ChatGPT as part of it. So we'll stop having a bounce around for so many different platforms and just go to one kind of location and maybe increase our subscription to get different values. I also think as business owners, wearable tech is going to become something that is going to be more of an interest. I got the Oura ring for Christmas, O U R A, I dunno if you've heard about that, but it's changing the way that I'm thinking about my sleep and my activity and that as a business owner is something that I've not had as much focus on as some of my other tech. So I think we're, we're really starting to become aware now of how our health and wellness is impacting the actual growth and sustainability of our business. So I think that'll become more of a feature. I also think that we're probably going to see more of a growth of this combination of robotics and AI and what that means, which I think is probably going to impact more of your logistics and manufacturing style organisations quicker than it impacts an office bound business. But I think that's gonna be a huge shake up when that comes.

Cec Busby ([27:33](#)):

What about in terms of customer experience as well? Like, there was quite a bit of augmented reality and VR stuff going on for a while during the pandemic. Do you foresee that as being something that just becomes par for the course for people with a shop front?

Tracy Sheen ([27:52](#)):

Yeah, I think it's a great question. I think that what we are seeing there is much what we saw or what we're seeing now with ChatGPT. So the VR and the AR is still in the domain of the big boys, the big end of town, shall we say. It's still kind of priced out of reach of my small business mm-hmm. <affirmative>. However, that is only going to change as, as the usage increases. So, you know, we're seeing companies like Lego now putting AR, augmented reality, into their bricks, you know, but then they're also having VR shops that pop up in the middle of Times Square and things. So I think the more and more the corporate starts to incorporate that type of tech, then the cheaper it will become that it will launch within, um, within small business.

([28:47](#)):

So I think that's probably, I reckon 18 months to three years. I think the big growth over the next 12 months is this, you know, native language being able to API incorporate like something like ChatGPT so that every business with a website could have a chat bot if they wanted to and make it much easier for clients to reach them when they wanted to and engage in a way that they want to. So I think it's those type of platforms this year that will make, have the biggest impact for micro and small business.

Cec Busby ([29:24](#)):

And what about processes, if you're a small business and you're yet to automate processes, what are some necessary processes that you think that should be automated that would really save businesses time to kind of get out of the weeds and start thinking about Big Picture again? Hmm.

Tracy Sheen ([29:45](#)):

And again, you know, look, I hate to harp on it, but this is stuff you can use ChatGPT for. Write me a process about onboarding my client.

Cec Busby ([29:52](#)):

<laugh>, do you have shares in ChatGPT?

Tracy Sheen ([29:56](#)):

I wish. Now wish tell you, You know, I hadn't really paid much attention to Sam Altman, um, who's one of the, the founders of Open AI, but I'll tell you what, I'll be watching anything else he does from now on because I'm like, good grief, this man kinda anything he touches. Um, but it's, again, it's pushing the boundaries, right? So I would go back to it and say, you know, help me write a process to onboard a client. And then of course you're gonna have to refine it, but you should have processes and procedures for anything that you do as the principal business owner, you know, if you got hit by a camel, could your business keep going? So if you answer no to that, that's the stuff that you need to have a process, a procedure and a way to automate.

Cec Busby ([30:42](#)):

I'm not sure when I would be hit by a camel. That would be a very unfortunate incident. <laugh>. Well, you know,

Tracy Sheen ([30:47](#)):

It's an internal joke that we use in our family quite a lot, just as, like, it's never gonna happen. But then we read an article the other week about a woman who was hit by a camel in the middle about back Australia, and we were like, right, this is actually a thing now. It can happen.

Cec Busby ([31:02](#)):

<laugh>, Sorry to the lady who got hit by the camel and I hope she's recovering <laugh>

Tracy Sheen ([31:10](#)):

And the camel was okay, by the way. So .

Cec Busby ([31:12](#)):

<laugh>, well, I imagine human and camel, camel would come off better than human. Yeah, I

Tracy Sheen ([31:18](#)):

Wouldn't, I wouldn't like to bet on the human on that one.

Cec Busby ([31:21](#)):

Alright. All right, Tracy, thank you so much. It's just been lovely chatting with you today. Any final tips for our listeners?

Tracy Sheen ([31:30](#)):

10 minutes a day. You know, grab a coffee, grab a glass of water. The moment that you sit down to have that little break, just flick your phone open, whether it's to go to the podcast, the website, check out what KBB is doing. They've always got great stuff on there. And just be willing to at least be open to what's out there. It doesn't mean you have to run off and try everything but 10 minutes just to keep aware of how things are changing.

Cec Busby ([32:01](#)):

Hmm, yep. It's always important to keep up to date with the latest trends, but just for anything in life. Absolutely. Watch the news

Tracy Sheen ([32:10](#)):

<laugh>. Absolutely.

Cec Busby ([32:11](#)):

Yeah. All right. Thank you Tracy. Lovely chatting to.