

Téa Angelos on the Flying Solo podcast

*Automated transcript

Cec Busby:

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.

Today's guest is Téa Angelos. Téa is the founder and CEO of Smart Women Society, one of the world's largest and fastest growing online education platforms that helps a community of literally of hundreds of thousands of women get smarter with their money, careers, wellbeing and love lives. She's also the author of the new book, *Smart Moves*, which dishes up actionable tools to help you navigate all areas of your life. She joins us today to share her top hacks for business and life.

00:00.00

Cec Busby

Hi Téa, welcome to the show. Thanks so much for joining me.

00:05.90

Téa Angelos

Thank you so much for having me Cec, I'm really excited.

00:17.88

Cec Busby

Yay I Love an excited guest. So can I ask you about Smart Women Society. So what was your inspiration for starting Smart Women Society?

00:18.28

Téa Angelos

For me, growing up, I was always the student that would create little summary breakdowns and I would share them with my friends. In university, I was a tutor and I was always breaking down my classes into small little graphics and small little summaries and my friends and my students always loved that concept. And I had this idea one day of bringing that to a bigger scale with all different life topics and breaking them down into simple pieces and visuals, and one night I started an Instagram page called Smart Women Society and I guess here we are today.

00:54.46

Cec Busby

As if it was that simple.

00:55.15

Téa Angelos

Yeah, as if.

Cec Busby:

So, how did you end up getting the business off the ground?

01:03.52

Téa Angelos

So for the first, I would say, 6 to 8 months it was purely a project of passion, creating a lot of content, really building community and that's something that I'm a big advocate for - building community, not just an audience or not just followers. So the first six to eight months was really just heavy, just pushing out a lot of content, listening to our community, creating content that they wanted to see. And then after that 6 to 8 month period we started launching products, and then that's how it got off the ground from a monetary perspective. And then with that as well, we started to bring in brand partnerships and brand collaborations and it's skyrocketed from there and really steamrolled. And I find that once the momentum starts to build, it keeps building. So, it was definitely a slow burn at the beginning but I'm really glad that I put in that 6 to 8 months of just building our community and really engaging with them and making them loyal supporters, and I think that's really paid off.

01:59.60

Cec Busby

Again, you're making it sound so simple - making them loyal supporters and building the community but that takes a lot of hard work. So for our listeners, who might also have businesses and they're wanting to get more community engagement, what are some tips that you could give them?

02:17.78

Téa Angelos

My biggest tip is treat them like a friend. I will always make an effort to make sure I'm using people's first names in messages, asking them about their weekend. If someone has messaged us, for example, saying that they're going for a job interview, I'll put a reminder in my phone to follow them up and ask how that went. And it's those little interactions where people actually see your business as a human and as a team behind the business, as opposed to just this one-sided, transactional perspective. So I think really engaging with your community as if they were one of your best friends has been a really key thing for us. And making time to nurture it as well. As you're saying, it's not as easy as it sounds, and I would spend hours in the DMs or replying to comments. Really carving out that time pays off so much in the long run, because then people are so loyal and devoted to anything that you release or anything that you're doing, and I think it's a really key aspect now, especially because online businesses especially are so saturated, so how can you stand out? And I think creating that community is a big part of it.

03:18.40

Cec Busby

You mentioned at the very top of this chat, when you were at uni you were creating all these little graphics and almost cheatsheets kind of things for people to help them and help yourself with your study stuff, and you did a doubled degree didn't you – commerce and law?

03:35.50

Téa Angelos

Yes, so I studied law and commerce, majoring in accounting and finance. So I've done a bit of everything.

03:42.81

Cec Busby

Holy cow. So how do your parents feel now that you're an author and internet sensation?

03:50.54

Téa Angelos

Definitely at the beginning, they weren't very happy that I wasn't following a traditional path and going - they were kind of saying that my degrees were a little bit wasted. But I think after time, and I think especially for a lot of people especially, maybe a bit older like my parents, running a digital business, starting a digital business that's very social media-led is very new. Like it's a very new space to be creating a business in and they didn't really understand it, but over time as they've seen me achieve different things, me write a book now, I think they're starting to get it and they're proud of me.

04:22.90

Cec Busby

And I'm sure that study is not wasted, like, everything that you learned about finance and and law has held you in good stead for what's come ahead.

04:35.79

Téa Angelos

Absolutely and I think so many of the skills that I've learned in my degree I'm using every day, from reviewing contracts, from doing the bookkeeping of the business, from creating the content. It's all been so so valuable, so nothing's gone to waste.

04:51.76

Cec Busby

So can you talk me through those early days of launching women's society - International women's society - Ah good grief. Can I even speak? <laugh>

05:01.35

Téa Angelos

Smart Women Society.

05:06.24

Cec Busby

Let's take that again. Can you talk me through the early days of Smart Women Society, and you've started to develop the community - when did you actually realize that it was a business?

05:19.30

Téa Angelos

I think, because, initially I started the business and wanted to do events, in-person events, and I started it in January 2020. That quickly did not go in the right direction with COVID happening and I pivoted to an all online model, creating a lot of content across social media platforms. And I think when I realized that I was on to something was when our follower growth really just steamrolled and it was skyrocketing and it was just this crazy organic growth. And I think it was a mixture of good content and breaking stuff down into those really simple cheat sheets, as well as just timing. I think with covid a lot of people took a step back, re-evaluated their money, their careers, their wellbeing, and they were searching for something that could give them the quick tips that they could implement straight away, and we were there at the right time. So I think when followers really started to grow and we were getting interest from media and podcasts and I thought we better bring some products out and it's kind of just grown from there. And I think the beauty is when you run your own business, you can take it in any direction, you can pivot and it's exciting to know that we can do anything with the business and test so many different things.

06:32.59

Cec Busby

Was there a particular post that just suddenly went 'bam' and you were like oh geez, okay?!

06:42.37

Téa Angelos

Definitely in our early days when we had some big influencers share our content. Abby Chatfield is a big fan of ours and she's shared our content before and we would see spikes of a thousand, two thousand followers overnight, and I think that organic kind of traction just from people, influencers and media people naturally finding our posts, loving them, sharing them, and it really steamrolled from there.

07:02.37

Cec Busby

And so why do you think you're so passionate about helping women take more control of their lives?

07:09.32

Téa Angelos

I think for me, something that I'm really passionate about is feeling confident and feeling empowered in all areas of your life, and to do that you need knowledge and you need education. So with more knowledge comes more power and becomes more confidence. And I think for me, when I used to work EY - that's where I was working full-time prior to going full-time with the business - I remember speaking with so many women who were in their 30s, their 40s, their 50s, and they were struggling with so many different things. And I wanted to create a platform that women of all ages could come to get the information they needed to feel empowered, so they could feel in control of their life. And those simple tips can make such a big impact on how you navigate your life and how fulfilled you are.

07:59.33

Cec Busby

So what are the things that make you feel empowered?

08:02.62

Téa Angelos

Ooh. On a personal level, definitely I always seek out information to make sure I have enough knowledge to feel empowered about a decision or about a subject. And I guess on a broader scale, on a business scale, knowing that I'm making an impact in people's lives is something that makes me feel very empowered and confident, and the business has been such a great way to do that. And every message, every email that we've received with people saying that you've helped me so much, you've helped change my life, it's that that really makes everything worth it and makes me feel so empowered.

08:35.95

Cec Busby

So that validation that you're getting, that you're doing the right thing with the business as well.

08:42.63

Téa Angelos

Yeah, and making an impact. I think that's a huge thing, like, having a growing business is amazing, but knowing that there's a purpose to it and an impact from that, I think is really that icing on the cake.

08:54.79

Cec Busby

So I think it's a perfect time to be chatting to you because International Women's Day is this week, so what does International Women's Day mean to you?

09:06.14

Téa Angelos

I think for me, and I just went to an amazing International Women's Day event yesterday, I think it's about women realizing that they have so much potential and can really achieve anything that they want to achieve. And as well as that, I think there is so much power in community. And when we raise each other up, we can do so many incredible things and I think International Women's Day is an amazing example of women coming together, celebrating each other's successes, sharing lessons as well, which is equally important, and really raising each other up to be able to achieve so much more.

09:41.82

Cec Busby

So then you just talked about sharing lessons. Ah did you have a mentor during this process that helped you?

09:47.69

Téa Angelos

Yes, I've been really lucky to have a lot of different mentors and for me I like to seek mentors in different areas, and I would have mentors from my old full-time job, people that

were a few years ahead of me, 20 years ahead of me, not necessarily entrepreneurs but people that are just excelling in their careers. And I think it's so important to have mentors that can share lessons with you, that can give you a different perspective. Yeah, I am really passionate about the mentor/mentee relationship and it's really been helpful to me.

10:22.32

Cec Busby

And I guess Smart Women Society is kind of like a mentor in its own way isn't it?

10:30.40

Téa Angelos

Absolutely.

10:36.40

Cec Busby

Ah, so you've recently written a book that's put your experiences down and all of your top life hacks. Why was it time for you to write the book?

10:44.19

Téa Angelos

I think the book was an amazing opportunity that was presented to me at the right time, and for me it was another way that we could share our messages and our tips and our tricks to a broader audience. I like to call it a life handbook. So my book is called *Smart Moves* and it's filled with over 130 different topics across money, career, wellbeing and love. The goal of it is to not be a book that you read once and then it collects dust on the bookshelf. It's one of those handbooks that you'll keep coming back to again and again. It might sit on your coffee table or on your bedside table, and I thought it was a great way to consolidate a lot of the things that we share into one handy guide that people can keep referring back to.

11:29.92

Cec Busby

It seems like ah the perfect time as well to write a book like that because everyone's come out of Covid and it's been a great reset, I think for people. People are really re-evaluating what they do and why they do what they do so. Does *Smart Moves* address that as well?

11:47.85

Téa Angelos

Absolutely, and it covers definitely, and I know for a lot of people coming out of Covid really reevaluating their relationships and friendships, their career and if they're happy with their career, or the direction that their career is going. We cover all of that in the book and really break down with simple actionable tips and flow charts of how to navigate all those different seasons of your life.

12:08.30

Cec Busby

So I'm sure something we're all keen to understand more is how to take better control of our finances and be able to use our money and our time wisely. So what tips would you

have for someone that's maybe struggling on that money journey; they can't save or they're just finding it hard getting by with you know, cost of living rises, etc.

12:34.60

Téa Angelos

I think first step is really getting honest with yourself and evaluating where you are right now. I know for a lot of people, they might not know how much they're spending every month, where their salary is going every month. So I think step one is definitely figuring out how much money you have coming in every month and figuring out how much money you have going out every month. Firstly from an essential expenses point of view - what are your core bills that you have to pay every month and all the essential expenses - and then following on from that, looking at your non-essential discretionary expenses. How much are you spending on going out every month? How much are you spending on shopping every month? And really looking at your last 2 to 3 months of bank statements and seeing where that money is going.

I think that's a really scary but important first step, to really transforming your money journey is knowing exactly where you're starting off. And then I would always say from there, is creating a budget for yourself and knowing that a budget is not a scary word. I know it's got a very negative connotation in general society, but a budget is simply a plan for your money and actually mapping out where you're allocating and you're giving all your dollars a job every month. So setting up your budget is the next step from that. And then tracking your spending and knowing where all your money is going every month, and we have a budgeting tool called our Wealth Building Dashboard that is one of our most popular products, and it really instills all these habits into people and helping them get on track with their finances.

So I think knowing where you are at the current point is the first step, creating a budget and a plan and tracking your spending to know where you're going, and then from there you can start doing other things. So you can start setting up financial goals and automating making that as automatic as possible. So if you've got savings goals, setting up automatic transfers when you've get paid; if you you got investment goals, setting up automatic investment transfers as well. And really creating goals that mean a lot to you. I know a lot of people at New Year's always say, 'I want to save more money this year' but why do you want to save more money? Is it because you want to save but for a house deposit? Is it because you want to go on a dream holiday? I think really attaching a why to the goals that you want to achieve and why you want to get better with your money is really important as well.

14:52.50

Cec Busby

You're so right because people often make these resolutions at the beginning of the year and they really are just lip service.

15:00.68

Téa Angelos

Exactly.

Cec Busby

But if you attach something more concrete to it then you are more likely to do it.

15:08.78

Téa Angelos

And something, sorry you go.

15:10.15

Cec Busby

I was just gonna say there's kind of a bit more accountability to it, and maybe if you mouth off about it to enough people as well, they'll help you be accountable too. <laugh>

15:20.43

Téa Angelos

Absolutely. I think having an accountability buddy, like a friend or a family member to keep you accountable, is super important. And something that I like to recommend is if you have a big financial goal that you're working towards, set it as the wallpaper of your phone. We pick up our phone hundreds of times a day and if you're constantly reminded of the house you're saving up for, or the holiday you're saving up for, then it really reinforces the goal to you and makes you question when perhaps you want to spend your money on something frivolous.

15:51.59

Cec Busby

That's actually a really good idea. I've never thought of that. I'll try that. <laugh>

The other thing I'm wondering about is your money habits and your attitudes toward money because, like I kind of have a theory and I think a lot of people do, that you get those habits and your attitudes from your parents. So what if your parents were just hopeless with money, like is it a foregone conclusion you're going to be hopeless? Can you change the cycle?

16:22.00

Téa Angelos

Yeah, absolutely, you can definitely change and I think what you said before about how our money beliefs and our money values are definitely shaped by how we grew up around money - if you grew up in a household where money was always a point of contention, a point of stress, then that is definitely going to shape how you view money as an adult. But I definitely think the first step to changing those attitudes and those beliefs is really understanding the current money beliefs you have, where they've come from. Is it because your parents would always say a certain thing? Is it because you witnessed certain things or you watched TV shows that had certain money beliefs? And understanding that is really important and I think moving forward is learning and creating new money habits for yourself. Learning how to forgive yourself for those past mistakes or those past views that you held, and looking positively into the future of how can I treat myself with kindness? How can I learn to build better financial habits for my financial goals that I want to achieve? And it's also important to remember that working towards a financial goal isn't a linear

process. It could be that you're on a great track for a month or so, and then perhaps you might blow a lot of money on some impulse shopping spree. And knowing that as long as you're heading in the right direction and being kind to yourself and working on being 1% better every day when it comes to your money story and your money habits I think that's what's most important and yeah, working in the right direction and knowing that there will be bumps along the way. But as long as you're working in the right direction, that's what's most important.

18:00.67

Cec Busby

What about if you have a partner and you have really different money habits? Like one of you loves saving and the other's like 'woohoo, let's go out and have a night on the town'? How can you resolve those things so that you can comfortably, I don't know, have the same money goals for your future?

18:24.30

Téa Angelos

Yeah, and this is so common where there's a saver and a spender and a relationship. And I think, first and foremost, like any good relationship, you need to communicate these things. I think if you're not talking actively about your money goals and your money habits then that's an issue. So I would recommend having a money date once a week, sitting down with your partner, being really open about your budget, how you're running your budgets together. Is it fifty-fifty, is it based on income, is it completely separate? And there's no right or wrong decision for every couple. Every couple is unique in how they're going to manage their money. But it's important to actually sit down, discuss your money goals, both individually and as a couple, and make sure you're getting on that same page. If you're both wanting to save for a house, what are those things - how much are you putting aside each month together to work towards that goal? Really being on the same page with your goals is important.

And I think something that's really handy that I do with my husband is we set a threshold for how much we're allowed to spend, I guess, without having to consult with one another. And if anyone wants to spend more than that amount of money, we have to then chat about that between each other. So we're still working towards our financial goals as a couple, but still having that freedom to make our own decisions for the day-to-day, unless it reaches that threshold where we need to consult each other on a purchase. And I think having that independence is good and then also being on the same page, because you don't want to be nitpicking each other's spending, I don't think that's good either.

19:55.69

Cec Busby

No, that's probably fraught with anger in the future. <laugh>

So, we've got our money sorted. What about our careers? What if we're feeling like our careers are at a stalemate, that we're not moving forward? Is it time to jump ship?

20:16.91

Téa Angelos

I think the first step, if you're feeling a little bit stuck in your career, is looking at what exactly in your current job or in your current industry are you enjoying and not enjoying. Because a lot of the time that I've spoken to a lot of our community members, it's actually the environment and their team that they're not enjoying, and they still enjoy the actual work. So I think really pinpointing what is making you not enjoy your role at the moment is a really important first step. And then from that is figuring out your action plan. So, internally, are there any other teams or projects that you could try that that you could get a new experience or shake things up a little bit. That's a step one. That's a little bit maybe easier to navigate if you're in a larger company especially. And then I think another important part of that is actually just talking to a lot of different people. So if you're wanting to move to a different industry, if you're wanting to move to a different company, if you're wanting to complete career change, message people that are potentially in your network. So, friends, family, friends of friends, or even cold message people on LinkedIn and ask them for a quick 15 minute virtual coffee to learn about what they do. And that is so helpful in actually getting an insight into other options that are out there for you, and I think that is a great first step as well. And then aside from that is obviously just applying for new roles that sound interesting to you, trying and seeing what lands and what sticks. And it's a lot of trial and error. It's very rare that someone just falls into their dream job.

22:02.29

Cec Busby

So what about if I've got a little side hustle going - I mean, like you were at EY and then you started your business. How did you know it was the time to make the leap?

22:15.21

Téa Angelos

I don't think there's ever a time that you feel fully confident that it's the correct time to make a leap. I guess in my story, what ended up happening was, I was called up to do jury duty and it was for a period of six weeks. And my team agreed to allow me to do that for six weeks and I was on a big trial and as it came to the end of those six weeks, I just said to myself, I can't go back to my role, I can't go back to work. Like, I know there's more for me out there. And it kind of was that break from the constant routine of juggling SWS as a side hustle and my full-time role and yeah - I just had that 6-week break to reassess everything and deep down, I knew I couldn't go back to my full time role. And then after jury duty, I resigned and haven't looked back.

23:08.22

Cec Busby

That's a great success story. It's great that you had the confidence in yourself to do that because I think sometimes that is what stops people from taking that next step, is they don't have the self-belief. So, what would your advice be to someone who's feeling reluctant just because they don't believe in themselves enough?

23:30.61

Téa Angelos

In terms of quitting their job to take their business full time? To be fully transparent, as I said before, I don't think there ever is a right time. I remember constantly questioning my decision and especially in those first couple of weeks when you are taking your business full time, it's learning how to create new routines, learning how to fill your days with your business, when previously you were just doing it out of hours.

And it is a really hard transition. I cried a lot, I questioned my decision a lot, but I think for me, something that I always reminded myself was - if this doesn't work out in a couple of months, in six months, a year, I can always go back to my job. I can always find another role and I think that was a good comfort for me as well. And I had saved up and built an emergency fund and I knew that for six months, for a year, I was going to be okay, so I have to give it my best shot and then just see what would happen. So I think saving up an emergency fund and cushion that would cover all your essentials and your bills is a really good safety net. And then knowing that if you can go back to your previous role or another role, I think that also is a good risk aversion strategy.

24:47.18

Cec Busby

And certainly there's a skills shortage, so I'm pretty sure people would be able to get a job back if they had to take that step backwards.

So now that you're working for yourself, how's your burnout levels going? Are you looking after yourself?

25:04.73

Téa Angelos

For the first, I would say I've definitely gotten a lot better, for the first I would say year or so. And I think it was because we were still in semi lockdowns, in and out of lockdowns, that there wasn't much else to do aside from work on the business because we were stuck at home. So I found in that first year or so I was very burnt out. And something that I really struggled with was creative burnout because we create so much content, and so much new content across our platforms every week, that I was just hitting that ceiling where I couldn't even think anymore of what new things to create, or what fresh things you could bring for our community. And I think, more recently - and last year I was also planning a wedding and that had to reshuffle my priorities - but I've learned now that I take weekends off, I try and shut off at night instead of being on my phone all night dealing with emails or DMs. And learning - I've really reevaluated that I can't be my best and I can't create the best content or be the best leader or be the best content creator without having rest and giving myself space to reset and recharge. So now I'm a really big advocate for rest, seeing my friends and family on weekends and I think creating that space has allowed me to be more creative and create better things for the business and our community.

26:27.96

Cec Busby

And so now do you also have support in the business though? It's not just you - you've got a team?

26:31.37

Téa Angelos

Yes, I've got two team members with me now which has been a great help. One of our team members now creates all our content so that's taken a huge load off me to be able to focus on things to grow the business, and work on the business instead of in the business.

26:47.84

Cec Busby

It's so important isn't it, because otherwise you're just stuck in the weeds and you really can't see what's going on. You're just like slogging away. So would you advise as well, anyone else, that maybe they look at what they can outsource so that they can still do big picture and look at how they can grow the business rather than being in it day-to-day.

27:08.91

Téa Angelos

Yeah, absolutely and I think it's important. And I struggled with that, like letting go of control over things that I thought I had to do myself. But I think if you want to grow and if you want to give yourself a bit more breathing room, I think it is important to outsource and think about the things that don't require your specific expertise or knowledge. It could be bookkeeping, it could be content creation, it could be admin work and customer service. Think about what you can outsource to free yourself up to be working on new exciting things, be working on the business on growing the business. I think that's a really important thing to do.

27:45.78

Cec Busby

And obviously the wellness side of things as well. You want to be able to have time to put yourself first. I mean, there isn't a business without you, is there?

27:56.50

Téa Angelos

Exactly. Absolutely.

28:03.18

Cec Busby

So you need to look after yourself. So what do you do to kind of revitalize and re-energize?

28:07.42

Téa Angelos

Well, two things. I think, firstly, watching just really trashy reality TV, where I can switch off my brain and don't have to think about anything. I think when you're in a very digital, social media based business where I'm always on my phone, I'm always on social media, putting my phone aside and actually just not going on it is a great way for me to recharge and reset myself. And as well as that, because I am running such a digital business, just going out to see my friends and family, spending time with them, being off my phone is so important. And filling my weekend with just activities that fill my cup and make me feel re-energized is important.

28:47.39

Cec Busby

So how many women are there in the community now.

28:51.23

Téa Angelos

So across our platforms we have over 400,000 women

28:54.63

Cec Busby

Wow. In 2 years or so, you've built that that's pretty incredible.

28:59.28

Téa Angelos

3 years, yeah, it's crazy.

Cec Busby

Did you ever imagine when you were starting out it was going to get so big, grow so big, and grow so rapidly?

29:10.77

Téa Angelos

I guess I went into it a little bit naïve, where I didn't really have any expectations. Obviously for me, if I could impact 100 people or 200 people, that was fantastic, and especially initially because I wanted it to be an in-person events business. And as it grew and as we received so many messages and emails from people saying how much our content and our products have helped them, that it's been quite surreal. I think it still hasn't set in three years later how much impact we are making on people, and I'm just so grateful for that. And I'm very very lucky to be running this business and doing what I do, and it's a nice, it's something I always dreamed of, to be doing something that had passion and purpose, and I wake up every morning really excited to do. And don't get me wrong, not every day is amazing. Not every week is amazing. I still cry a lot and I'm still stressed a lot. But knowing that I'm in a role that I really really love, I think, is such a game changer and I hope a lot more people are in roles that they're really excited to work every day.

30:18.00

Cec Busby

Yes, I hope so too. Otherwise, what's the point, Téa, really? You don't want to live your life a slave to some kind of drudgery, where you're resenting what you're doing every day. Time to make a change if that's the case I think.

30:37.26

Téa Angelos

Absolutely.

Cec Busby

So any final advice for our listeners?

30:43.22

Téa Angelos

I think if anyone is listening, has their own business or is worried or wanting to start a business, or wanting to take that next step in the business, my biggest advice is take action. I know for a lot of people, we think about the things that we want to do, we make all these drastic, like, these fancy plans or these big business plans and have to map everything out perfectly. But I'm a big believer that messy action is better than no action. So, keep trying, keep testing, nothing is set in stone, and you can always pivot and adjust and redo things. So, just take action and actually take that first step of that thing that you've been thinking of and wanting to do. And as I've said, I'm sure anyone who's listening knows that thing that they want to do or that they need to do, so this is your sign to just take that first step. Do it and make some progress.

31:35.40

Cec Busby

I really like that - messy action. Because nothing's perfect. We all need a bit of messy action in our lives. So, onwards.

Thank you so much for joining me today, Téa. It's been great chatting with you.

Téa Angelos

Thank you so much for having me, I loved the chat.