

What I Learned From 50 Podcast Episodes

David Crabill: Welcome to the Forrager podcast, where I usually talk with cottage food entrepreneurs about their strategies for running a food business from home I'm David Crabill, and today is a bit of a different episode it's episode 51. And now that I have 50 episodes in the books, I feel like I have learned a lot from the cottage food entrepreneurs that have been on this show.

And if you've been listening to the episodes, I'm sure you would agree as well. They've just shared a ton of amazing information and I've really been blown away by all the stories that have been shared on this podcast. so today. I thought I'd do something a little different and share with you some of what I've learned over the course of the first 50 episodes.

and also take you behind the scenes a little bit about how I actually produce this podcast. So specifically over the first 50 episodes, I have noticed some trends with the guests that I've had on the show and noticed some similarities between them. So I've narrowed them down to eight of the most common traits that I see in successful cottage food entrepreneurs. So I'll be sharing those traits with you today. I'll also be taking you behind the scenes and how I produce this podcast. How do I actually find guests? How do they get on the show? What is the recording studio that I use look like? And how do I get the audio sound good? Some details like that might sound kind of boring, but I think you'll find it interesting.

I will also share which episode of the first 50 surprised me the most. And also which episode of the first 50 was my favorite and I'd ask you if you think you could guess which one was my favorite and I'm guessing you probably can't. I actually sent out an email to my audience a few weeks ago, asking them what their favorite episode was.

And they shared a lot of different episodes, but nobody actually chose the episode that I would choose as being my favorite. So I'll share that towards the end of this episode. And then finally, to cap off the episode, I will be talking about a new ish direction that I'm taking the podcast.

Not a huge one, but I've definitely had something in mind for a while. And I decided to wait until we got through 50 episodes before implementing it. So I'll talk about that at the end.

All right. So with that, let's jump into this episode and talk about the eight most common traits that I see in successful cottage food entrepreneurs,

So the first trait I've noticed is that successful entrepreneurs are consistent and they show up. And this is something that's come up over and over again on the podcast from the

beginning. I definitely know in episode three, Dawn Belisle talked about showing up and then episode four with Diana Shockley.

That's like a masterclass in being consistent, especially in the early days of your business. And again, this is something that I've seen over and over again with the guests on my show is that when they say they're going to do something, they do it. And they put in the work

And that's closely tied into trait number two, which is I've noticed that the guests on my show tend to be hustlers. They are action takers and they get things done. They do not often wallow in indecision and they make the most of their time and produce a lot. And you'll notice that a lot of these traits would apply to successful business owners in any realm, not just cottage food ones.

So the third trait of the guests on my show that I've noticed is that they tend to love serving other people.

They're very service oriented and are always focused on providing the best service to other people possible. This is actually pretty closely tied in with the fourth trait that I've noticed, which is that a lot of the guests on my show have had former experience in the food service industry, either working at restaurants or bakeries or some form of food service. And so I feel like those go hand in hand, and also, I feel like the person who has food service experience just has a leg up over someone who's starting out brand new, and maybe hasn't seen how a food business would run.

so this concept of serving others is also pretty closely tied into trait number five, which is that I've noticed that a lot of the guests on my show tend to love people. They describe themselves as a people person. they tend to be very social. Sometimes they're more extroverted, but not always, but generally speaking, they love going to events. They love going to farmer's markets. They love engaging with people and interacting with people and they love their customers. And that's something that I've noticed, not just from this podcast, but just in general in seeing that people at the farmer's market I've sold that.

And elsewhere, generally speaking, you can tell when a business owner really loves their customers, it just shows in everything that they do

also kind of related to that would be the sixth trait that I've noticed, which is that the successful entrepreneurs tend to be willing to open up and share themselves and their story with other people. And I think this just makes them very relatable to other people. and that's a big one for me because I've always been an introvert.

And in the beginning of my business journey, I didn't want to share anything about myself. So you've heard me talk with guests a lot about that concepts, particularly the introverts that have been on my. And definitely, it seems like the people who are willing to open up in some aspect. Maybe it doesn't have to be on social media, but at least telling their story on their website or engaging with customers tend to do better with their businesses.

Overall, I would say another interesting trait that I have noticed this would be the seventh. Would be that a lot of my guests are creative people. They tend to have art backgrounds or sometimes creative writing backgrounds whatever it may be. They just tend to generally be more creative types.

Obviously, this is correlated with the fact that a lot of the most successful cottage food businesses out there are customized businesses, custom cake businesses, custom decorated cookie businesses. So there's a big creative aspect with that, but even with like episode 27 with Jennifer Knox, she sells spice blends, but she has used her creative writing abilities to make her products much more memorable. So I've definitely noticed across the board, regardless of what kind of business people have. I've noticed that those who love to create, Tend to do really well. and finally the last trait, trait number eight, I've noticed that some of my most successful guests have partnered with someone else in their business. They're not solo entrepreneurs. certainly some of my most notable stories out of the first 50 came from power couples or people that had some kind of business partnership. This was talked about directly on episode 48 with Anthony Rosemond. But it makes sense, you know, if you've gotten into business, you know, there's a lot of moving pieces.

There, there's the production side of things. There's the business side of things. And so being able to split up duties is essential to growing your business in a big way. Now clearly I have had a ton of entrepreneurs on the show that don't have a business partner and do very well with their business. But overall, I would say that those that have some form of help Have a much easier time growing their business to the point where it can be the primary income for their family,

all right. So those are the top eight traits that I've seen in the successful cottage food entrepreneurs I've had on the show. Hopefully you can see some of those traits in yourself as well.

All right, moving on. I'm going to take you behind the scenes a little bit about how I actually produce this podcast. And it all starts with the guests, of course. How do I find guests for the show? Actually at first I reached out to my audience at the very beginning and asked them to apply to the show and I got a few applications.

Um, I also had a number of people in mind, just from my decade of experience in the cottage food industry. but that list got exhausted pretty quickly to be honest. And there was a period of time where I was actually kind of nervous about being able to find enough guests for the show.

Initially, I thought they would just come to me, which was pretty silly in hindsight to think about, because it's similar to what I see a lot of new entrepreneurs think with their food businesses is that people will just come to them and buy their product when they realize how great it is, which usually that doesn't happen.

Usually there's a lot of marketing involved. So I actually had to learn how to find my podcast guests, which really ended up being quite a blessing because the most successful entrepreneurs out there don't tend to have a lot of free time to find a podcast like mine and apply for it. so what I ended up doing was I started doing a weekly search for the term cottage food on Google.

And I was just looking for news stories or sometimes the word cottage food was in someone's website. And I was just looking for stories that were notable in one way or another. And those weekly searches resulted in a ton of potential new guest prospects for the show. And I actually now have quite a long list of potential guests. Now that took me through, I don't know, the first 30 episodes or so, and then I really stopped doing those weekly searches because not only did I have a very large list of potential guests to work with, But also some of my listeners have started to tell me about some of the success stories that they're aware of. In addition to that, as I've talked to guests on the podcast, they also know potential stories to showcase on the podcast. And so the list of potential guests that I have is definitely growing at this point without a lot of extra effort on my part.

And looking ahead to the next 50 episodes, I mean, there's a ton of amazing stories that I could have on the show. Now I will be honest that sometimes it's hard to actually get people to come on the show. These are successful entrepreneurs and they're busy. I'd say, especially in the early days of the podcast, when there weren't a lot of episodes out there and my podcast was kind of unknown.

It was a bit harder to get someone to agree to be on the show. I've definitely had people say no, or ignore me Or say they don't have enough time. And sometimes it's taken me many months to get a guest on the show. But how do I actually decide who comes on the show and who doesn't? And there's not a real scientific method for that, but it all starts with one of the primary goals of the podcast, which is to tell compelling cottage food stories.

I'm actually a very avid survivor fan. It's the only TV show that I watch these days. Having followed that show over the course of 20 years, I've also watched their production team evolve and find a way to produce a compelling show that showcases relatively normal non-famous people. And as I've seen that show evolve, they've evolved into telling stories. That's pretty much all they do now. And so I knew when I started this podcast that I needed to really focus in on the stories of my guests. And so when I'm considering guests on the show, I'm thinking about their story, I'm thinking about what makes it compelling. And I'm looking for a variety because quite honestly, the vast majority of cottage food businesses out there fall into the realm of custom cake businesses and custom cookie businesses. And there's a ton of those types of businesses that I could have on the show.

I mean, there's at least a dozen really, really popular ones just within my own area of Sacramento, California. But, uh, I didn't want the podcast obviously to be redundant or have the same types of businesses on it over and over again. So I've tried to find a variety of different types of food businesses, but the variety goes beyond that too.

I'm also thinking about my guests. Sometimes it's where they come from. I've had a number of international guests on the show, people that have immigrated to the United States. And also, I just generally think about someone's background or someone's culture and how that adds to their story when considering guests, another thing that differentiates guests is where they live. There are some states where I have a ton of potential guests California being the biggest one.

And I don't want the whole podcast to just be people from California. So I'd hopefully like to represent every state on the podcast. And I definitely consider that as well when I'm choosing guests. Another thing I definitely look at when I'm considering a podcast guest is what their social media following looks like. I will go over to their Facebook page or Instagram feed, and try to get a sense for how successful their business is from those. That's not always accurate, but it does give me an idea. Another thing I'll consider is how long someone has been running their business.

That's not to say that I wouldn't have a brand new entrepreneur on the show. In fact, I intend to have more new entrepreneurs on the show, but one thing I want to make sure is that there's enough story there to cover a potentially hour long episode. If somebody has been running their business for a few years, then there's definitely enough story there to turn it into a really compelling episode. And the last thing that I think about when I'm considering a guest is their ability to communicate their story, their ability to speak on the podcast. And I will say this hasn't really been a problem because generally speaking, the type of person that starts a successful food business already is very comfortable sharing their story and telling it to many people in a captivating way.

so that hasn't really been a problem, but it's definitely something I think about when I'm considering each potential guest. And beyond that, sometimes there's not really a rhyme or reason to when I have someone on the show, sometimes it's just based on their availability or maybe they just reached out to me recently. there's definitely some randomness there as well. When I choose a podcast guest. And finally, for the first 50 episodes here, I've been really diligent about trying to make sure that my podcast guests all started from home. And I've certainly turned away a number of very, very strong potential guests that started with the normal route of using a commercial kitchen.

so that has been one of the primary requirements for being on the show. And I will talk a little bit more about that towards the end. Now, once I have a guest lined up to be on the show, What's the process like for actually doing their interview. And one thing that I do for my podcast guests is I actually researched them pretty heavily before I get them on the phone. And this is something that I think a lot of podcasts hosts have different opinions on. I know there are some people that say you shouldn't do that because there's an element of surprise that comes with asking questions and learning about things in the moment as you're talking to an entrepreneur.

And I certainly see the value in that, but for me, I'm still in the stage of when I'm producing the podcast, I'm thinking about a lot of different things at once. I'm thinking about the recording, I'm thinking about what the person is saying.

I'm thinking about how it fits into the context of their entire story arc over the episode and where I'm going to go next with the story. So I like to be really prepared with an episode and oftentimes guests are really taken aback by how prepared I am and how much of their story I already know. And another thing is that I've definitely gone through an episode and then afterwards learned something about the guests that I really wish I had been aware of in order to include it on the show.

And I would say one thing that may be unique to my podcast is I've noticed that a lot of my guests tend to be very humble people. Again, this relates to that trait of wanting to serve other people. And so I found that if I don't bring something up, they're not going to mention it, even if it's really significant in their story.

so I try to find out in advance what I need to include in the episode to make sure their story is as complete as possible. From there. Once I've researched a guest, I will set up a zoom call with them. and one of the challenges that I face is getting my guests have really good audio because I'm obviously interviewing people from all around the country and some of them are not. So tech savvy. In fact, a couple of my guests had never even used zoom before. So I typically start by educating them via email about what devices they might have that would result in good audio One thing I knew from the beginning of the

podcast is that the microphones that are embedded into most laptops and webcams tend to be a really poor quality.

And those are typically the microphones that will default when zoom is opened up. So I try to get my guests to use something different than that. And I've found that generally speaking, just even a smartphone or an iPad has a really good microphone in it also, if someone has a Mac book pro that tends to have a really good microphone in it as well.

And some of my guests have dedicated USB microphones, that's not too common, or they might have like a Bluetooth gaming headset or something that has a microphone arm that puts the microphone right in front of their mouth. But regardless of whatever I share via email, the main thing is that when I hop on the zoom call, I'm listening to see if that audio is clear. And there's a number of times where it's not really all that clear and I'll ask my guests, what are your other options?

Let's try this, let's try that. So sometimes it'll take a few minutes to find a device or find a way to get their audio to be better. And that helps a lot, but then beyond just the process of getting fairly decent audio from the beginning, I do do quite a bit after the fact with editing to clear up that audio. I'll talk about that in a little bit, In terms of my audio set up, it's actually really, really simple. I don't know why, but I, when I think of a podcast I think of someone sitting in like a sound studio with those foam things on the walls.

I don't know, maybe that's because I've seen like Joe Rogan commercials or something, but that's definitely not the case with my podcast. I'm sitting here right now in my house. We rent out a three bedroom house in Sacramento, California. And the room that I'm in is actually very small. Um, It fits my desk, just barely fits my desk and our daughter's crib and a twin bed that my mom sleeps on when she comes and helps with the kids.

So if the room was half a foot shorter, all of these things wouldn't fit into it. That's how small the room is. And I say that because it's actually really helpful to have such a small room to record in. I learned that actually in episode four with Diana Shockley, that was the only episode that I did in person.

That was right at the beginning of the pandemic, March 2020. So Diana, who lives in Sacramento. She actually came over to my house to record that in person. And I set up the microphone in our dining room, which has a high ceiling, and that produced a really echo-y sound. I tried to combat that with editing, but it still sounds quite different from the other episodes. So I recorded in this very small room. It's not treated, that's the technical audio term. It's not treated with any sound dampening, things like foam or anything. But I do have the microphone really, really close to my mouth. So it's only about an inch away from my mouth and it seems to have worked pretty well.

I use a blue Yeti microphone. That's a pretty popular microphone for podcasting. This actually something I picked up off of Craigslist about six years ago. So I bought it used for like \$50 and it's worked just fine. It plugs into my computer. It's a USB microphone. So it's actually a much more simple microphone and I don't have nearly the kind of audio equipment that most professional audio sets would have for the first six months of the podcast. I literally had my little blue Yeti microphone sitting on my desk on its stand, which is a little problematic because any bumps to the desk will transfer sound to the microphone.

So after about six months of running the show, I finally got a, I think it was only like a \$20 microphone, boom arm. That's actually mounted to Sierra's crib of all things. And so that way it comes out in front of my face and I can touch the desk or I can type, or I can use my mouse without affecting the audio quality. but that's pretty much my setup. I've got this little boom arm, I've got the blue Yeti microphone and a pop filter right in front of it. And that's all I have in the hardware side of things. Now I do do quite a bit of stuff on the software side of things to make the audio sound better. I always record my audio into audacity. that's one of the most popular, free audio editing pieces of software out there. So once I've finished recording the zoom call with my guest and I've recorded my own audio into audacity, Then I will import the guests audio from zoom into the project, and then I'll start to make a number of adjustments from there within audacity. If there's any background noise, I'll use the noise removal tool to remove that background noise. If I can, I will do. What's called normalizing the audio. I use a noise gate to remove any unwanted sounds. And then I also compress the audio. I use a compressor to really boost everything, to make it sound really, really good.

From there. I will export the audio out of audacity and I'm not nearly done yet. from there, I will import the audio into a piece of software called Descript. And this is really a phenomenal piece of software. It's relatively new and it makes audio editing so much easier. I've done a little bit of audio editing in the past before running the podcast.

And it's just a nightmare to edit audio. You have to listen to it to find clips. And you're also looking at this wave form as a little hard to describe, but it's really, really hard. It's a very time-intensive process to try to edit audio in any way. Anyone who's tried to edit audio will tell you this.

What Descript does is it takes that audio It understands all the words that are being said and automatically transcribes all the words. And it'll put that into more like a word document. And then all I have to do is actually edit that word document and it will edit the audio behind it as well.

So if I like delete a sentence out of this word document, then it will delete that sentence from the audio clip.

and that might not sound that significant to you, but trust me, when it comes to editing the audio, it makes it so much easier. And it's actually what allows me to edit the podcast pretty heavily without it taking a ton of time. Now I do spend a lot of time editing the podcast.

It's a very curated podcast, but it wouldn't be even possible for me to edit it the way that I do, if I didn't use a tool like Descript. Descript also does a ton of things that save me time. For instance, it notices all of the ums and ahs and pauses in the episode and allows me to automatically remove them all at once. And typically in hour long episode, there's about a few hundred ums and ahs in the podcast sometimes I intentionally leave a filler word in because it would sound weird if it weren't in there. But trust me, when I say that the audio would be a lot less clean. If it weren't for this tool, that's in Descript. Another thing that Descript's done really recently, I mean, they keep pushing the edge of technology is they've created this tool called studio sound that somehow takes the audio and through like some artificial intelligence, wizardry makes the audio sound better and actually makes it sound like it was recorded in a studio. I'm not exactly sure how they do that. But for my podcast, guests that sometimes takes their audio from being good to great. And I literally don't have to do anything other than just click a button to enable that.

So I usually think pretty long and hard before I pay for a monthly subscription service, but with Descript, it's really a no brainer. It's easily worth what I pay for it. And there's no way that I could produce the kind of quality of podcasts that I produce. If I didn't have it, I'll put a link to Descript down below in the show notes, if you'd like to check it out, but it is a pretty amazing tool.

Descript also gives me the automated transcript that I don't really do much with other than just take it and plop it on the website. You probably noticed since it's computer generated, it's a pretty rough transcript, but uh, I figure it's better than nothing. So I put it up on the website in case it's helpful. The last thing I wanted to talk about in terms of the production of the show is that when I am editing and Descript, sometimes I'll edit pretty heavily. Most people wouldn't know this, but I do often talk with my guest after their episodes ended.

You know, we just start chatting about things and sometimes, actually many times they often say things that are really compelling and I'll ask them, I'll say, Hey, can I put this into the show? And so that's sometimes a bit of effort, but it often pays off in a big way because some of the most compelling parts of episodes were actually recorded after the episode was quote unquote completed.

And I've taken that and tried to put it back into the episode and fit it in some more seamlessly. Also sometimes I'll just rearrange the episode. If I can do that fairly seamlessly

to allow the story, to kind of come together in a more cohesive way. So there's definitely a lot of things that go on with trying to get the episode into its final state.

And the benefit is that at the end, hopefully it's a very curated experience for you and it results in a really high quality episode That is easy to listen to and really valuable for you. All right. So that's some of the behind the scenes of the production side of how I actually make this podcast come together. And now I'm going to share what I would say is the most surprising of the first 50 episodes. And I will say a lot of the episodes surprise me. I already shared that I do research my guests pretty heavily beforehand and kind of have an idea of where I want an episode to go, but oftentimes they will still surprise me with things I had no idea about.

And that's awesome when it happens. In terms of the one episode I would say is the most surprising. I'd say that's a pretty clear answer for me and that'd be episode 40 with Justina Rucinski. I knew from the beginning of starting the podcast, I wanted to have her on the show at some point. Um, Definitely wanted to have kind of more of a distance from the event that she dealt with in her life before having her on the show.

But leading up into that, she was pretty clear that she didn't really want to talk about that, which I totally understood and expected and respected. Um, But during that episode, she just opened up with this moment. That was just so raw and real and human. And I would say definitely one of the most compelling things that will ever be shared on the podcast. That's around the 16 minutes, 17 minute mark of her episode, if you haven't listened to it yet, but I was just really blown away by her willingness to be vulnerable. And I also feel like that willingness is What allows her to positively impact so many people that can relate to her. So that was definitely the most surprising episode by far for me. And it just blew away all of my expectations that I had going into that interview with her.

so from there I also would like to share. what I would say was my favorite episode out of the first 50 episodes. And really, I mean, how can you even pick, I mean, so many unbelievably amazing episodes in the first 50 I would say literally every episode was very impressive to me in one way or another. and some of the success stories I've had on the podcasts are literally just mindblowing. So how can I pick just one? I will say, I mean, I'm calling this my favorite episode. I think more accurately as the most valuable episode for me, because I really learned something important from it.

And also noting like, it's my favorite because it addressed where I was in my business at the time. But I noticed from polling my audience, that everyone has their favorites for their own reasons. So it's certainly by no means the best episode, but it was actually pretty easy for me to pick out one that stood out above the rest.

And that was episode 35 with Nathan and Nicole Parchman. They run their business, nitro salsa. And I mean, throughout the episode, their story really just blew me away with all that they've done with their business, despite having two very full time jobs and with kids and also having two very active side jobs, Nicole is a dance instructor. And Nathan is a politician. And then on top of all of that, they run the salsa business out of their home that literally does over a thousand dollars of sales per week.

And then they're building this commercial kitchen that costs like \$150,000 to grow their business. It just was like one of the most unbelievable stories that I've had on the podcast up front. But the reason why it's my favorite, isn't just because of that, because I've had a lot of really amazing stories on the podcast.

but what really made this interview stand out for me is when I better understood why they have been so successful. And that came actually after we finished recording the episode and we're just chatting and Nathan asked me a question that no other podcast guest asked in the first 50 episodes. And that question really took me aback and it was kind of an aha moment for me because it instantly allowed me to see what sets Nathan and Nicole, apart from their competition. o what Nathan asked me was this, he said, Hey, David, it's been awesome being on the podcast. Thank you so much. Hey, what can we do for you? How can we help you?

So that's what he asked. And as I said, he was the only person in the first 50 episodes that asked me this question. I had many other podcast guests who said, Hey, thank you so much for having me on the show. I definitely appreciated it. Please let me know when it comes out and I will share it on my social channels and I'll share it everywhere I can. which is super helpful. And I appreciate the efforts of my podcast, guests to help get the word out about the podcast. But Nathan was the only person that actually asked. He didn't assume he said, Hey, how can we use our skills and our strengths and our connections to help you?

And I actually didn't know exactly how to answer the question in that moment, because I had never gotten the question before, but just in asking the question, he allowed me to realize that the reason why they have been so successful is because all they focus on is trying to lift up and serve other people. And that in turn lifts up themselves, it was one of the most remarkable things that I learned from the podcast. And it really caused me to think about how I interact with others in my business and how I could better collaborate with people and constantly think about using my skills to better serve them.

So thank you, Nathan and Nicole for that question. And I think that question actually was all that I needed.

So that's the interview that pretty clearly was the most valuable one for me, based on where I was in my business journey when I talked with Nathan and Nicole.

but I mean, if you've listened to the podcast, you know, just how amazing all of the episodes have been. And I'm looking forward to the next 50. And with that, I wanted to tell you about a little change that I'm going to be to the podcast. Not a huge one. Um, Hopefully one that will make the podcast even more valuable. So the first 50 episodes, I was pretty diligent about making sure that each of my podcast guests either are, or were at one point a cottage food business, meaning they had started at home, but as I progressed from one interview to the next, I realized that by having that restriction on my podcast guests, that prevented the podcast from being able to explore some topics really in depth with an expert that maybe hasn't started a food business from home before. But could still talk about some aspect of starting a food business, like potentially how to grow your Instagram account, for instance, and I certainly had some guests on the show that have become experts or semi-experts in different fields, but looking forward to the next 50 episodes instead of just having kind of tunnel vision and only allowing people to be on the show who have started food businesses. I'm going to be thinking a lot more about what the guest has to contribute to the show and how helpful their content could be to a cottage food business and that might mean that some episodes end up being really honed in on one aspect of running a food business. And I think that's perfectly fine. so we'll see, I'm certainly expecting the majority of my interviews will be the same will be with people who started out of their home kitchens. And as I said, I definitely have a very significant list of potential guests who would be great to have on the show, but if it feels like the right thing at the right time, definitely open to talking to an expert in their field about some aspect of running a cottage food business.

All right. That about, does it for this special episode of the podcast. I hope you found it interesting and valuable. And looking forward to the next episode, We'll be back on track with another great interview with a cottage food business

now, if you want more information about this episode, go to forrager.com/podcast/51.

And if you enjoyed this episode or any of the first 50 episodes, please head over to apple podcasts and leave me a review. A review is the best way to support the show and it will help others find it as well.

and finally, if you're thinking about selling your own homemade food, check out my free mini course, where I walk you through the steps you need to take to get a cottage food business off the ground to get the course, go to cottagefoodcourse.com.

Thanks for listening. And I'll see you in the next episode.