

Tiffany Hill with The Pink Crumbb

David Crabill: Welcome to the Forrager Podcast, where I talk with cottage food entrepreneurs about their strategies for running a food business from home. I'm David Crabill and today I'm talking with Tiffany Hill. But first, are you building an email list for your business yet? If not, you really should be collecting customers email addresses and emailing them on a regular basis.

[00:00:20] Even these days, email continues to be better than social media for generating consistent sales, and the best part is that you own it. Once you build an email list, nobody can take it away from you. I personally use ConvertKit to manage email for my fudge business and I created a free tutorial that will walk you through how to set up a free email marketing system for your business in less than one hour.

[00:00:41] So to learn more, you can go to forrager.com/email. All right, so I have Tiffany Hill on the show today. She lives in Apple Valley, California, and now runs three businesses. Her cottage food business called The Pink Crumbb, a paid membership community called Think Pink Bakers, and a bakery packaging business called Pink Design Company.

[00:01:05] I just have to say I have never seen a cottage food entrepreneur with a growth trajectory like Tiffany's. She now has over 300, 000 Instagram followers, but get this, just two years ago she almost quit her fledgling cottage food business because she was struggling with sales and barely making any money.

[00:01:25] But just a few months later, she was consistently making thousands of dollars per month, and today she primarily focuses her efforts on teaching other bakers how to do the same. Even though she started Think Pink Bakers just last year, she's already had over 10, 000 people join her membership. Tiffany shared so much valuable information in this conversation that I decided to turn it into two episodes.

[00:01:47] In this first episode, she shares how she started and grew her cottage food business, In the next episode, she shares how she built off that success by starting her online course business as well as her packaging business. And let me just say, both of these episodes are chock full of lessons learned and great business advice.

[00:02:05] So with that, let's jump right into part one of my conversation with Tiffany. Welcome to the show, Tiffany. Nice to have you here.

[00:02:15] **Tiffany Hill:** So nice to be here. Thank you for having me.

[00:02:18] **David Crabill:** Well, typically on the show I tell people to take me back to the beginning of their cottage food journey, but in your case, I think it's important to understand what brought you to that point. Can you just give us quick snapshot of your background?

[00:02:32] **Tiffany Hill:** Oh yeah, sure. Absolutely. I think that is such an important part of the story. well, if we go way, way back several decades, I was a daycare provider. So I kind of like to tell myself that I was an entrepreneur at heart, even though I didn't see it that way at the time. But that enabled me to be home with my children and be a part of their young, young years.

[00:02:57] But eventually I became a teacher and then I became a principal. And then I moved into the County Office of Education in my County. And gosh, it was such a wonderful journey, but At each phase of that career, it also took me further and further away from what my original goal was, which was to be with family.

[00:03:18] And, you know, things like that can really kind of happen slowly, so slowly that you just wake up one morning and say, wait a minute, I set out to be with my children and somehow life took me in a different direction. And so at that point, I had nine grandchildren and I was watching them grow just as rapidly as my own kids had.

[00:03:42] And I thought, I got to do something different. Super grateful um, for my career, just years well spent, but also felt the pull to, to do something different and have a bit more balance in my life.

[00:03:56] **David Crabill:** Well, if someone would like to learn more about your background, they could just go to your about page on your Pink Crumbb website, and I would just point people to that page anyway, because I say, like, that's how an about page should be. I mean, it's really well done, I just think it's a good example for aspiring bakers on how they can really capture people's attention with sharing a story.

[00:04:21] Now, I know you've been a school principal, but you also consider yourself an introvert. Not something I would have necessarily assumed based on

where your business has gone but you say you're very uncomfortable selling, right?

[00:04:36] **Tiffany Hill:** Oh, extremely, very introverted. I could hole up in my cabin. In the mountains and just do nothing but create for weeks on end. you know, I think a lot of people are surprised when they hear me say I'm an introvert, but there is such a difference between being an introvert and understanding how to move through society and move through social settings and, and doing what it is That needs to be done versus where you feel most comfortable.

[00:05:11] And for me, entrepreneurship was a very uncomfortable step and something that really took me into a different world where, you know, my imposter syndrome kind of was at an all time high. I was having to put myself in situations that were a social media. There was a, you know, there's a lot to all of that.

[00:05:32] But without putting yourself in those situations, you don't grow either. But yes, at my heart, 100 percent introvert.

[00:05:40] **David Crabill:** I also wouldn't think of an introvert as being someone who would step up into a leadership role like school principal. I don't know. You seem like a unique introvert to me. I don't know if I just, maybe a lot of introverts become school principals. I don't know.

[00:05:54] **Tiffany Hill:** You know, my husband is an extreme introvert and he was also a school principal, so maybe. But I will say that a lot of introverts have a competing need within them. And I know I certainly do. And that is that, one, I really, really Need to have time to create. I need to be on my own. I cannot socialize.

[00:06:17] at a level that is, you know, on par with others, it drains me. But I also have this strong love for helping others. And I think that those two things together, it's kind of always that push and pull trying to feed both of those. And that is, as much as I am introverted, I also love supporting and helping humans.

[00:06:39] And so I think I'm just always kind of balancing between those two things.

[00:06:43] **David Crabill:** Well, I mean you did run the daycare when you were a young mom and so you had this kind of entrepreneurial background to some degree and even being a principal you're sort of like you're doing a lot of the

things an entrepreneur would do. You're running an organization. So where, where did this entrepreneurship come from?

[00:07:04] Is it something that's in your background?

[00:07:06] **Tiffany Hill:** No, not at all, but my daughter uh, my oldest daughter, when I, if I rewind to when I was a young mom, yes, the daycare had a bit of the entrepreneurial spirit to it, of course, but it wasn't as common back then as it is today. You know, there's definitely more individuals pursuing that as a career path and my oldest daughter was one of those individuals and she was very different than me.

[00:07:34] Maybe it was generational, I'm not sure, but she had a very clear vision of what she was going to do. To do and the business she was going to open and she successfully did that. She's the owner of Wink Click. It is a business in the beauty industry. She's been wildly successful with that. And so watching one of your kids take steps to live life on their own terms was actually very inspiring to me.

[00:08:00] And I thought, you know, I know I can lead. I've been a leader in my current career. Can I transfer the skills that I've learned in a traditional career, can I transfer that into a small business or an entrepreneur type journey and what would that look like if I did that? And I think that's really what kind of gave me the initial idea.

[00:08:21] **David Crabill:** Well, I was just thinking about it because you, running the daycare and also being a principal, these are service based type of things, right? But you moved into starting a product based business. What are some of the differences you found between the two?

[00:08:38] **Tiffany Hill:** Oh my goodness. I mean, I would say, I really floundered at first because. You know, you don't know what you don't know. And I would say the hardest part of being an entrepreneur for me was definitely putting yourself out there, of course, but also when you've spent multiple decades in a traditional career.

[00:09:01] You might learn skills, you might learn leadership skills, you might learn organizational skills, collaboration skills. There might be a lot of different things that your skill set benefits from. However, The one thing you typically don't have to do in a traditional career is figure out how to get people to come to whatever is being offered by the organization you work for.

[00:09:26] Unless you're working in marketing. You're not usually responsible for that piece. So I was creating at the end of my career at the County, I was creating credential programs for individuals who wanted to become a teacher, but I never had to stop and say, well, how do we get the individuals who want to become a teacher?

[00:09:45] What draws them to our program and not somebody else's? All I had to do was create the content for my program. Boss. And so I think when you make the shift to entrepreneurship and all of a sudden I was responsible for, well, what makes people choose me? What makes them choose my product? If you're somebody who's uncomfortable with selling, which I was, if you're somebody who has no experience in marketing, which I was that is a learning curve and that was probably my greatest Challenge was just simply marketing.

[00:10:18] **David Crabill:** I know you struggled a lot with the early sales. If you could walk yourself back, you obviously know a lot more now about it. What would you have told yourself or what would you have done differently?

[00:10:31] **Tiffany Hill:** I mean, this sounds simple, but it's, it's really more complicated when you get into the meat of it, but I would have told myself, just pretend like you're a customer. So when it is. Selling my baked goods, what might they want, if I was purchasing baked goods, what would I want?

[00:10:51] If it was my online membership. Really thinking about, who was I when I was struggling with cells in my home bakery and what would have helped me. And so I think going back, if I could shift earlier into that mindset of, you What does the person who's purchasing from me, what will they benefit from?

[00:11:13] What are they looking for? And really, you know, it's the whole target audience and kind of just thinking from that perspective. I think in reality though, for some of us I, don't know if I would have had those answers until I just. I just got in and was willing to just keep being open to testing things out and trials and tribulations and kind of experimenting.

[00:11:36] That is where I started to understand how the human mind works when they decide to purchase something or they decide to keep moving and not purchase. For me, I had to experience it firsthand.

[00:11:49] **David Crabill:** It sounds so simple when you say it, because it's true, but a lot of entrepreneurs, they are thinking about what they want, right? Like, they want to start a business, they want to sell a certain thing, and at least

for me, like, entrepreneurship has pushed me to be as selfless as possible, because you have to learn that You're just in business for other people, right?

[00:12:14] **Tiffany Hill:** Yeah, and I would say that is a great way to put it and a hundred percent how I feel too. I was looking at it from my own perspective when I first started and, and naturally so for anybody else who's looking at it because it is how, you know, we often have the pressure of we need to earn money to survive.

[00:12:33] And that fact right there can really alter how we look at things and the decisions we make as well. You know, and I often try to remind myself, okay, if I didn't need to make any money, let's just say money was not an issue at all. What would I do tomorrow? What would I offer people? Would it be free? how might I support others?

[00:12:54] And shifting into that mindset every time I start to get a little bit stuck when it comes to what is my next move? How should I market this? Whatever the question might be. If I can shift my mindset into, no, let's take myself out of it. Let's pretend like earning an income is nothing that I need to be worried about.

[00:13:13] What decisions would I make? And that is what has led me to offer so much for free, to sell my baked goods in a pay what you can model. That is what's led me to say, let me just give back. And in return, I feel like I've been really, really rewarded financially because of that. So it's, it's kind of a win win for everybody, if that makes sense.

[00:13:35] **David Crabill:** talking about giving away things for free, before you started the business, you had been giving away cakes for free for a long time, right?

[00:13:45] **Tiffany Hill:** Yes, I had been, and you know, I think a lot of bakers fall into that either questioning their worth, you know, which I think I was doing a bit back then bakers tend to be generous, loving, you know, we're baking for people because it's how we show love. And so when we then say, well, give me money for that, it can sometimes not sit right.

[00:14:08] And so, yes. While I was working in my traditional career, I was baking on the side getting requests for different items, cakes, whatever it might be and very uncomfortable with requesting sometimes anything at all. Other times I would just ask for ingredients to be covered. But it was not a comfortable place for me.

[00:14:29] So I really had to overcome that mindset as well.

[00:14:32] **David Crabill:** And yet I saw that you said that you never thought you would run a home baking business at all. Like what pushed you into this?

[00:14:42] **Tiffany Hill:** I would say probably my husband and my children, because, you know, sometimes we can get stuck or I can get stuck with seeing a model in front of me, which was my daughter's at the time, and she was selling a beauty product and not being able to think beyond that. And so it was my husband who said, you know, if you're going to open a business, you really need to be selling your baked goods.

[00:15:07] That is what you enjoy doing. That's a passion of yours. People request them. And at first I was a little bit like, no I don't, I don't think that's what I want to do. And as time went on, I realized that he was correct. I realized that this was something that I was good at. I knew that there were people who were better at it than I was, but I could grow.

[00:15:31] And so I just knew this, does make the most logical sense, but I. Again, got stuck in a narrow minded, well, the only model I have of a home bakery is selling custom cakes, so that's what I'll do. And I quickly realized that I wanted to leave my nine to five career. That was my goal and selling custom cakes in the area that I live, it would have taken me quite some time to really build up.

[00:16:00] a customer base and I needed to start earning an income yesterday. And so that's what really led me to start thinking about, I limiting myself? Are there other ways to do this? And if so, what might those be? And of course that led me to the farmer's market and that was probably the best decision that I made and the best thing that could have happened to me at that point in my home bakery.

[00:16:25] **David Crabill:** Well, before the farmer's market, when you, you initially started this business, well, almost three years ago, you were selling sprinkles, right? Can you tell me like what went into that decision? Because I've never heard of a cottage food baker making handmade sprinkles.

[00:16:44] **Tiffany Hill:** Oh my goodness. So that was my very first dabble, I guess you could say, into entrepreneur. And that really goes back to what I was saying a couple minutes ago, that in my mind, it was a product based world because that's what I was watching my daughter do. And, you know, when you

don't have experience with something, you don't know all the different routes you might be able to take it.

[00:17:06] So I thought, well, I don't want to sell my baked goods. I want to do something in the baking industry, though. And I'm, I love art. I, you know, like to be creative. And so I decided I'm going to handcraft these adorable little sprinkle charms that will go into custom sprinkle mixes that I will put together these blends.

[00:17:30] And that was, you It was such a fun time in my career, but it was also not time effective. It wasn't efficient when it came to, how could I scale this? I didn't have the knowledge at that time. To make wise decisions when it came to what does it mean to open a business that could be a viable business?

[00:17:53] Now, I think I could. In fact, I've thought about bringing those sprinkles back because I'm like, Oh, now's the time to bring that back. But initially I would say it ended up almost being more of a hobby of mine and giving me time to really think through what might my next move be. Which is exactly when my husband said, if you want to get results quicker, you probably need to actually be selling your baked goods.

[00:18:22] **David Crabill:** So your goal was sort of to leave your career and leave your job. When did you actually do that?

[00:18:30] **Tiffany Hill:** I did that In the fall of 2021.

[00:18:34] **David Crabill:** And was this before or after you were? Running a successful cottage food business.

[00:18:41] **Tiffany Hill:** It was before, so I was running, I was operating my sprinkle business at that time. It became apparent that this would forever be a hobby if I did not free up some time in my life to dedicate to being an entrepreneur. My husband and I, he tells the story a little bit differently, but I'll tell it from my perspective.

[00:19:08] We, we made some changes in our life We sat down, we really discussed it, we determined, okay, this is what I'm going to do, which means we need to survive on your income after being a dual income family for the entirety of our marriage. He was super supportive, but he laughs now because he says, you know, I kind of feel like you made a decision and then you went for it.

[00:19:34] So I was still running the Sprinkle business at that time. I did that for a few more months and then I was like, okay, I have time to think this through. I have time to strategize. I've got to really move forward with something that sells. immediately and to me that ended up being actually selling my baked goods.

[00:19:54] **David Crabill:** So when like what month or year were you consistently Making money in your business from a week to week basis.

[00:20:06] **Tiffany Hill:** Okay so I left my full time job very late in holiday season of 2021. probably by March of 2022, I would say I had made my official announcement that I am opening up my home bakery. I am selling my custom cakes. Here's my information. Here's how you can reach out to me. And that was very, very slow moving.

[00:20:37] I did get a couple orders from like friends or friends of friends. I struggled with pricing my cakes appropriately because they were friends. There wasn't a lot going on in that aspect of selling custom cakes that I felt was going to get me from A to Z. In a time manner that I wanted. So then I realized, maybe I need to be operating this business, not only custom cakes.

[00:21:03] I can offer those, but I need to have additional menu items that I'm offering that people can be purchasing if they don't need a custom cake. And so from about March of 2022 to May, I was operating my home bakery as if I was a little corner bakery. You want cinnamon rolls, I'll make you cinnamon rolls.

[00:21:26] You want brownies, I'll make you brownies. you tell me what you want. it was a very ineffective business model. I was burning the candle at both ends. I had not increased my work life balance. I had actually negatively impacted it. I was losing my passion for baking. And that is when I almost threw in the towel and said, okay, if I go back to my product based business, which was my sprinkle business, that's going to take me a few years to really, really build a name for myself and figure out how I'm going to scale it up and how do I hire employees and, how do I even have the startup funding to take that to the next level, if I do my baked goods I'm a one baker show.

[00:22:13] I'm going to be baking for, 18 hours per day and making not a whole lot of money. So maybe I need to just go back to my nine to five job.

[00:22:23] **David Crabill:** it sounds like it's taking a long time You know many many months of not making much money from your cottage food business Do

you feel like? In hindsight, you would have left your job later. Just because it sounds like even going full time didn't necessarily solve the problem, right?

[00:22:43] **Tiffany Hill:** Didn't solve the problem because I was lacking. a lot of entrepreneur skills that developed over time, but that first year. So if I left at the end of 2021, that spring of 2022 was where I was really like, what is the answer? What do I do? I don't really advise anybody to just walk away from a stable career.

[00:23:13] I was at the point where I was willing to significantly alter our lifestyle so that I could give my full attention to this. But not everybody, you know, I was at the end of my career. I wasn't raising children any longer. So I think that looks a little bit different for each person. Would I have left later?

[00:23:34] My answer is absolutely not. I think I left at the ideal time because it created a sink or swim situation for me. I had to figure it out. Or, I had to return one or the other, even though we had made changes in our lifestyle they were significant, I, I needed to contribute financially and I think I was faced with, I either need to get this going and figure it out or return and it, it's not that returning to my career was such a detrimental Feeling, I don't want to say that at all, but I was determined.

[00:24:11] I wanted to accomplish this. I wanted to be successful. I wanted to figure it out. I didn't want to throw in the towel. And so it forced me to do that, if that makes any sense.

[00:24:23] **David Crabill:** I was actually thinking about whether Your success is in part due to the fact that you weren't so enamored with what you were selling, right? A lot of entrepreneurs, they really want to sell a specific thing, but for you, the end goal was to have a successful business, right?

[00:24:42] **Tiffany Hill:** Yes. And I, I think. David, that that's a really good point because I'm working on a blog post right now, today, as we speak. And one of the pieces in that blog post is you have to be willing to do things that you may not enjoy. and that is what I did. There were aspects of my business, once it really did start to take off, that weren't super aligned to my personality. But I knew I have to do this anyways. I cannot be choosy. I cannot be picky. I can make changes. And as things get going, I will make those changes. I will figure out what is the solution to these components that really are not aligned to what I'm doing. Me and my joy and my passion and all those things, but I will determine that at a later date.

[00:25:37] Right now, I just need to do it and get going. So I don't know if that's what you were referring to, but I feel very strongly about that.

[00:25:45] **David Crabill:** we already know that one of the things that you didn't enjoy was the marketing and sales aspect. So what were some of the things that you learned that got you over that hump?

[00:25:56] **Tiffany Hill:** I mean, the best thing I did was go to the farmer's market. That is something, as an introvert, that I never in a million years saw myself doing. It is not something I see myself doing today. It's not super aligned to my personality, but at the time it was the best move I could have made.

[00:26:17] And the reason for that is because it threw me into marketing. It's through, you know, you can't learn how to market if nobody's buying your product, you really have to have sales, initial sales to analyze why, why were my sales? This on this date, but then they were lower on that date and then they were very high on such and such date.

[00:26:44] You really have to have a bit of that to start to have any opportunity to analyze what you're doing well and what you're not doing well. And that's what the farmer's market did for me because I went to the customers instead of hoping that they might find me. Which is what my model had been in the spring.

[00:27:04] So by June, that's when I went to my first market and that's when a light switch got turned on for me that, oh, the problem is that I'm waiting for people to find me, I need to go to where the people are. And I need to take all of my things with me and I need to sell them. And that is when I learned so much.

[00:27:26] I learned about bundling products. I learned about building trust with people. I learned about pricing. I learned about. Things I was making that were on my menu that really needed to come off. They were not serving my profit margins or my business at all. That's where I really started to take all of these puzzle pieces and build the puzzle, and that was the best on the job learning.

[00:27:53] I could have ever gotten. And when I go back to what we were talking about a few minutes ago, with regards to, you have to do things that you might not enjoy doing that was way out of my comfort zone. I was in my early fifties, I was looking for work life balance, and I was, Working hard. I was attending two markets per week.

[00:28:17] I had two to three days between each market in which I was baking all day long, every day, loading everything up, heading back to the market. I knew I'm not going to be able to do this forever. This is gonna, you know, at some point I'm going to have to figure out my next move. But man, I am going to do it right now because this is like a master's degree. And how do I sell my baked goods and what leads people to stop at my booth, to not keep walking, to come back, to reach out to me outside of the market.

[00:28:49] It was just huge in regards to my growth.

[00:28:52] **David Crabill:** you said you were very uncomfortable with the idea of selling in a market. What was your first market day like?

[00:29:00] **Tiffany Hill:** Well, my very first market day was it was actually a community event, not so much a farmer's market. It was a local community event and my daughters encouraged me to go. I was feeling frustrated with my home bakery. Like I said, I was about ready to throw in the towel and, they said, mom, why don't you just slice up your cake, slice it up, take it to this event.

[00:29:24] It's going to be really fun. And I kind of thought they were crazy, but I did it anyways. I went, I stood there awkwardly because I don't know how to do this. I don't know how to sell. I don't know how to be a salesperson. I don't know how to do this. And I probably would have stood there, you know, like a lump on a log out of my comfort zone, had my daughter, one of my daughters said, let me take some samples of your cake. She's a very outgoing individual. And she said, let me walk them around and give them to people. And within a few minutes, I had people coming to my booth when I had had nobody at my booth. And they said, oh, we just tried your cake, we'd like to get a slice of the white with raspberry.

[00:30:03] And you know, that That was just a little bit of success that I needed. It was just a, oh my goodness, you know, if there's any other baker or small business owner out there who feels like they don't have confidence in themselves, that is very normal. I was. In my prior life very confident, very comfortable, but understanding who I was as an entrepreneur, that was a whole different Tiffany that I had never met.

[00:30:35] And she was not confident. She was not sure that this would work out. And so just having that little bit of success Really kind of lit a fire under me and it helped me realize that I only had 32 cake slices with me that day. I sold all 32. And it made me realize that I made one thing instead of a whole menu of items.

[00:30:57] I took them to one location. I sold them. I went home. And that was where my whole concept of working smarter, Not harder, started to come together and then just continued to just grow and build. And so then I found the local farmer's market. I went there probably within a couple of weeks and became a regular.

[00:31:18] And that led to six straight months of religiously attending twice per week.

[00:31:23] **David Crabill:** Well, as you know, because you now teach a lot of entrepreneurs and bakers, A lot of people do go to a farmer's market or an event and it's just not working. What would you say to someone like that?

[00:31:38] **Tiffany Hill:** Oh my goodness. I had days that didn't work as well. So I would say to somebody like that, It is so easy, because I was this person, to feel defeated and not want to put ourselves in that position again. It's never a good feeling. It's not a good feeling to bake a lot of items, to take all those items, and to bring those items back home with you.

[00:32:03] And it is human nature for us to say, ouch, I don't want to put myself in that position again. The better thing to do is to say, why? Why was that? And as soon as we can start to determine the why, now we're really going to start to get progress because it's very rare that we just miraculously, everything falls right into place and is successful.

[00:32:29] When I sold 32 slices, that was not that profitable. I was there for like three or four hours. So if I were to calculate my hourly wage that it took me to make those slices, be at the event, but you know, I would say you have to keep showing up. here's a great example. I had a cafe type sign, chalkboard type sign, and it had my name on it and it dawned on me At one point that, why is my name on that sign?

[00:32:58] Nobody cares that I'm The Pink Crumbb. Nobody knows anything about my business, nor do they really, it's not that intriguing to them. But what they might care about is if I erase that and write homemade cake slices, world famous cake slices, the best cake slices in Apple Valley, something like that to where.

[00:33:21] They want to come engage with me. So there were little changes that I was making to my booth. This is all covered in my farmer's market. That felt little, but made a huge difference when it came to marketing. And that's where I

started to really figure out how do you market a business versus just hoping that things go well and being frustrated when they don't.

[00:33:44] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I hope marketing is, is never a good path to follow. Well, you said that you can identify with people that, that struggle at markets because you said you struggled in markets, but you sold out on your very first market. So what, what were some of the struggles that you experienced at markets?

[00:34:03] **Tiffany Hill:** Oh, some of the struggles that I experienced were Really not feeling as if all of the time and energy that I put in to being at the market really justified the profits that I was bringing home. So there wasn't really a lot of days where I sold nothing, but there were days that I brought food back home with me.

[00:34:26] There were days that I passed that food out to the other vendors. There were days that my sales were a couple of hundred dollars and I knew that I had spent the better part of 48 hours preparing for this event. So I knew that that's not a feasible business model. that is not something that's going to take me from I'm making a comfortable career and this is a viable business option.

[00:34:52] There was another time where I was really figuring out my marketing. Things were really going well. I was kind of a staple at the market. Some people were even showing up at the market. Just to come to my booth. So, you know, my confidence was starting to actually grow. I was feeling good and I decided I'm going to change the entire layout of my market stall.

[00:35:18] I really want it to look different. I want it to feel different. And. it was a detrimental day. I sold very, very little and I was almost on the verge of a tantrum, if I'm completely honest. I don't really want to admit that, but inside I was like, what the heck? Because, you know, you've invested all this time.

[00:35:42] It's hard and it stings. But I had to get my bearings, I had to go home, I had to sit down and I had to think about why, and I had to understand that people don't like change, they do not adapt to change well, why did I mess with something that was actually working well, how might I implement it. Small changes next time so that there's not a shock to visitors who are walking by who probably possibly didn't even recognize that that was my stall.

[00:36:16] So it was still so much growing and learning to me. If there is another baker out there who's going to the market and they are not selling anything, I would really advise them to start determining what is happening at

that market. Are they one of 10 bakers? Do they need to change their signs outside?

[00:36:36] Like I was talking about before. Are they offering too many products? Are they not known for one product? thing. There's so many different components that can lead to customer confusion or customer disinterest. And it's really determining what is it that's happening. you said that you sold at the market for about six months. How did your booth or your marketing strategy change over that period of time?

[00:37:05] Oh my goodness. I, well, I would say I definitely had to make some significant changes to be able to keep up the pace. And for me One of the first things I needed to do, and I didn't do it right away. So when I say first things, I mean, a couple months later, when I actually started to surface a little bit and could think beyond, I just need to bake all day.

[00:37:26] When I started really becoming a business thinker, I knew that I did not have pricing mastered. And that's okay. Some people don't. I didn't. I didn't have the time to really think about it, but I knew I needed to address it and it became a priority. So that's the first big shift I made. I was shocked in many ways.

[00:37:45] There were things on my menu that were not profitable. I really had to sit down. I created a pricing formula. I determined how much do I want to be paid hourly. In order for me to operate this business and I will not be paid less than X amount per hour. I needed to ask myself that question and I had not done that up until that point.

[00:38:07] I was willing to be paid nothing hourly. And that's not a feasible business model. So I did that and I was able to identify some products that were not. Gonna make it on my menu any longer. One of those items was these very delicious little dinner rolls. They were a dupe of a restaurant out here.

[00:38:29] They had a nice little butter glaze on them and they were very, very popular. They were very time consuming to make. And when you think about a six pack of dinner rolls, how much can you really sell that for when you can run down to the grocery store and pick up a six pack? So those had to come off and I knew that there would be people who were disappointed, but.

[00:38:48] That product was not a product that was going to be able to stay. So pricing was a big, big shift I made as far as becoming wiser with that. That also led me into, okay, I have no vacation time. I have no sick time. If something

happens this week and I cannot bake at the level that I typically do, then I do not have an income.

[00:39:12] And what might I do about that? And that's what led me into how. Might I operate my booth the same way that the candle maker is operating her booth or the t shirt clothing maker is operating his booth? How might I replicate that? Because they're not attending with the same stress that if these items don't sell, this is detrimental to my bottom line.

[00:39:37] They can bring their items back next week. And so. That led me to really think about marketing differently, as well as what I was selling, and I really moved into supplemental items that did not perish. By the end of the day maybe they were not perishable at all, or they had a long shelf life. I did a lot of research on them.

[00:39:59] I landed on a product initially called creamed honey. It's delicious. I knew it would be intriguing enough in my area to really attract the interest of my customers. And that just snowballed. I ended up bringing in. Sourdough starter dry pancake mixes, dry soup mixes, a lot of different products that I could really fill up my booth and make it look very full.

[00:40:25] And sell, still be selling, even if all my baked goods had sold out already. So I was maximizing every minute that I was at that market. Or maximizing weeks that I could not bake in a high volume. So that was really, really significant for my business.

[00:40:41] **David Crabill:** What I'm hearing through all of this is that you are constantly experimenting with your business and you're constantly reinventing yourself. And I guess it's not that surprising since you've been through multiple careers, you know, you kind of keep reinventing to figure this out for yourself every step of the way.

[00:41:00] Is that just who you are as a person or is that something that you're just intentionally trying to do to make the business successful?

[00:41:07] **Tiffany Hill:** I think it's, it's a little bit of both. I think that, you know, my discomfort with marketing was because I really like to give to people, you know, that makes me feel good. Being a taker is, kind of a, a mindset play that I guess I, I. Put on selling, which isn't fair. But once I turned marketing into what is the psychology behind what leads humans to feel comfortable purchasing something, that is what my initial undergrad degree is in, psychology, and I'm fascinated by it.

[00:41:43] And so once I removed my personal self out of successes and failures, and Only looked at every decision I was making as an opportunity to study the psychology behind it. was much braver when it came to, well, let me try this and see what happens. Well, let me try that and see what happens. I do get bored easily.

[00:42:06] And so reinventing myself and trying the next new thing and seeing what occurs from it. It was helpful to me because I, at this time, I kept hearing, you have to find a niche, you have to find a niche. And I am somebody that really struggles with that. I will forever struggle with that.

[00:42:22] And so it was a way for me. to not have to do that in a sense as well. But it just studying results is what just continued to lead me into, well, let me make this change and see what happens.

[00:42:35] **David Crabill:** So what eventually pushed you out of the market? You said you did it for only about six months.

[00:42:42] **Tiffany Hill:** Yeah. I think at the end of six months, I had simultaneously been growing my Instagram account. I had made the conscious decision that I am going to share what's happening because I was about ready to close my business. And I don't know, I may still have to close it, but let me just share what's happening in the event that there's anybody else who might feel the way I've been feeling.

[00:43:09] And so I intentionally did not share only the successes. I was sharing, okay, this worked, this didn't work. Okay. I'm heading to the market again. Okay, here's what I'm finding. I'm tired. this is a lot, but I'm still going. And so at the end of that six months, I knew. I need to move to the next model now, because I'll always be a teacher at heart.

[00:43:32] That is what, you know, I had been doing for the past couple decades. I know how to create programs. I've done that. I don't have time to do anything else besides this rinse and repeat. I am heading to the market. Lifestyle. And I really feel that, you know, at that time I was making an income that I was really happy with, but I really feel that when you grow your home bakery to a degree where you do feel like you now have some options you have a customer base, you're able to earn consistent income with your home bakery.

[00:44:10] When you get to that point. You do come to a crossroads and you have a decision to make. And I had a couple of decisions before me. I can start to hire employees to help me. That is. One route I could take. I could open up a

brick and mortar bakery, also be hiring employees. That is another route I can take.

[00:44:31] I can start to offer digital products and teach other home bakers. That is an option I can take. I can start to sell a physical product that isn't necessarily baked. Such as my sprinkles again. I really. was at a point where, okay, I can make some decisions with where I'm going to head. And I think for each person, that decision will look different based on their personality.

[00:44:55] And kind of like I was saying earlier, you can make the changes to your business when that time comes. And that time had come for me. I knew that I needed to start doing something different if I really was going to accomplish that work life balance. I've overseen teams of people, so I was comfortable with that, hiring staff, but I also knew that, is that what I really want to do?

[00:45:19] And what I really, really wanted to do was teach. And I made the decision, I, my husband and I sat down again. We made the decision that I would ease up on the baking side temporarily. I would offer porch pickup because now I had a customer base. So I wouldn't be at the market anymore, but I would be really, really marketing that here's how you can order from me and you can opt in to porch pickup.

[00:45:42] I knew that I needed to learn how to do porch pickup if I ever had the opportunity to teach on that because I didn't know how to successfully do it. And at the same time, It would free me up to start creating some content. And so that was my next move and the next thing that I did. And I took a hit financially initially.

[00:46:00] And I knew that I would, but I knew that I needed to as well.

[00:46:03] **David Crabill:** I was going to say that you're kind of not following your own advice here because you'd said like, It's a mistake to change something that's working. And that customers don't like change, right? So you didn't mention like an, Alternative, which would be to say, you know, cut your markets in half, right?

[00:46:22] Like you were doing two markets a week. You could have just done one. It sounds like you didn't have any other sales or revenue streams coming. So what led you to just kind of quit cold turkey on the market?

[00:46:34] **Tiffany Hill:** I do agree with that initial advice to not change what's working. But I also think that at some point in your business, you do become the visionary. And when I first started, I did not have the skillset required to be the visionary of my business. And that had changed.

[00:46:56] I was really able to see the potential for my business. My market did not give us the option. We had to either be committed or go to a different market. And so I don't know, maybe I would have gone down to one day per week. I don't know. There's no way to know the answer, but I knew that it was not an option at my existing market, and I loved that market.

[00:47:20] I didn't really want to move into finding a new market, getting established there. I also knew that. My customer base was very different at this point. They were loyal, whereas initially that is not the case. you can only push your customer base as far as they are comfortable being pushed, if that makes any sense.

[00:47:44] And initially my first few months at the market, My customer base was almost like a newborn. You know, I'm really, really needing to nurture them. I, cannot ask a lot of them. I can't ask them to independently support me regardless of what I'm doing. I'm really having to nurture them. At the end of that six months, there was a different level of loyalty in regards to please tell us where you're going to be and how we can get Our products from you. And I think when you start to notice that happening in your business, you always want to be cognizant of customer service for sure. But it also does give you a bit more flexibility to say. Is there a model I can pursue now that maybe wouldn't have been successful before that could be successful now?

[00:48:32] **David Crabill:** You said that you weren't able to be the visionary in your business when you started with enough experience, you were able to be, but I'm sure you had visions or plans when you started this whole journey. So before you started, what was your vision for your business?

[00:48:52] **Tiffany Hill:** Well, you know, my vision initially was that I would just sell custom cakes and beyond that vision I didn't have any experience that would tell me whether or not that was a good idea. And so I think when you put it in those words it makes me kind of rethink that, was it vision or was it the confidence to know if my vision could be carried out to fruition?

[00:49:20] And that might've been the key difference. So when I first started, I may have had a loose vision, but I didn't have a lot of confidence that, yes, this is what I'm going to do. It will work out, and this is my plan for doing so. As it

progressed, and even today, I'm able to sit down and say, here's what I'm going to do, and I have a high level of confidence that this will be the result.

[00:49:46] In those early months, even that whole first couple of years, I couldn't have predicted the outcomes, kind of like when I was telling you I just kept showing up and studying and studying, studying the results, trying to find out the why, because I didn't know the why, so let me try to figure out the why.

[00:50:05] That eventually shifts into I can confidently make predictions about my business and that did not exist for me initially.

[00:50:14] **David Crabill:** Well, as you know, a lot of new entrepreneurs spend a lot of time trying to come up with a business plan. Is that something that you did when you were starting? Because obviously your business has taken you in a lot of unexpected directions.

[00:50:26] **Tiffany Hill:** Yeah. And I, I love that question because it's so important. Yes, I did. I'm a planner. I'm a type A personality and none of my plans turned out, you know, I invested a lot of time into creating plans and I really feel strongly that we get sidetracked with that. Many components of entrepreneurship that do not matter.

[00:50:51] When I think about how much time I invested into trying to analyze what my business name might be now I'm like, okay, that in the big scheme of things, unless it's not something ridiculous and unless it's not something that really limits you. You know, all of that planning, you, you got to just be willing, which is very hard for people like me, because I tend to be a bit of a control freak, I had to really be willing to say, I don't know where it's going to go, I'm just going to keep following the signs and so nothing that happened was a part of a plan, but it, they were all parts of responses to signs that I was seeing. And I would say, okay, I think I'm going to go in this direction. Now I think I'm going to go in this direction. Now today I feel like I am back in control because now I actually have a bit of wisdom when it comes to what I might do next. Whereas for quite some time, I just had to be okay being a beginner and not having all those answers.

[00:51:50] **David Crabill:** I love that answer because you'll hear a lot of business coaches say you have to have a plan, you have to have a business plan, but I had never really thought of it in the context that those business coaches have the business experience to be able to come up with a good plan, and a new entrepreneur just doesn't, and that definitely, I can relate to that, that's been my experience almost exactly.

[00:52:14] **Tiffany Hill:** I'm glad that you feel the same and it's not just me, because I do believe there are individuals who just for whatever reason are better able to create a plan, and maybe it's because of what you said, they're business coaches already, but I think there are other minds that do work differently maybe they've studied, been studying it and not actually acting on it.

[00:52:35] I don't know. I think there are people who have a stronger vision than what I had and a stronger plan, but I also believe that there are others who just don't and that's okay, you know, it doesn't have to be only one way, you just have to start taking actions because that's how you will start to get that wisdom and experience.

[00:52:58] **David Crabill:** That wraps up part one of my interview with Tiffany.

[00:53:02] For more information about this episode, go to forrager.com/podcast/113

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[00:53:21] 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.

[00:53:34] Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode with part two of my interview with Tiffany.