

It's All a Blip

A practical guide to keeping perspective when things go wrong in your business



PAY IT FORWARD
with
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There's a piece of advice I received at one of the lowest points in building my firm that I keep coming back to:

Life is a blip.

It sounds almost too simple. But when you're in the middle of something hard, simple is exactly what you need.

Early on at Upkeeping, I made a significant mistake with a client and lost them because of it. I was carrying the full weight of that experience -- the stress, the self-doubt, the feeling that one bad moment was somehow the whole story of what I was building. A neighbor of mine, an entrepreneur and a friend long before she was ever a client, said— something that reframed everything:

"LIFE IS A BLIP. YOU'RE GOING TO LOOK BACK AT THIS WITHOUT ALL THE FEELINGS YOU HAVE RIGHT NOW, AND WHEN YOU DO, YOU'RE GOING TO SEE IT FOR WHAT IT WAS."

It took me close to two years to fully release the emotion attached to that experience. But the perspective she gave me that day became something I carry with me. This guide is my attempt to pass it on.

The rain cloud problem

When something goes wrong in your business, it rarely stays contained to the business. It spreads.

A client mistake, a difficult relationship, a decision that backfires -- any one of those things can put a rain cloud over everything else in your life. Your health is still good. Your family is still there. Your support system hasn't gone anywhere. But when something in the business is pulling hard at your attention and your emotions, those things get hard to see.

That's not weakness. That's what it feels like to care about something you're building. But it's also a distortion. And if you stay inside that distortion long enough, it starts to feel like reality.

"THE GOAL ISN'T TO PRETEND THE HARD THING DIDN'T HAPPEN. THE GOAL IS TO KEEP THE HARD THING IN PROPORTION."

The choice inside every difficult moment

Here's what I've come to understand about hard moments in business: you don't get to choose whether they happen. You do get to choose what you do with them.

When something goes wrong, there are really only two paths:

Path one

Walk away from the experience with a lesson. Move toward what you learned. Let the moment become something that made you better.

Path two

Keep living inside the moment. Replay it. Let the emotion stay attached to it long after the moment itself has passed.

Both are choices. But only one of them moves you forward.

That doesn't mean you rush the processing. It took me two years to fully let go of one particular experience, and that was okay. The point isn't speed. The point is direction. Are you moving toward the lesson, or are you staying in the feeling?

Finding your walk person

Not everyone has the right person in their life for this kind of conversation. But most people have someone closer than they think.

Your walk person doesn't need to be a coach, a consultant, or a mentor. They don't need to know your industry. What they do need is:

- To know you
- To have navigated hard things themselves
- To be willing to tell you the truth with care rather than just telling you what you want to hear

When you find yourself in a hard moment, the instinct is often to either isolate or to vent to someone who will simply validate how you're feeling. Both of those responses are understandable. Neither of them gives you perspective.

What you're looking for is someone who will sit with you in the difficulty and then gently help you see past it.

The longer view

Here is what I know now that I couldn't fully feel then: the hard moments that seem defining rarely are.

The client I lost, the mistake I made, the two years I spent working through the emotion of it -- none of that defined Upkeeping. None of it defined me. It was a blip. A real one, with real weight. But a blip.

Most of the things we lose sleep over as firm owners will look the same way from the other side. Not because they didn't matter, but because we learned from them and kept going. That's how blips work. They only stop being blips if you let them become something you live in permanently.

You won't. You're going to learn from this. Whatever this is for you right now.

How to apply this in the next 7 days

Exercise

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| DAY 1 | Name what's hard. Write down the thing that's currently taking up the most mental and emotional space in your business. Get it out of your head and onto paper. |
| DAY 2 | Separate the lesson from the emotion. Ask yourself: if I could set the feelings aside for a moment, what is the actual thing I want to learn from this? Write that down too. |
| DAY 3 | Identify your walk person. Who in your life can give you honest perspective without just telling you what you want to hear? If you have someone, reach out to them this week. If you don't, start thinking about who that person could be. |
| DAY 4 | Name what's still true. Make a short list of what is still good in your life right now. Not to minimize the hard thing. Just to keep it in proportion. |
| DAY 5 | Take the longer view. Ask yourself honestly: will this matter in five years? Will it even matter in two? What would you tell a close friend who came to you with this exact situation? |
| DAY 6 | Choose your path. Remind yourself that you have a choice. You can take the lesson and move forward, or you can stay in the moment. Both are available to you. Only one moves you forward. |
| DAY 7 | Let it be a blip. You don't have to be over it. You don't have to have it all figured out. You just have to be moving, however slowly, in the direction of the lesson. |

Summary - At a glance

- *Hard moments in business have a way of clouding everything else. That's normal. It's also a distortion.*
- *You can walk away from a difficult experience with a lesson, or you can keep living inside it. Both are choices.*
- *Perspective is hard to give yourself when you're inside something hard. The people around you can see what you can't.*
- *Find your walk person -- someone who knows you, has navigated hard things, and will tell you the truth with care.*
- *Naming what is still good doesn't minimize the problem. It keeps it in proportion.*
- *Most hard moments are blips. They only stop being blips if you let them become something you live in permanently.*