

Re-Release 04: (Ep. 70) Playing Small Serves No One



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rachel Rodgers

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Before we dive in, I have an announcement to make, it has been an amazing, beautiful, hectic, whirlwind of a few months for me and my team at Hello Seven. We worked our asses off to launch the book in May. And thanks to you all of my faithful readers, listeners, and friends in the Hello Seven universe we made it a bestseller and it's having an impact on so many. From the bottom of my heart thank you so much for all of your support.

But to be very honest with y'all, mama is tired, okay? I need a break. And I believe that rest is a revolutionary practice that all of us, and especially Black women need to reclaim. So I am going to be taking a break from the Hello Seven podcast for a little while. But don't worry, in July we'll be re-releasing some of our OG very best episodes and I will be back with a vengeance in the fall.

Playing small serves no one. Don't ask me to stay small, don't let anyone convince you to shrink either.

Welcome to the *Hello Seven Podcast*. I'm your host, Rachel Rodgers, wife, mother of four children, a lover of Beyoncé, coffee drinker, and afro-wearer, and I just happen to be the CEO of a seven-figure business. I am on a mission to help every woman I meet become a millionaire. If you want to make more money, you are in the right place. Let's get it going.

Hey, friends. Have you ever noticed how our society is not very kind to powerful, successful, ambitious women? I bet you have. If you are a woman in a position of leadership, if you run a business, if you're an influential blogger, if you're an elected leader or a CEO, then you are more likely to be judged harshly and criticized and shamed than a man in the same position.

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As a woman, in blatant ways and in subtle ways, you are continually told, “Don’t be too bossy. Don’t be too loud. Don’t be too wealthy. Don’t be too ambitious. Be moderately successful but stop there. Don’t go beyond that point.”

I know some of you are nodding and thinking, “Yup, I have experienced this myself.” Or maybe this has not happened to you personally yet, but you’ve witnessed it happening to others. And ladies, I want to validate your emotions because this is real. This is not something that is just happening in your imagination. We have evidence confirming that this is true.

Check this out. Magazines like Fortune and Fast Company reported on a study that analyzed 248 performance reviews from 28 companies. The researchers found that 88% of the women’s reviews contained critical feedback compared to only 59% of men’s reviews.

The researchers also found that the women’s performance reviews tended to be much more harsh, including language like, “Watch your tone,” and, “Stop being so judgmental,” and, “You can come off as abrasive.”

In this study, the researchers noted that the word abrasive was used 17 times to describe 13 different women but the word abrasive never ever appeared in any of the men’s reviews. Interesting.

Meanwhile, over in the men’s performance reviews, the language was much, much gentler, with statements like, “He needs to learn to be a little bit more patient, but who doesn’t?”

So, why am I mentioning this study and bringing this up? Because on today’s show, I want to talk about the criticism that you may face as an ambitious woman who wants to make more money.

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People will want you to stay small. Through their words, their actions, or both, people will often try to keep you in a container that feels comfortable to them, a container that is too small for you. Don't let them. Don't ever let anyone convince you to be smaller than you want to be.

So, on today's episode, I have three things that I'm going to share with you. Number one, I have a true story about something that happened in my own company this year. Number two, I want to talk about what intimacy actually means and how you can create an intimate experience for your clients and customers even if you are serving thousands of customers every month. Intimacy is scalable. Number three, I have some big questions I want you to think about; questions about expansion and playing big and fears that may be holding you back.

Okay, here we go. I have a story for y'all. There was a situation that happened earlier this year, just a few months ago. And here's what happened.

My company, Hello Seven, had its highest revenue month of all time back in June. We had a massive influx of new members joining our club and we made a million dollars in one month. It was historic. It was exciting. This big flood of cash allowed us to do some really beautiful things.

All of our employees received a big, fat bonus check because we do profit sharing. We were able to also hire several new employees to take even better care of our customers.

From my personal earnings, I made a donation to a nonprofit that pays off debt that lower income Black families are carrying. And while all this excitement was happening, there were some new challenges arising too. Because in one month, our club membership went from 300 people to over 1000 people. And that is a very big jump.

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Some of our club members were like, “Hurray, the more the merrier.” But others were not as thrilled. Some of our Shmillies felt like the group had become a little too noisy and just too big. A few club members had specific concerns that they voiced to us.

For instance, a few people said that when they posted a question, it was getting lost in the shuffle and wasn’t getting answered because there was just too much conversation and everything was moving too fast with all the new people.

And some people told us, “I liked the way it used to be because things felt more intimate when we had fewer people in here.” A few club members posted messages and reached out to me and my team to express their concerns. And we listened to everyone’s feedback.

And then, my team and I got together and we sifted through the feedback and made some decisions. There was a lot of valid feedback and we made some immediate changes and improvements, like creating small breakout groups so people could hang out in a quieter setting.

We also created the Hello Seven Growth Scale Gatherings. And that’s when you get to be in a really small group and have sessions with other entrepreneurs that are at the same revenue level as you and you get to work out your challenges in this small group. So, we built in more intimacy.

But here’s the bottom line. If a customer says to me, “Hey, I’m having an issue with the product I purchased and I’m not getting the results that I wanted,” that is the kind of feedback that I want to hear because then we can make improvements to create a better product. We want to make sure that our clients are getting results. That is hugely important.

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But if a customer says, “I just liked it better when you were smaller and less successful,” then the answer is no. That’s a completely different thing. I am not okay with someone telling me, “You need to stay small.” Because that is what the world tells women, especially Black women, all the time, “Stay small, don’t be too ambitious, don’t be too rich.”

Yeah, sure, it’s all good if you run a nice little business and you generate five or six figures per year. That’s cute. But the minute you aim for more, the world comes after you with claws out. And do not ask me to stay small because I would never ask that of you. And don’t let anyone ask you to stay small either.

I have a mission, which is to help women earn more money and build wealth and gain economic power. I want to help as many women as possible because I want to create a massive economic shift in our world.

I have an ambitious mission, and that means serving as many clients as possible, thousands and maybe eventually millions of women. Not hundreds.

But here’s the area where business owners get confused. We confuse intimacy and smallness. We think, in order to provide an intimate experience to my clients, I can only serve a tiny handful of clients at a time. But that is a misconception.

I want to elaborate on this because it’s really important. First, let’s define the word intimate. It doesn’t mean small. It means closely acquainted, familiar, close. It’s about closeness, kinship, connection, care, and thoughtfulness. Feeling like a close-knit family. That is what intimacy means.

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I have been in communities with 10,000 women that felt intimate. And I've been at dinner parties with five people that did not feel intimate. Intimacy is all about how people feel in the room, not the numbers in the room. You can create intimacy even if you are serving thousands or millions of customers at once.

Look at a brand like Peloton, for example. When you get on that bike, you immediately feel like you are part of a wolf pack. It's you, the bike, your trainer, and the other people riding all having a shared and intimate experience.

Maybe there are two people riding alongside you, or 2000 people. And it really doesn't matter. You feel like a badass and you get great results either way.

Or consider the experience of going to a spiritual center like a mosque or a temple or a church. There might be 10 or 100 or 1000 people joined in prayer or listening to a sermon or meditating, in person or online. Regardless of the size of the group, it feels intimate. It's an experience of family and kinship. Even if you are listening to a sermon on Spotify that one million people have streamed, it still feels intimate. It's a moment of connection.

Again, it's not about the numbers. It's about how you feel as a member of that community. So, I really want to emphasize that small is not necessarily better and small is not necessarily intimate. Intimacy is scalable. And when I say intimacy is scalable, to give you a few examples, here at Hello Seven, we now serve around 1800 customers a month.

Even though these are big numbers, we've built intimacy into everything we do. We send each new club member a beautiful welcome gift in the mail that feels special and intimate, welcoming them into this new family. We

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have a team of coaches in The Club every single day and we now have systems in place so that whenever a member posts a question with the ask a coach hashtag, a coach goes in to answer.

Members get personalized attention, even though it's a big group, because we have the staff in place to handle those larger numbers. We also create intimacy by being vulnerable and human. As the founder of this club, you see me in The Club sharing personal stories, talking about my mistakes and wins, sharing whatever is on my mind and on my heart. This sets the tone and creates an environment where our members feel safe being vulnerable and sharing their own stories as well.

So, hopefully you are seeing now, as a business owner, you can serve big numbers of people and still create the feeling of intimacy that you want. There is always a way to achieve this and it doesn't have to be shrinking your income.

I have worked with so many clients over the years who have said, well I can only serve five clients or I can only serve 10 or I can only serve 50, depending on what the offer is. And I want to tell you that you don't have to create a cap. You don't have to limit your income in order to serve your clients well.

There are so many ways, through creativity, systems, processes, and building a team that you can serve a lot more people and serve them really well so that everyone has the opportunity to get the amazing results that your business delivers on.

So, we've talked about how women are criticized more harshly than men, especially in the workplace in business world, and especially when women are ambitious and assertive and want to play big. I want to give you a couple of questions to percolate on.

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If you're listening to this episode on my website, helloseven.co, below the audio, we have a transcript of this episode so you can find these questions there too. Question number one, what is cost if you decide to expand, if you aim higher, if you play big? There is a cost.

Maybe you will be criticized online. Maybe you will have to deal with uncomfortable things like risk and rejection and the growing pains of leadership. Maybe you'll have friends or family members who shun you because they think that now you're a rich bitch. Well, let me tell you something; I'm delighted to be a rich bitch. Feel free to call me a rich bitch anytime.

Question number two, what is the cost if you decide to stay small? There is a cost if you stay small too. The cost might be that your income remains stagnant and you're unable to save up for a down payment on a house or save for retirement.

The cost might be a lifetime of financial stress. The cost might be regret, the pain of knowing that you shied away from your full potential and never totally went for it.

Question number three, which cost is greater? The cost of expanding or the cost of staying small? That's a big question. I have my own strong opinion on that. You can probably guess my answer.

Okay, now a lighter question, question number four. How could you create intimacy in your business and expand at the same time? How could you bring that feeling of genuine friendship, kinship, respect, closeness, and thoughtfulness into your business? How could you bring that feeling into your customer service, into your programs, into the snail mail you send to clients? Or maybe you need to hire more people so the staff to client ratio

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is one to 30 instead of one to 3000. That could be part of your plan, or not. It depends.

Question number five, final question. Think about your five closest peeps, the people you spend the most time with, either physically or virtually. The people who most strongly influence your day, your mood, your energy levels. Are these people who vigorously encourage you to expand, or are these people who tell you to stay small?

Maybe someone doesn't verbally tell you to stay small, but they tell you through their actions, not words. Like, when you are celebrating a big financial milestone and a certain friend is nowhere to be found and strangely silent. Or maybe you have a spouse who pouts when you are focusing on growing your company instead of doing laundry or making meatloaf or baking cupcakes or whatever the fuck.

Sometimes, without realizing that they are doing it, people in your life may try to keep you small. And it's not because they are bad people. It's because seeing someone expand can feel really scary and sometimes threatening. Your spouse may see you on your path to expansion and on some conscious or unconscious level, they might think, "If you expand too much, maybe one day you will not need me and you will leave me."

So, if you sense that people in your life are trying to keep you small, get therapy or coaching or counseling. Talk it out. And be clear with them about your intentions. Let them know, yes, I am expanding, I am no longer playing small, and I want you to expand too. I want us to be on this journey together. We can all get on this expansion train together.

Like Lizzo says, "If I'm shining, everybody gonna shine." So, when I grow, when my business grows, when I have more customers, I'm always going to make that benefit everyone around me. And I know that there are so

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many people, from my team members to my clients, who benefit from this larger network and from the money that is being made here and the opportunities that are created. So, if I'm shining, everybody's going to shine.

Okay, this episode has covered several points and I want to button this up for you. To sum it up, there is a difference between a customer giving constructive feedback and pointing out something that could be improved, versus someone just wanting you to stay small and never change. One is helpful. And the other, not so much.

And in the case of my Shmillies, I think some of them may have been threatened by this larger group and may have felt uncomfortable. And what we did was we coached around that. We talked about it. We put it out in the open. We didn't try to hide it or pretend it wasn't happening.

And I told them exactly what I'm telling you, that I can't stay small, that I have a big mission and that I have to make that happen. And that means that I am going to continue to grow my business and there are going to be more and more people that join The Club.

And with every new person that joins, there is a bigger budget for The Club. That means that we can do more, that we can serve at a higher level. With every person that joins The Club, they're coming with their stories and their expertise and their willingness to cheer each other on. There is a beautiful network that is happening and what we have seen happen is that most club members are so excited about the growth and they are taking full advantage of it.

They are getting together in small groups. They are networking. They are hiring each other. They are referring each other to different businesses. They are having each other on each other's podcasts. They are creating

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opportunities for each other and it's really, truly beautiful and it is everything that I envisioned when I started to think up what The Club could be.

Intimacy is not necessarily about small numbers. Intimacy is a feeling. It's a feeling you can generate, whether you are serving five clients or 5000. And if you remember nothing else from this episode, remember this; your playing small serves no one.

I will never ask you to be small. Please don't ask me to be small. Let's play big and let's do it together. There's room in this world for all of us to take up space and build companies with big missions and big audiences and big revenue.

Thanks for listening. Now, before you go it's an incredibly exciting time here at Hello Seven. That's because my new book, *We Should All Be Millionaires: A Woman's Guide to Earning More, Building Wealth, and Gaining Economic Power* is on bookshelves now. You can pick it up from Amazon, Target, Barnes and Noble, or your favorite Black-owned independent bookstore.

When you buy, you'll be getting my playbook on how to make million dollar decisions, how to increase your income right now, no matter what your current profession and no matter what's going on in the economy. And why earning more money as a woman is not selfish or greedy, but in fact a revolutionary act that brings the economy into balance and creates a better world for all.

Go to helloseven.co/book for more information and links. Go get the book now.