

creative mindset bootcamp

MODULE 4 planning for success

This is not a “get stuck making pretty lists of things” lesson. Because if you’re anything like me, you’ve probably alternated between doing NO planning, and spending so much time on creating a pretty system with all the bells and whistles that you don’t get any of it DONE!

I’ve spent far too many hours wandering the aisle of the office supplies store looking for just the right whiteboard, or buying markers in all the colours, post-it notes, a fancy diary, stickers to remind me of what needs doing, magnets, washi tape, all of it!

And don’t get me wrong – if those things work for you, run with them. But if you’re using them as an excuse for avoiding actually getting shit done, stop it now.

At the end of the day, what you need is a system for understanding how your brain works, and a way to set yourself up for success – in the simplest, most straightforward, easiest to achieve way possible.

In other words, it doesn’t need to be pretty – it just needs to work!

get it out of your head

In the previous module, I asked you write down all the things that you're thinking need to be done in order to move to the next step in your creative business. All the ideas, all the little steps, in one giant list.

This is necessary for effective decision making, but it's also necessary for planning. You can't prioritise which thing to do first until you can see all of the things that need doing - particularly if you run the sort of creative business that has ten projects running at a time and you're the one overseeing all of them.

So, if you don't already have a system for writing things down, now is the time to find one.

Below are a few options to consider – you might find one more effective than another, or you may use a combination of all of them for different aspects of your planning.

An app on your phone.

For me, it's the notes app on my phone. My phone is always with me. Always. And the notes app also connects across all of my other apple devices, so if I'm sitting at my desk on my iMac, or on the couch on my MacBook, I can still see, and edit the list. I can also tell Siri to add a note if I really need it while I'm driving, in the shower, or cooking.

You could also use a dedicated list app like Wunderlist or similar, but I like the flexibility of being able to move things around and have it all show up on the one screen in the notes app. We'll cover more about how I set this up later in this module.

Your inbox.

I also use my inbox as an 'items to action' list. If it's still in my inbox, it requires action from me of some sort.

If I'm out, and someone asks me to do something that requires me to be at my desk, I'll email myself a reminder

A journal/diary

There are times where the tactile aspect of pen to paper is super helpful for getting your brain going. I use a journal with blank pages (lines get in the way of my creativity!) for brainstorming, jotting down thoughts for new projects, ideas for new courses, or anything that needs a little more space.

A whiteboard

If you need big, visual reminders, grab a whiteboard. But remember, the point here isn't "pretty", it's getting all the things out of your head. Don't get hung up on what it looks like, just get all the ideas down. You could also go with post-it notes on a wall or whiteboard so that you can move them around when the time comes to start prioritising all the things.

Whatever your system is, and it may change over time, it needs to be something that you have access to regularly. If you're running your own business, you'll often find yourself coming up with ideas at random times, or remembering important tasks at the most inconvenient occasions (hello driving, falling asleep, or being in the shower)

sort it out

Once it's all out of your head, it's time to start sorting and prioritising.

I personally use a very, very basic system for this. I know people who have dedicated Trello boards for all the things, and again, if that works, that's great, but so often we let this stage trip us up. Find what's simple and works.

Within the note on my phone labelled "To Do", I sort items based on project, then priority.

There's a general to-do list of "get this done today, or at least this week" type items, then tasks for specific projects (eg. this course, the Clarity program), then a "things I would like to get to when I have spare time, or I'm looking for something to do that isn't pressing" section with longer term ideas, or things that need doing – like updating the about page on my website – it would be good to do, but it's not a high priority.

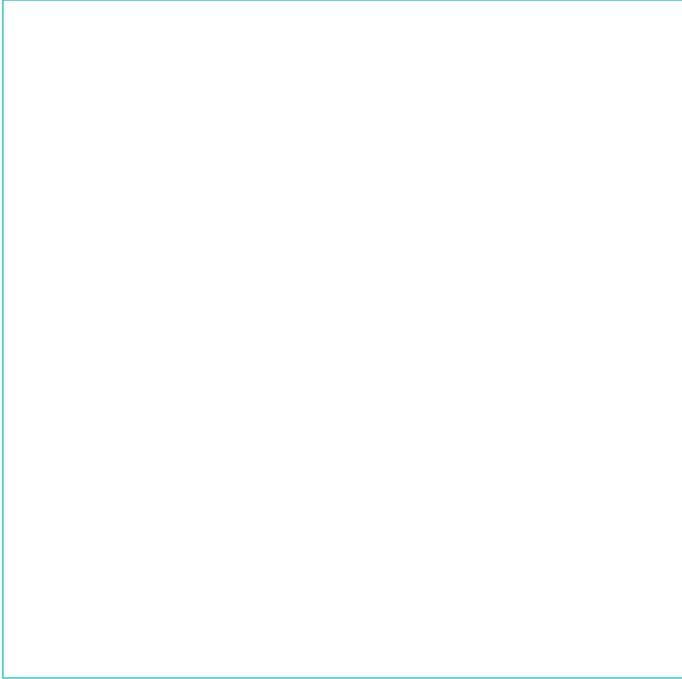
You need to be a little ruthless here. If you have 50 things on your "get this done today" list, it's highly likely you'll just stare at it and cry, and nothing will get done. Narrow down one place to start, put that at the top of the list, and if you need a momentum kick, choose the easiest one you can see.

It's also ok for something to sit on your "maybe someday" list for three months, and then you realise it's no longer a priority and so you delete it.

You can also use something like the worksheet below, with sections for now, next, dream, and delegate, to help you sort the items on your list.

Essentially though, the goal here is get it all written down, sort, then prioritise.

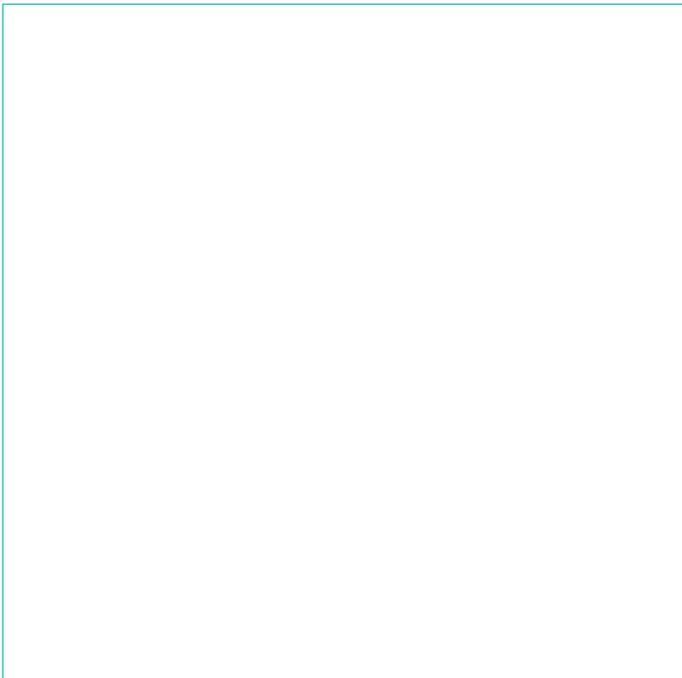
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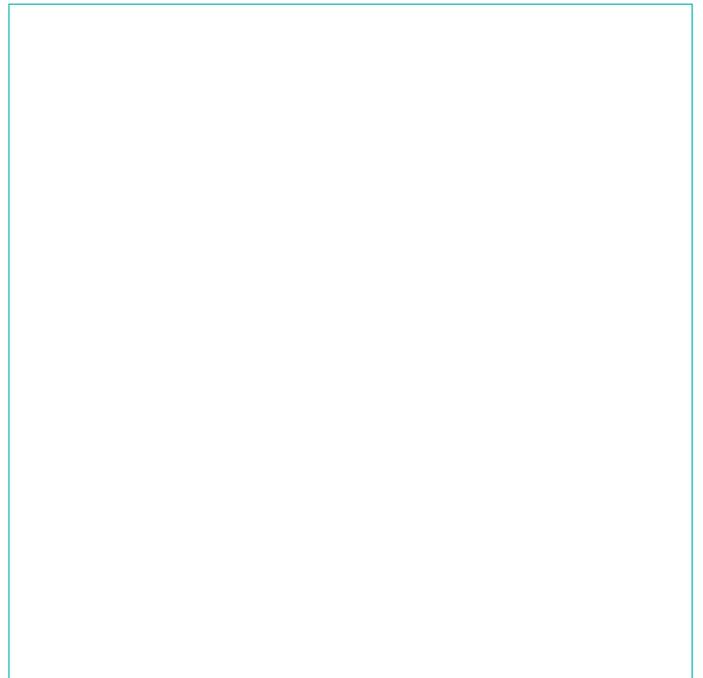
next



dream



delegate



deadlines are your friend

In the previous module we talked about using deadlines to move us out of decision paralysis. Well the same thing can be helpful here.

Running your own business often means setting your own timelines. And we creatives can be expert procrastinators. Whatever you're working on is never going to be perfect the first time you launch it, you're never going to have "all the issues sorted out", and you're probably not even going to be happy with it to start with. But you can't learn, grow, and make it better until you actually put it out there.

So, choose the thing that is your biggest priority, and attach a deadline to it.

What you do with that deadline will depend a little on your personality and how your brain works best. I tend to need to make those deadlines pretty public – so I announce them on my social media, or I tell my email list, something that will make me more horrified to not deliver by the deadline than by delivering something I've decided isn't perfect. And clearly my desire to deliver something amazing is pretty freaking high, so I have to raise the stakes even higher.

I do my best work close to deadlines. It's when I finally get out of my head, get out of my own way, and just do the thing. So I move the deadline closer than whatever my first thought is, I make it public, and then I get to work on avoiding doing it until the night before the deadline. I don't love that this is my creative process, but I've learnt to work with it and set myself up for success as best as I can.

If that all seems a little too terrifying for now, find a business bestie and tell them. Because you're in here, tell me! Which is your homework for this week by the way. You've made a list, you've sorted and prioritised. You've chosen the thing you're going to work on, now I want you to set a deadline, write it down below, and then share it!

My next step:

My deadline: