

Episode 86: Using LEAN Principles to Create Better Outcomes for Your Consulting Business—with Crista Grasso

Deb Zahn: I want to welcome you to this week's episode of the Craft of Consulting Podcast. So if you're like me and most people I know, there's going to be times in your consulting business journey that you're just going to feel like things are out of control. You're overwhelmed. There's too much to do. You don't know if you're doing the right stuff. And you haven't taken the time to actually plan so that you know that you're doing the right stuff on any particular day. I've been seeing a lot of this recently and I don't think COVID is making it any easier for folks. So I brought on Crista Grasso who teaches the Lean Out Method. And what she does is she talks about LEAN Principles, which was something that was developed in industrial processes with the goal of increasing quality and reducing waste.

And she applies that to what consultants and other entrepreneurs do to help them get control of their life so that they know that when they're doing something, it is for a distinct purpose to achieve their business goals. And not just doing activities for the sake of doing it. I got so much out of this. I need to change what I'm doing. So listen to this and hope that it helps you. It sure helps me. Let's get started. I want to welcome my guest today, Crista Grasso.

Crista, welcome to the show.

Crista Grasso: Deb, thanks so much for having me. I'm happy to be here.

Deb Zahn: So let's start off. Tell my audience what you do.

Crista Grasso: Yeah. So I'm an international lean business consultant. I'm also a coach for small business owners and I run a global accessories brand.

Deb Zahn: So just a few things.

Crista Grasso: Just a few.

Deb Zahn: And then occasionally sleep. But no, actually we're going to talk about how to balance it all today. So I know that there are a whole lot of problems that consultants and entrepreneurs—other entrepreneurs—have when they first start off or when they're trying to grow their business. And so you're on both sides of it, both as a consultant and someone who I know helps entrepreneurs. What are some of the issues you see that come up that you know the solutions for?

Crista Grasso: Oh yeah. Absolutely. I think one of the biggest ones is people way over-commit and they end up burning themselves out. And it's done when you're first starting, right? You just want to take every opportunity. You're like, "Yes, I'm going to do this. I'll try this. This is great. This person wants to hire me." You see the dollar signs coming in and think this is great. This is how I get my business started. The problem is if you're not saying yes to the right things, or you're saying yes to too many things, you can very

quickly burn out. And you don't end up actually doing your best work, which can actually hurt the growth of your business.

Deb Zahn: That's right. Because at the beginning in particular, and any time you're trying to grow it, your reputation matters more than anything. And if you don't have the reputation for excellence because you said yes to things you shouldn't, you're right. That can be a huge ding. Or you just can't deliver quality because you're too busy. I love that.

Crista Grasso: Right.

Deb Zahn: So I know one of the things that you've done, which is one of the reasons I wanted to have you on the show is when I saw this. I'm familiar because I'm a healthcare consultant with the basics of LEAN Principles. And I love that you're applying that to entrepreneurs and small businesses. Because usually I see it in companies and organizations and I love that translation. So let's start off. For folks who don't know what LEAN is, can you generally describe what it is?

Crista Grasso: Yeah. LEAN is something that's very popular in the corporate space, right? I do this with my corporate consulting clients that I work with and it started in manufacturing. And it's really about eliminating waste and high quality. And so, if you think about a company who does manufacturing, what do they want? They want a lot of consistency in what they put out. They want their things to be as high quality as possible. And they want to do it as cost-efficiently as possible with no defects. No waste. So LEAN is just a way to look at that. To make sure that you're eliminating waste and improving quality and really ultimately delivering that value to your clients.

Deb Zahn: That's right. Which as entrepreneurs is what we should then also want. So you have what you call Leaning Out. Can you describe what that means then? How do you take those principles and apply it to that?

Crista Grasso: Yeah. This happened in my jewelry business, where I ended up getting myself in a little bit of trouble in my early days in business like a lot of people do. Taking on too much. Way over investing in things that I shouldn't have invested in. Thinking things were going to work that didn't because I didn't actually get feedback from my market. And at the time I was struggling in my own jewelry business. I was working with these big corporate consulting clients and helping them lean out and I recognized that there was a disconnect. I wasn't applying the same practices to my own business. So I looked at it...

Deb Zahn: I'm laughing with you because I'm guilty. Guilty.

Crista Grasso: How often do we do this? There's something that works really well, but we see it in a different place and we don't think that we could take that and apply it to what we're doing in a different scenario. And so, that was where the Lean Out Method was born. And it's really just about identifying what are the most important things that you need to do and know right now. And focus on delivering value to your business. Value to your clients. And eliminate everything else. So it's really about that client value. The

business profitability and just getting rid of all the noise and all the fluff that usually exists in business that has us working way too hard and focusing our attention on all the wrong things.

Deb Zahn: Right. Because when you're a consultant and not just when you start, but at any time in the process, there are an overwhelming amount of decisions to make. So what I see is folks often just get lost in the details. And so, there isn't really a strategy to even identify what's waste and what's not waste. What's high quality? What's not high quality? So if somebody who's too far leaned in or hunched over or whatever metaphor we want to use, what's the first thing that you would tell them to do to start to apply some of the Lean Out Principles?

Crista Grasso: Yeah. So to me, whether you're consulting with a big huge Fortune 50 client or whether you're working with a small business and solopreneur, it's always the same. You need to know for yourself and then also for your client. We'll talk about that facet of it in a bit. But what is that long term vision that you see? Where do you see both yourself, your business and your clients in the future when you look? Whether it's 5 years out. 10 years out. Longer term. Just what do you see as that future state? And then once you have that clear picture of where you want to take it because you always want to start with the end in mind. I recommend you then scale that back to the next 90 days and say, "What in the next 90 days, from a goal perspective, should I be focused on that's going to get me towards that longer term vision?"

And what I see most people do is all of the overwhelm and the forever long to-do list and everything. When you really look at it, it's that they're doing things that aren't actually in support of where they want to take their business and where they want to take their life. And when you have that clarity of vision and you know your short-term goals, it makes it a lot easier to see what those things are that you're doing that actually don't need to be done either at all, or don't need to be done right now. And people usually get some immediate time back in their schedule when they do that. And then there's some other techniques that you can do to more strategically look at things to further lean out. But that's usually a great first step.

Deb Zahn: I love that because one thing that I noticed when I started helping consultants is that, when I started, which was a decade ago, there actually wasn't a lot of advice on how to be a consultant. And now there's quite a bit and how to be an entrepreneur and all of that. And at a certain point, I had to say, "I'm not listening to any more podcasts. I'm not reading another thing because all I'm getting is all these 'shoulds.' I'm not great at math, but I know that that exceeds 24 hours of my day." But figuring out how to make the right decisions or how to even assess it, I think, is what trips a lot of people up. So if somebody were to start that process. And let's say that they've already done it the way that's not working for them and they have too much going on. For those that struggle to even see a future vision because all they can see is their to-do list. Their ever-growing to do list. How do you help them get over that hump so that they can actually think strategically and long term?

Crista Grasso: Yeah. Some people are really good at seeing what they want in the long term. Other people are really good at seeing what they don't want in the long term. And that's where I would start. I'm always a big fan of keeping your attention on where you want to go and not where you don't want. But if that's what you need to get started, you should absolutely do that. And usually when you're in that place of being overwhelmed, it's really easy to define what you don't want. Because you're like, "Well, the first thing I don't want is to have to work 80 hours a week," right?

Deb Zahn: Right, right.

Crista Grasso: And it's like, great. Now tell me about your clients. Like which of your clients just frustrate you. You leave them feeling drained versus leaving them feeling energized. Let's talk about what's not working and usually people can talk about what's not working. And if you can get that out, it usually helps you to start to see what you want. And you might not have this beautiful well formed, 10-year vision at the end of it. But you'll have enough of a vision to start to make some decisions about what to focus on and what not to focus on. And the rest of it will emerge as you start making those changes in your business.

Deb Zahn: Gotcha. So the future vision doesn't have to be fancy pants and perfect.

Crista Grasso: No.

Deb Zahn: And especially during COVID with so much uncertainty. Yeah, good luck with that. But something so that you can make decisions today.

Crista Grasso: Yeah. And I think something that people really overlook in vision that I think is so incredibly important is a lot of times people think of the business. Sometimes people think of themselves and their lifestyle and how that balances. And I think you do need to look at both facets of that. But the piece that I see missing a lot is your customer. So who is the customer that you want to be working with in the future? Who is the customer you don't want to be working with in the future? And it could be a particular niche. It could just be a type of individual, like certain characteristics. You want to work with people who are open to actually being coached, right?

Deb Zahn: So let's actually pause so everybody can picture that person in their head. Because you did as soon as she said it, so hold on to that. Sorry. So I think that's great. Thinking through who you ultimately want to work with and don't, I think is a great step. That implies that you're going to say no to things, which I know is another part that trips a lot of people up. But I think it is a consulting superpower to say no. So how do you help folks once they're able to say, "This is my vision?" And we'll get to how to define what to do in 90 days, but comfortable with the thought that they get to choose. And that choosing is important and that means saying no to people?

Crista Grasso: It is. I just opened up the cart for an offer that I had and I did consult calls with people and I told people no. And as a result of telling them no, I didn't hit the financial goal that I wanted. And if I had said yes to just two of the people I said no to, I would have

hit it. But at the end of the day, I know that it's all about. To me it's what is that transformation and result that your client wants? Why are you there and can you actually help them get it? Are they capable and ready to get it? And in this case, the people I talked to, they weren't. There were some things they needed to do first and so I said, "Listen. I would love to work with you. But I don't think the time is right. Here's what I think you need to do and when you put these things in place, let's circle back and connect. And at that point in time we'll see if it's a better fit."

But I think you really need to look at what is that result? Are they in a place where they can actually achieve it? And then are you the person that can help them achieve it? And I think you really want both of those things because, again, where we started this conversation. With your credibility. Building your reputation. Just to be coming to the place where you become so known that people are coming to you instead of you constantly going out and trying to find work. That comes from delivering and getting your clients exceptional results.

Deb Zahn: That's right. Not from helping them with process. It comes from actually achieving things. And if you rack up too many clients who through no fault necessarily of your own except you didn't say no at the beginning, didn't actually achieve what they wanted, your name and your brand starts to be associated with that. Regardless of what the actual circumstances were.

Crista Grasso: It's so true. It's sad. But it's true, right? And so, anytime that you look back over your experience and you see where somebody didn't get the results, usually there were some red flags upfront.

Deb Zahn: Yes.

Crista Grasso: But you chose to ignore them and said yes to something you should have said no to. It's just almost everyone you talk to, right? And it's like, "Well, did you kind of have some indication that it was going to go this way?" And usually, "Well, I was worried when they said... Or when they didn't do..." And so, usually, you know going in. And it can be hard to say no, but I recommend that you don't just say no. You say no with a plan like I did for those two people I consulted with. Here's why it's not a good fit right now and give them something.

So I gave them something they could go off and do so that they could circle back when and if it's a good fit. If it's just simply you're not the right person for them, I always recommend either recommending somebody else and referring someone, which they will appreciate. Or giving them something to look for. Just say, "I'm not the right person to help you with this, but what I think you want to look for is somebody who does." And so give them something that they can do and it makes them know something they appreciate instead of something that is really negative and feels uncomfortable.

Deb Zahn: That's right. And the one warning I will give people is I have found nos can also act as an aphrodisiac. That's the best way I could call it. So I've had clients chase me because I said no. And they weren't used to it because they're used to consultants who just say

yes to everything. And so, they thought I was the great white whale or something that they wanted to get on their hook. But that's where knowing that no is no and being firm about it, I think is really clear. And I love your take on adding some value to it because ultimately the relationship matters. So if folks have enough of a future vision that now they can work with it. They're practicing saying no. Hopefully in their lives. Then how do they figure out what to do in that 90 days?

Crista Grasso: Yeah. Because your vision helps you know if something is the right thing. Your 90 days helps you know it's the right thing right now. And sometimes things aren't a no forever. They're just a no, not now. And so, that 90 day plan. Your 90 day goal. That's what really helps you to know what to focus on now. So I always look at, you start with is there something coming up for your business that is a clear goal for the next 90 days. And making sure that's in alignment with the vision that you have. When you think about your sales or your growth targets, what is it that you need to do to actually achieve those? Are there some big things that you're doing? You could look at, for example, January, right? Beginning of a new year typically is when a lot of companies, if you're working with companies, open up budgets and end up starting new big projects. That's frequently when they're bringing in consultants.

And yes, they do it all year long. But January and late January. Early February. Tends to be a time where the floodgates open a little bit and there's more opportunity sometimes than other times during the year. So you may even be looking ahead and thinking about, "Well, I know this is coming. What do I need to do in Q4 to get ready for that? What should my goal be now so that I'm ready to take advantage of those opportunities in Q1?" And so, you just want to be thinking very strategically about sales goals. Growth goals. Opportunities in the market. Things that your customers need and what you can focus on right now that again, is in alignment with that overall vision that you have.

Deb Zahn: I love that because I think particularly this year...because 2020 is now a swear word apparently. Folks are really looking forward to 2021. So not only do their business processes and their budgets open up, but there will be a desire particularly as we head into what is likely going to be a difficult phase with the pandemic, people are going to want to look forward. They're going to want to feel good again. And they're going to want to accomplish things again. So I love the idea of planning for that now. And even within that, plant some seeds for that now so that you get your sprouts at the beginning of the year. That's wonderful. So after you do that. You set your goals for the 90 days. I know that slippage is common, so it's easy to not stick to it. It's easy to just get caught up in the latest fire. How can people hold themselves accountable to what they said their goals were?

Crista Grasso: Yeah, absolutely. To me, I think when you think about the goals that you set, it's really important that you know what's important and why it's important. And that you allow yourself some flexibility in the how. You want to be adaptive so that you can make changes week-to-week. Day-to-day. As needed based on the things that you're learning and based on the things that are happening in the world, right? There's been so much that's happened this year. Who knows what's to come. You don't want to get so

prescriptive and so fixed and exactly how you're going to do something. But you do want to know very clearly and commit, 100% commit to what it is that you want and know why it's important. And so, I think what you need to do is you need to look at your day to day and your week to week. And you need to make sure that the things you're focusing your time on are actually the things that are going to deliver that goal.

And I see usually a really big disconnect where people are like, "Oh yeah, I have a vision. I have goals." But when you look at their activities on a day-to-day basis they do not align. And so, that's where sometimes you need to say some micro no's. To say, "Wait a minute. I'm doing this, this and this and not one single one of them aligns with this overall goal that I have. Am I spending my time in the right place?" So I think you have to get really comfortable saying no at that macro level and at that micro level.

Deb Zahn: And to yourself, which as entrepreneurs we like new shiny things...

Crista Grasso: Mm-hmm.

Deb Zahn: So it's difficult to do. But I use my calendar as the source of all truth for how I spend my time. And it's a good way to look back and to say, "Why was I doing that? That didn't have anything to do with what I said I wanted to spend my time doing. Or that's taking up way too much time. Who else can do that that is better suited for it and frees me up to actually accomplish my goals?" That's great. And I know you have a whole bunch of tricks to help people keep on track and clear out time to be able to do it. Share one of your top ones. Something that lots of folks struggle with and you got a good solution for it.

Crista Grasso: Yeah. I'll give you two that interrelate. One is, know your capacity. So if you go into your week knowing that you want to work a 40-hour week, let's say, don't schedule yourself for 40 hours. Because we all know that 40 hours is really 60 and things come up that you couldn't have predicted. And so, you always want to create some space in your schedule. So if you want to work 40, schedule yourself at 30 max and trust me, you will have more than enough to do to fill those 40 hours. But don't over schedule yourself. And then once you have that clarity on the right things to be doing right now with your vision and your 90-day plan, then work in focused blocks. That's my biggest tip that I could give. So when you look at those 30 hours that you have planned, see how much of that you can do working in focus blocks.

And that's where you're either working on a single thing or a batch of activities for a longer period of time that's uninterrupted. And really protect that space as best as you possibly can. So try to turn off your notifications. Put your phone away. Do whatever you can so that you can actually focus because you will get more done in that short period of time than you will if you spread it out over the week and work on it 30 minutes here, 15 minutes there, your task switching all over the place, right? The more you can focus on one thing or a group of related things, the much more efficient you're going to be. And 40 hours are not created equal. You could spend 40 hours really busy working really hard and finishing nothing. Or you could spend 40 hours getting all of the important things done really quickly and seeing value from them right away.

Deb Zahn: That's right. And know thyself. Because I know when I am able to focus. I'm a morning person, oddly. That happened after I turned 50. And I know that that's when I can focus most. But if I spend all of my time going down email rabbit holes, when I can be my most focused. And then I'm trying to save things that require deep thought and concentration when tea offers me no ability to focus. Now that's how I'm going to end up doing 40 hours in and do nothing. So I love that. And I love how you actually name it so that it's clear that the intention is to focus because multitasking is a lie. And I think everybody's figuring out that that's where a lot of waste goes is squirreling around between different things. Anything that you see that people tend to struggle with the most and cause them to relapse back into their old inefficient, low-quality ways of doing things?

Crista Grasso: Yeah. I think planning is so incredibly important because planning allows you to be proactive instead of reactive. And when I'm talking to a client and they're like, "I'm just putting out fires and there's so much going on and there's so much." I'm like, "Let me see your plan." "Oh, I didn't create it this week. Oh, I didn't create it this month." And so, what'll happen is you'll start to get a little busier and you'll start to ignore the plan. And all of a sudden, that's just a self-fulfilling loop where you all of a sudden get busier and busier and busier because you don't have that clarity on what to focus on. So everything feels important and everything feels like a fire.

And so, I think the number one thing that you need to create that protected space from is planning. And I teach people LEAN strategic planning. To me, it's really simple. You only need 15 minutes a day to create your daily plan. You only need an hour a week to create your weekly plan. And usually when you do your 90-day planning, it's a little bit longer. It can take anywhere from like two to four hours, depending on if it's just you or if you're planning with a team. But it's really not that much time and it will help you stay focused and to know what to work on and to not get stuck in a fire drill, don't repeat cycle.

Deb Zahn: Oh yeah, fire marshal Deb.

Crista Grasso: Yeah. You're going to have fires. Things are going to happen in your business. There's no amount of planning that's going to make you avoid the things that naturally come up. But you're better prepared for it. And if you only plan for 30 of your 40 hours, you have the space to deal with it. Instead of it constantly bumping other things out and just ending the week feeling defeated and exhausted.

Deb Zahn: I love that. I absolutely love that. So let's say somebody does it. Good for them. They get through the 90 days and they accomplish what they need to. What happens next? Is it continually 90-day increments?

Crista Grasso: Yeah, absolutely. And so what you do at the end of a 90 days is you evaluate, right? And I'm a big fan of reflection. Kaizen is actually one of the pillars of the Lean Out Method, which is small continuous improvements. And so, I think you should constantly be looking at and evaluating how things are going. And at the end of one 90 days, you want to say, "How did it go? Did I hit my sales and growth goals? Did I hit my

overall goal? Why? Why not? What worked really well that I want to carry forward into the next 90 days? What didn't work really well, that I want to either leave behind or re-imagine." And you want to revisit your vision and say, "OK, I know where I'm going. Now, what's the next goal for the next 90 days that's going to, again, bring me that much closer and build on this positive momentum and results that I've gotten in this last 90 days." And so, that you just repeat.

Deb Zahn: Rinse and repeat.

Crista Grasso: Rinse and repeat. Yep.

Deb Zahn: That's wonderful. And as a healthcare consultant, the Kaizen method that a lot of folks use is called PDSA. Plan. Do. Study. Act. And it's the same thing where you plan. Don't just do something. Then you actually do it. Then you have to reflect on it. Then you change your actions based on it. And that's a cycle. So you continually do that and if you continually do that, that's continuous quality improvement. That's continuous process improvement. That's wonderful. So if you met a new consultant, so a professional, who's like, "I'm going to do it. I'm going to become a consultant." What other advice would you give them before they take the leap? Is there anything that they should be doing ahead of time that will set them up on the path that you're describing?

Crista Grasso: Yeah. I think one of the things that really helps people set themselves up for success is to be really clear on what it is that you are uniquely skilled to do. So if you haven't read the book, *The Big Leap*, I really like the zone of genius concept that he introduces in the book. And so, what is your zone of genius? What is that thing and the niche that you want to carve out as a consultant? And I think that's really important because again, when you do something the first time it's going to take you a lot of time. There's going to be a lot of learning as you go through it. You're going to make some mistakes, right? And when you do something on repeat, you just keep getting better and better and better at it. You become more known for something in the industry. It makes things a lot easier. And you're going to get your clients better and better results and have more stories that you can share with them that are going to help accelerate their results.

And so, when you're just getting started and you're thinking, "Do I want to do this?" Absolutely. But I think the most important thing that you can do is start with a direction as to what it is that you want to do. Because if you're planning to go into it doing all the things for all the people, you have an uphill battle that's going to be a really rough road. Whereas if you go into it really focused, even if you're not entirely sure what you want to do. But you can narrow it down to, I want to experiment with this, this and this. See what I like. See which clients I like. But you do it very strategically. I think that that is the way to set yourself up for success from the beginning. And the way to set yourself up to work lean from the beginning without having to get to the place of overwhelm and overwork and burnout in order to then evaluate if you need to lean out.

Deb Zahn: That's right. That's right. And I think what happens is people get scared because they get into a scarcity mindset that essentially, if I can't be all things to everyone, I'm never going to get business, and I'm never going to be successful. And by the way, anybody listening to the podcast and here's the rumbling, I'm going to leave that in. Those are five rescue cats who decided now was the best time to lose their minds. So when I do my planning, it is not in this room, let me just say that. But I think people get stuck in the scarcity place and so, they don't want to pick a niche. They don't want to pick their zone of genius, or I have a tool that's actually called know your zone. And it's four zones, including a no-go zone.

Crista Grasso: I love it.

Deb Zahn: And they're just afraid that means they won't be successful. But the reality is the opposite will be true if you choose and reflect wisely. Because as you said, you're going to then become really excellent and known for something over time. But even in the beginning, if you're out marketing, folks need to get a clear signal of who you are. And how who you are and what you can do relates to their problems and their aspirations. And it is not a clear signal to say, "Yeah, I can do stuff. You got stuff? I can do stuff." That's not helpful to people.

Crista Grasso: No. When you're known for something and you have that niche and you do that thing really well, you get your clients really great results. You end up in a place where honestly business becomes a lot easier because people refer. I don't remember the last time I went out looking for one of my big consulting clients. They're usually coming to me and I'm saying to them, "Well, I have to finish this engagement first. I'm going to see this through, then I'll come talk to you." But it's because I've done this for 20 years and I'm pretty well known for what I do. So I don't need to go out and look for work. Work just comes to me.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Crista Grasso: And that's just in the corporate space. It's very different with my private clients. I go out and look for work with my private clients, but that is the power of having a clear niche and being known for something.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. I'm here to testify to that because I don't actually remember the last time that I went seeking work because I didn't have something in my pipeline for exactly those reasons. So that's wonderful advice. Now, obviously, one of the things that you mentioned at the beginning that it sounds like you're also trying to do is make sure people have a life that isn't just work. Now, there's some people that work is their life and they love it and that's what they want to do and good for you. I'm not that person. Most people I know aren't that person. So I want to actually ask you personally, how do you bring and use these principles to bring balance to your life however it is you define balance?

Crista Grasso: Yeah, so to me, I feel like you always want to set yourself up for sustainable success. And create whatever that ecosystem is for you. And just like you said, for some people,

they want to work. And a 60-hour or 80-hour workweek is their ideal workweek. For other people, their ideal workweek is 30 or 40 hours, right? And there's no right or wrong. It's just a matter of what that is for you. And so, I have a technique that I do with people. I call it the time pie. And it's literally looking at a workday versus a non-work day and saying, "What are the things that are important to you beside your business?" Is it family? Do you carve out time for self-care? Do you carve out time for self-development? Is it your community? Everyone has different facets that are important to them.

And so, it's defining what are those things other than work that are important to you? And on a work day, how much time do you want to allocate to each? And on a non-work day, how much time do you want to allocate to each? And I think that you have to first start there. Recognize not every single day is always going to match that, but at least you know your ideal. I think of balance at more of a macro scale instead of a micro scale. So every day is not going to be a perfect eight hours of working. A perfect two hours with your family and friends. But when you look over the course of a month or 90 days or a year, I think you usually can achieve that balance if you're paying close attention to it and not constantly taking away from one of your personal buckets for your business bucket.

But it starts with just getting clear on what that ideal state looks like. Then look at your current state and start to look at what can I change to close that gap a bit. Because usually people aren't in their ideal state to start with. They may be working way too much. They may be sacrificing self-care or sleep or not spending enough time with family and friends and things like that. And so, you've got to take a real honest look at where you want to be versus where you are. And what can you start to say no to. To close the gap between the two.

Deb Zahn: Absolutely. So when you look at your life, because I imagine you do this all the time, what are some of the gaps that you closed that you were successful at? Just to give people hope that this is possible.

Crista Grasso: Yeah, so as I mentioned, I have three different things that I do, right? So I have two businesses, and I do consulting with Fortune 50 clients. So if I don't be very intentional with my time, it is a recipe for overworking and overwhelm, right? So I'm super, super intentional. And when I look at my jewelry business, I love that, it was a multi six-figure, super successful business. I made the decision to actually shift that to be more of a passion project. And because that wasn't where my long-term vision aligned with what I wanted to do for my business. So I still make jewelry. I still sell it. I stopped doing wholesale. I cut out entire divisions of my business. I simplified to an extreme. And right now I'm able to run that business really successfully with only a few hours a week.

Deb Zahn: I love it. And you get to because you're the boss.

Crista Grasso: Exactly.

Deb Zahn: So you get to make those choices.

Crista Grasso: So yeah, I just figured out what was important, right? The passion piece of it was what was important to me. Being this big, huge international accessory brand in all of the big stores was no longer important to me. So I shifted that and I'm focusing that energy now on helping small businesses and entrepreneurs grow and scale their business. And that to me right now is what's most important. So your time pie, your focus, they will shift all the time. And you just need to be willing to shift with them as you grow and evolve as a business owner and as a business.

Deb Zahn: I love that. So Crista, where can people find out more about some of what you're talking about?

Crista Grasso: Yeah. You can find me at leanoutmethod.com.

Deb Zahn: Wonderful. And we will have a link to that in the show notes. And now you know she says no to people. So that should make you want to go there more. But yeah, I actually looked at some of what you're offering and it's really clear, helpful, basic things and actual planning. Something that you can hold in your hand and use to actually plan out your 90 days. Really helpful stuff. Crista, thank you so much for joining me. I appreciate it. And your ability to concentrate when you both see and hear what is happening in this room proves that you're good at this.

Crista Grasso: I love the cats.

Deb Zahn: So thank you. Yeah, what are you going to do? This is our life during COVID, right? So thanks for joining me, Crista.

Crista Grasso: Thanks so much for having me.

Deb Zahn: Thanks so much for listening to this episode of the Craft of Consulting Podcast. I want to ask you to do actually three things. If you enjoyed this episode or if you've enjoyed any of my other ones, hit subscribe. I got a lot of other great guests that are coming up and a lot of other great content and I don't want you to miss anything. But the other two things that I'm going to ask you to do is, one is, if you have any comments, so if you have any suggestions or any kind of feedback that will help make this podcast more helpful to more listeners, please include those.

And then the last thing is, again, if you've gotten something out of this, share it, share it with somebody you know who's a consultant or thinking about being a consultant, and make sure that they also have access to all this great content and all the other great content that's going to be coming up.

So as always, you can go and get more wonderful information and tools at craftofconsulting.com. Thanks so much. I will talk to you on the next episode. Bye-bye.