

**Welcome to The Boomer Business Owner. My guest today is Catherine Morgan. Catherine is a Baby Boomer, and the founder of Point A to Point B Transitions. As a business consultant and career coach, she combines business strategy development with accountability coaching.**

**Catherine speaks extensively about career transitions, entrepreneurship, and productivity, and is the author of *Re-Launch You: Discovering Your Point B and Embracing Possibility*.**

**Hey, Catherine. Welcome to the show.**

Thank you so much for having me.

**Totally excited to have you on today, because I really believe that your message resonates with those who are listening to this podcast.**

I certainly hope so.

**Let's get started by maybe in your words, explaining your work to our listeners.**

I've gone through different ways of explaining it to people, and here's the gist: I help re-launch people in their career, business, life. At a certain point people get stuck, or need help, or can't see past their own blinders and that's where I come in. I help them see clarity, impossibility, and move forward.

**Okay. I think I read this in your LinkedIn profile, a lot of times people come to you and say: "My life sucks." Basically, I come and I am expressing to you some level of unfulfillment in my life. How about that?**

**Are you then sitting down with me, and are we talking about all facets of my life? Are we focusing solely or primarily on my work? Where does that go?**

I'm not afraid to dive into the mucky stuff with people. I think it's an artificial distinction to separate the person from the professional. A lot of times where people are stuck is actually in their personal life. They are having elder care issues, they're having personal health issues, they've had job loss or lumpy revenue stream in their business. Whatever. Maybe a combination of things that have toppled their little tower over.

I work with both the professional aspects, be it skills or strategy, or getting a compelling LinkedIn profile, and also to build up the person. Because when they first come in, especially my job loss folks, the people in job search, their world has tumbled down.

Especially, and this is particularly prevalent with Boomers, they've been somewhere for 20, 25, 30 years, there's a shakeup in management or the company is bought out, and all of a sudden, they're laid off through no fault of their own. Just new CEO wanted to bring in their people, and oops, they're on the street.

Before they can even start a job search, they need to get their feet back under them and reassess what they're trying to build, and reinvent their confidence and their skills. Does that make sense?

**It does. There seems to be two different issues here. I get the concept of re-launching, but it could be... I come to you. How do you determine if I like the corporate environment, I like the comfort of that, and I'm just maybe not fulfilled in my job, but I'm happy having a job and I would like some help finding a better job versus someone who is maybe more entrepreneurially inclined and want to**

**do something themselves? How do you ascertain that in the beginning?**

That's very important. It's asking probing questions, and figuring out what their personality type is. I love having my business, and I don't mind the uncertainty that having your own business brings. Some people are really uncomfortable with uncertainty.

In a roundabout way, I would ask them: do they like systems and process in place? Do they like to walk into a situation where they're just executing on someone else's idea, or are they visionaries, are they jazzed by walking into a new situation or developing a new way of doing business, or building new relationships? You can take it down to core skillsets that I'm sure you see in your business owners, versus people who probably shouldn't be business owners.

**For the purposes of the rest of this conversation, let's assume we're talking about someone who you've determined is comfortable with and hopefully has the desire to do something entrepreneurial. With that as a backdrop, I'm going to synthesize and play a role of a lot of the people that I've talked to, a lot of the feedback that I've gotten.**

**You and I are talking, Catherine, and I'm just this person, and I say: "Catherine, I'd like to do something entrepreneurial. Number one, I'm not sure what I do. I don't know if I have an idea. I don't know how to get started. I don't know what to do. In addition, I have responsibilities; I have a spouse, I have children, I have a mortgage.**

**I've been working at the same place so I make a decent amount of money. I'm not willing to take a 50% pay cut. You could suggest that I could do something part-time, but**

**I don't have a lot of extra time," blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.**

**When I say, "blah, blah," I don't mean to demean or belittle people's mindsets about that, but it is just the same recurring things that I hear on and on and on.**

**If someone comes to you with some message like that, where do you begin the conversation?**

I do speak to many, many people like that. Somebody who is really stinging from a layoff or has had some kind of position where they've had marketing, business development roles, graphic design. They're sure that they can go out on their own, so we'll talk about that person.

That person has some skills. They need to look at what their best skills are. I would talk to them about what they feel they do particularly well. I would also help them figure out what they hate that they do well, that they shouldn't be doing. I would talk to them about how much money they need to make.

Clearly, the best place to look for what they want to do is what people naturally come to them for. That's how I band it up. The job search side of my business is people always came to me for resumes, always came to get job search strategy coaching. I also have this business consulting background, having worked for the big four; KPMG, Arthur Andersen, and Deloitte. This business consulting thing comes sort of naturally to me.

We would look at: what are your best skills? What do you like doing? What would you like doing, going forward? What industry do you have some knowledge about or connections in? In general, when people are looking to launch a business and they're not sure what to do, the right place to direct them is their clients are people somewhat like them. Whatever industry you

came out of, if you were a nurse, probably something in healthcare. It doesn't matter. That's the first place to look.

If you're stuck with that, what do people naturally come to you for? We tend to devalue what we are particularly good at, because we find it easy and we don't realize that other people don't find it easy and would happily pay for it.

Somebody who's really great with numbers and bookkeeping thinks it's easy and everyone can do their own. No, no, no. People are very happy to pay you to do it for them. Great at organization? All your friends invite you over to help redo their closets or home offices? You might not realize that people would happily pay for that, because they see a pile of paper and they freak out, but you don't have any problem with that. There are lots of places to look.

Who are you? Who are your natural connections? What do people naturally come to you for that you may be devaluing, or what do you particularly like to do? Those are the three places to look.

**I guess in my question, I sort of almost presupposed that someone would be looking to start a business to do something entrepreneurial. Do you have conversations with people about maybe buying an existing business, or buying a franchise, something along those lines?**

Yes. I had somebody come into my practice who I thought was a natural solo consultant and could have done great work with Fortune 100 companies. He had amazing experience. He didn't want to go that route. He wanted to buy a "business-in-a-box," and that's what he did. He wanted to have the leverage of: "I'm using process by (insert name of famous marketing guru.)" Some people are drawn to that.

My folks who tend to work with me don't have that kind of cash on hand. It is not cheap to buy a franchise business. I'm not sure what benefit it really buys you. I think it buys you benefit. You feel personally vetted because you have this stuff that has been vetted by the marketplace, opposed to the insecurity you may feel about creating your own stuff, intellectual property and the like. Does that make sense?

**Yes, of course. We talked in the intro about accountability coaching. How do you handle the issue of accountability? Is it just by the very nature of me interacting with you on a weekly or periodic basis that I am held accountable, or is there some other things you focus on in that realm?**

Accountability is king. As a solo business owner, and I'm assuming that most of your listeners are solo business owners, we can give ourselves the best snow job in the world about why we couldn't get something done; we weren't feeling well, we had some other competing priority. If you don't have someone else to be accountable to, assuming you don't have a partner or someone else that you have to do something for, you need to build in accountability. It could be a peer, it could be other small business owners, it could be a coach.

With me, people hire me to do a combination of things. To help them get very clear and develop the strategy for what they're trying to create, which turns into goals, which turns into projects, which turns into tasks, which are mapped over a timeline. Then I hold them accountable to getting things done in the timeline that they agreed to.

**It's interesting to hear you say that, because we've recently in the last couple of months started a private mastermind group called "Boomer Mastermind." We have been running it for a few months and it's interesting in interacting with the people in the group that it seems like, to me, a fair commonality among people in the group is**

**that they probably would really, really, really like some accountability.**

**People are smart, they know a lot of things, they've done some things, they intellectually know what to do, and it seems as a lot of people—this group, people you've interacted with—can really use that extra kick in the pants or extra support, however you want to phrase it, along the lines of accountability.**

Yes. Accountability is a combination, sometimes big hug, sometimes kick in the pants, as you said. I practice what I preach. I am an evangelist on the necessity of accountability for the small business owner. I joined a mentorship program with Michael Port for a year. I was part of his Alliance group. Then I separately peer coached with someone for a year, and I hired a marketing coach to take my book.

I knew what I needed to do, I just for whatever reason, could not make myself do it, so I hired Victoria to kick my butt and to say: "Hey, did you send your newsletter out? Did you respond to that HARO inquiry?" That's always, always money well spent. You will get 5 to 10 times return on your money for that.

**You mentioned Michael Port, he's the *Book Yourself Solid* guy.**

He is.

**My understanding is he has something that's popping up with other people, some kind of a certification program. Are you aware of that program?**

I am.

**I'm not intimately familiar with it, but is that the kind of situation where me or one my listeners can get certified in**

**what he does? Again, this could be applicable to other people who offer similar programs, but you get certified.**

**Essentially, it's almost like the cross between starting from scratch and doing a franchise type thing. You have this knowledge, you have his information, you have his framework, but you could build your own business and build out, talking about his principles. Is that a fair assessment?**

It is. I would call it a hybrid. It's the hybrid. You do have the *Book Yourself Solid* business strategy and a lot of his thought leaderships. He's very generous in what he allows you to use and the way he allows you to use it. It's a very favorable contract, as opposed to some of the business-in-a-box contracts I've heard about.

It is exactly what you described. You would have somebody's thought leadership, New York Times' best-selling author, somebody who gets \$25,000 a speech to talk about this, and you would have that. You would be able to take this information and use it however you wanted in whatever niche that you are choosing to serve.

That can be very nice for somebody who needs a little more structure, likes the fact that things are already created, and just wants to go and run. It will cost you some money to get the certification; it's not a quick or cheap thing, but it will save you over the course of the years I think quite a lot of money and quite a lot of banging your head on the desk, to be quite honest with you.

**Catherine, is there some sort of an overarching mission or vision of what you're trying to accomplish with the work that you do?**



Yes. It boils down to my why, why I do this. I can't stand when I go and I speak to job search networking groups, looking out at the grey hair of experience and people thinking that they are not going to be able to work, or they're not going to make money, or they're not going to be able to start a business.

When I look out at these groups, there are people who want to do a bunch of different things. They don't see the possibility or they're buying into what the media is telling us, that their life is essentially over and they're going to be broke. Then they go to terrible dark places of living in a van by the river, or whatever. That's not the case and that's not what I see.

What I get up every morning to do is to help people to see possibility, whether it's starting your own business (and for a lot of people it is), whether it's going back to corporate, or being a consultant, or having what is seeming to be called a job portfolio where you are doing some freelancing and maybe some part-time work and maybe some contract work.

You're still working hard, you're probably even working more hours than you did, but you get some flexibility and you get to mulch your work around your life instead of your life around your work. For people who are having elder care issues, or health issues, or things that Boomers are particularly affected with...

We're the sandwich generation. A lot of us have kids at home, and then we're having to have elder care issues. We're strapped, and we need to wrap our work around our life.

That's what I'm trying to do, is help take people's blinders off and help them see that there are many, many ways you can make a good living, and leave a legacy, and have work that you enjoy and get paid well for.

**If I may also rephrase or extend your point, I use the example of an accountant. Somebody who's been an**

**accountant for 20+ years, who knows Excel like the back of your hand. You could be talking with them and they say: "What do I have to offer?" They probably know more about Excel than 99% of the population.**

**A lot of times they need someone like you to hold the mirror up, or just say: "You do have value. You do have knowledge. You do have something of value to bring to the marketplace, which can in turn bring you some cash."**

Exactly. If I could take that and extend it a little bit further, I'll look around the room and a bunch of people raise their hand, and say: "I was a CFO at a company and my company got bought," or whatever. There's a lot of contraction in the marketplace, so there aren't as many CFO roles. Smaller companies maybe don't have the budget to have a full-time CFO, but they certainly need the skillset.

I know a lot of people who have been very successful borrowing the loan staff model and saying: "Okay, you don't need a full-time CFO, but you'll have my 30-whatever years' of experience and I'll come in and spend 25% of my time with you." 25% of my time with you, over three or four clients for a year-long retainer to be their at-will CFO is working out to be great for some people.

You sometimes need to just look at different business models to put your skills back into the marketplace.

**Catherine, does your work focus more on the strategic end of things or implementation, or both? It's a great example that you just gave about the CFO. Got it, I have CFO capabilities. Maybe I don't want to work for a big company or they're not hiring, but there are a lot of smaller companies that could use my knowledge, so maybe in some way, shape, or form, I can provide that knowledge to them on a part-time or an outsourced basis.**

**Conceptually or strategically I understand that, yet, I may be sitting here, saying: “I don’t know where to start, Catherine. How do I do that? I guess I have to get some business cards or something. How do you do marketing? How do I figure out how many hours I’m going to give someone, what to charge?” Do you help with those details as well, or are you more strategically focused?**

It’s run the gamut. It’s what people need. I also do a lot of business writing for people, which I don’t talk about. Invariably, the small business clients who hire me, say: “Oh my gosh, I missed the marketing closet. What happened to my one-page flyer? What happened to my four-page handout? What happened to my case studies? What happened to the collateral that shows me as an expert?”

They may or may not have the skills to write it, or they try to write it and they get completely blocked because it’s very hard for you to write about yourself. Invariably, I write articles, or websites, or case studies, or LinkedIn profiles, or sales sheets, or sales scripts. Whatever somebody needs for that.

I like to get my hands, forearms, and elbows into somebody’s business and help them with whatever they need. If it’s just strategy, maybe they just pay me for a couple of hours. If it’s strategy plus accountability, my small business owners tend to stay with me for years because I’m the player to be named later. I just help.

They get big proposals and they don’t necessarily know how to manage them, but I have a very strong background in proposals. I’m like: “Easy-peasy. I’ll just do it for you.” Like that. It’s whatever somebody needs.

My small business owners tend to take me full on. I’m like an extra member of their team, but their coach and keeping them accountable. I really know what their challenges are, so I can

poke them, I'm like: "Ah, I know you have a little block against this. Did you call that person?"

**It's funny if you just think about it for a second and the analogy that you're giving about the CFO person. Yes, they know what they want to do, but they're saying: "Where's my marketing piece?" They might wind up going to a displaced marketing person for a big corporation who's actually started their own business to help smaller businesses with their marketing pieces. It's kind of funny if you just extend it out, think it through.**

It's not funny. It's fact. The displaced graphic designer who's gone into web development, the displaced marketing person. Where I really see it is PR. All these really small solo PR practices coming together to do stuff, manage overflow, and then having their own clients. It's a very fluid world out there, but it's good. You can get some people with incredible skills at reasonable prices that you would have never had access to in the past.

Honestly, if I was only going to leave you with one thing, the world of work has changed, but there's incredible opportunity in it if you look at it the right way. It doesn't have to be scary and intimidating. It can work in your favor.

**Leave us with one other thing, Catherine. Given that the person who's listening, let's just assume that they are your prototypical client, if you will. Are there any resources that you would point people to, be it a book, a blog, a website that would help people get a sense for what's going on?**

Absolutely. Some seminal works that I would recommend is of course Michael Port's *Book Yourself Solid*. If you are someone who's going to do any kind of brain renting (I like to call it), service professional, selling your expertise, time for money

packages, that sort of thing – he is the guy. The way he presents information is fantastic.

Also, if you're interested in somebody's perspective on how the world of work has changed and how you can always be of value, floating in and out of consultant, corporate, freelance, online business, whatever you're going to be doing... She does portray it as a fluid work situation that we're in now. I strongly recommend Pamela Slim's book, *Body of Work*, which helps you tie the pieces of your history. Your job history may not make sense, but she helps you tie it in a bow and really frame your value, whatever you're trying to pitch.

**Catherine, this has been very informative. If someone wants to reach out and connect with you to learn more, what's the best way for them to do that?**

My website: [www.PointAToPointBTransitions.com](http://www.PointAToPointBTransitions.com).

**All the great resources mentioned in today's episode will be available on the show notes page at [www.TheBoomerBusinessOwner.com](http://www.TheBoomerBusinessOwner.com).**

**Catherine, thanks so much, on behalf of all our listeners; we really, really appreciate your help.**

Thank you so much, Charlie. It was my pleasure.