E157 - Why I ditched Instagram for good and moved to Substack.

Welcome to the Empowered Edupreneur Podcast. My name is Michelle Smit, and I'm a business growth mentor and subconscious transformation coach. I work with established women in business who are ready to scale beyond what they ever thought was possible, helping them grow thriving businesses that feel as good as they look.

If you're ready to elevate your identity, unlock your subconscious power and combine it with aligned strategy to create limitless results with more ease, freedom, and impact, then you're in the right place. Think of this podcast as your weekly dose of mindset upgrades and business expansion that will unlock your next level and help you thrive on your terms.

We're going to have so much fun together. So thank you for pressing play today. Now let's dive in.

Welcome my friend. This episode I am diving into it. I'm sharing the story of how I broke up with Instagram, and let me tell you, it feels so damn good. Now, let me just give you some context. I have been creating content on Instagram for as long as I can remember, basically. Five years at least of my business, five years of my business, I've been creating content on Instagram. And really religiously, almost one post a day during the week from like Monday to Friday. And I grew it to over 8,000 followers.

And yeah, about two months ago I decided I'm over it, I'm done. I'm leaving. And I decided to move to Substack. Substack is this up-and-coming social media platform. People don't like to say it's social media, but it is social media. It just works very differently to any other platform that I've used. It is more of a long form platform where you have a lot of writing, you absorb the content through reading a lot of the time or listening to podcasts.

That's the main content form on Substack is writing and listening to podcasts. I have seen some videos, but I don't watch much

videos on. It's more images, writing, storytelling, and podcasting. So yeah, it's quite different to Instagram. Instagram is very much like short form, video-based doom scrolling, surface level, like fast content. And Substack, you're looking at more longer form content deeper, slower, it takes longer for you to absorb the content.

You don't have as much doom scrolling and things like that. Anyways, so this is how it went. Okay. So I didn't make some like big dramatic exit posts, like I'm leaving Instagram forever and I didn't do a whole thing, but at the beginning I just said, you know what?

Let me not be crazy. Let me not just ditch Instagram and bounce to Substack yet. Let me do it like trial month now, before I go into that, the reason I wanted to leave Instagram is because I wasn't feeling good for a long time there. I did not feel-good using Instagram for my business. I did not feel good in myself, and I felt it was impacting my mental wellbeing, and I was just so unsatisfied by it.

So that kind of led me to being like, you know what? Let me try something else because I can't keep complaining about it and not trying something else. And I had done that for a long time. I was getting over me complaining and not trying something. because that like just pisses me off when people do that.

So I didn't want to be that person, and I said, let me go and experiment and see how I feel using Substack. And my sister had introduced me to Substack. She started Substack two years ago. She's grown to almost 7,000 people on her email list on Substack.

And the really cool thing about Substack, which I didn't mention now, is that you don't get followers. Well, you can get followers, but actually Substack is basically a funnel in itself, someone follows you and then they immediately subscribe to your email list. So you don't need a lead magnet, you don't need anything.

You just need to create some content, and people can subscribe to your email list immediately. So you then build an email list,

which for me, that sounds amazing. You know how much I preach about having an email list more than followers. And so my sister was like, give it a go, give it a try.

So I tried it out I think it was in August or something. I did a one-month trial where I stopped posting on Instagram and I went into Substack and I told myself, you know what, for one month. I'm just going to do the Substack thing and I'm going to just figure it out. And I did not know how to do the Substack thing.

Thankfully my sister did help me a little bit. It's been a lot of trial and error, and it's been feeling so nice actually to be a beginner at something and learning something from scratch, like I feel like such an idiot in a lot of ways. Which actually reminds me of how it felt when I started my business.

But yeah, honestly that month was very, very interesting for me. So in today's episode, I'm going to walk you through what I discovered, what shifted, and why I've officially ditched Instagram for good, and why Substack is my new digital home. I'm so excited about it. So let's dive in.

Instagram zapped my energy. So the first thing I noticed the month off of Instagram is how I felt better. My energy felt better. When I looked back on when I was using Instagram. I could feel my energy being zapped out of me. I would open the app, and I check one thing and then suddenly it's an hour later and I'm knee deep in everyone else's lives and I'm on like vacation reels and I'm watching endless cat content and food videos.

And I was like, oh, I could be doing something so much more productive with my time. And I just fried my nervous system. I just constantly felt I was on, because the doom scrolling and that dopamine hit just was a constant chase.

So when I took that month off, I just felt like I had so much mental space. I felt calmer. My energy came back and it really made me see how much Instagram was zapping my creativity. And not only that, I was starting to think badly about myself, which it's like a very subtle thing.

It's a very subtle thing that happened. And then I started to feel guilty about not showing up enough and. Oh, for me, it just wasn't working. I wasn't able to stay consistent with it because I didn't enjoy it. And I just pushed through, I pushed through and I was like, you know what?

I feel like shit. This is just not the vibe. I didn't start my business to feel like this. All right. So that was one of the reasons. And then, the other reason was that I felt that Instagram's algorithm is built for surface level content. I'm not to say that that's true.

I could be talking nonsense, don't get me wrong. I'm not a pro Instagram person or whatever, but for me, I just felt surface level. So Instagram's entire ecosystem is built for hits of dopamine. Short, fast. Almost click bait video content. Remember those days when it was just pictures? Oh, I love those days.

And look, I can do that. I love video. It's not like I don't like being on video. I love video, but it just felt like I couldn't really be meaningful in it. I feel like my content wasn't impactful. It just felt like surface level for me, and it was a game I wasn't really happy to play.

I'm not like a small talk kind of woman, so if you're going to meet me out in the real world. You're going to notice that we're going to go deep pretty quickly because I don't like small talk. And if you've listened to me, you know this. I want to go deep. I want to talk about real stuff. And Instagram for me, I just didn't feel like I could. And maybe that's not true.

That was the way I was using it. I'm sure other people might have a different experience and that's fine. But yeah, it wasn't working with my energy, and I was craving a lot of more depth, and I was just wanting a bit more intentional content. People to absorb my content a bit more intentionally, like how I have this podcast and Substack being quite a bit more intentional as well.

I feel like Substack you can have long, meaningful conversations. People are actually genuinely connecting. And there's just a

feeling of support and good vibes on Substack, which I didn't feel so much on Instagram. And then the other reason is that Instagram felt a bit fake to me.

So obviously, let's not lie, I think a lot of the stuff we see online is a lot of fakeness, but it feels like a human heartbeat on Substack that I just couldn't feel on Instagram. how else to describe it. I could just say it like there was a heartbeat on Substack that I didn't feel on Instagram.

So people read, people comment thoughtfully. You can get into nice conversations with people. They respond with depth. It's not like scrolling past millions of videos. I felt on Instagram stopped even engaging. And maybe that was just my experience of it and the content that I was creating.

And I probably was in Instagram jail because I wasn't consistent and I left for months and came back. So I was definitely in Instagram jail, so my content wasn't being pushed out anyway. But yeah, Substack just feels more human. Substack feels like you're sitting down at a cafe with someone who genuinely wants to connect and not speed dating just for attention. Which is like Instagram.

And that energy difference is something I'm moving towards. As the world becomes more AI and all of that. I want to lean towards human and realness because that's what I crave. And the other thing that I realized within that month is that Substack was way better for my mental health which was a game changer.

I remember in the past when I was creating content on Instagram. Often, I would create content for my business and then I would get lost on Instagram. Because it's addictive. And I would find that I had three hours a day on the app that I was absorbing content.

And three hours is a long time to be on a social media platform a day. And obviously some of that time I was posting for sure. I was posting my content. So I wasn't just consuming, I was creating, but other times I was just doom scrolling and numbing out. It was like junk food for my brain.

And since switching to Substack, I checked my Instagram app like 30 minutes a day. And that just feels so much healthier for me. And I don't doom scroll as much on Substack. It just doesn't have that same addictive thing as what Instagram has. because it takes a lot more energy for me to consume on Substack.

because reading long form takes more mental energy. So I'm on Substack every day and checking in and doing things for my business. And I'm connecting and I'm doing all the thing. But I'm not like getting stuck there for hours. So it just feels a lot healthier, and I feel a lot happier. I feel a lot lighter.

I'm not glued to my phone. There's also a lot less comparing on Substack that I feel. I think it's very common for you to go on Instagram and compare yourself. Whereas on Substack, I'm not feeling that as much. I'm not really comparing myself to anyone. I'm actually just being me and just sharing my thing.

Yeah, I don't know. It feels good for me. My mental space feels good right now, so I'm just paying attention to those cues and I'm just following what feels good. And I really urge you to do the same. That's really important. We don't want to be feeling like crap. We did not start our business to feel like crap.

And the next thing that I would say in this experiment is that my brain felt nourished, not numb. So dead honest, Instagram makes my brain feel like mush. It really just makes me feel like foggy, disconnected, a little bit anxious. Whereas Substack though, it makes me think, it makes me reflect to the content I'm absorbing.

There is very interesting perspectives of people. Really well written stuff as well. Very deep topics as well, very deep. And it just makes me feel like my brain is working. And it's doing something good for my brain. Not depleting it and turning it into mush. And that's important for inspiration and creativity.

Everyone who has a business knows that we need to keep that brain going. We need to keep that creativity flowing. And the last thing, the last game changer for me was that Substack feels like

true ownership. This is the thing, people are killing themselves for followers on Instagram.

Oh, I just want to have those 10 K followers. how is that going to help? Are those 10 K followers going to pay your bills? No. If you get them on an email list, then I can consider it to be a bit more serious. But Instagram could shut down or your account could close tomorrow and it's gone, done.

You've lost it. You've lost your followers, you've lost years of work, you've lost everything. It's gone. There's no ownership. But Substack though is different. So it's email first, which means that every subscriber becomes part of your email list, and then you own your audience. That for me is true ownership and true power.

And even though I haven't monetized my Substack in terms of creating a paywall for now, because that's how Substack works. You create your content and then you create a paywall. So people need to pay to see your other content. It's like a membership model. I haven't got any intention for doing that now.

But in terms of it just being a powerful lead generation platform where I can put my work out there, get brand awareness, get people seeing my stuff, and they can then subscribe to my email list immediately, that is a vibe. So when someone subscribes, I get to connect with them directly. So no algorithm no gatekeeper, just me emailing them, which means you've got like a direct line of communication with your people.

That's amazing. Instagram, I don't know if you've noticed, but a lot of your content doesn't even show to your followers. You need to get them on your email list to be able to connect with them. So that is one of the main reasons I actually chose to move to Substack. I was like, this just makes so much more business sense.

You can connect, you can nurture your community. I can grow my podcast. If you've got a podcast, you can put it on there and can grow. I can build my email list from there. I can just create and share my story. I don't have to try create these ten second

reels anymore. Honestly, I just don't want to create a reel for a long time.

And then the thing that I wanted to leave with is that I realized after giving myself a lot of crap about leaving Instagram. I made myself feel bad about it. I honestly realize now in retrospect, because it's been like two, three months that I've been off Instagram and I've been using Substack.

It's just so okay to change what you do in your business and your content. It's okay to make a change if it feels aligned for you. Don't beat yourself up. It's completely normal. The way you create content now is going to be different from three years from now. It's going to change, it's going to evolve and you need to be okay to evolve and change with it and don't beat yourself up.

So, I've been on Substack now for two and a half months properly. And I love it. I have around 300 emails subscribers and I'm so excited about it. It feels very, very meaningful to me. And really excited to keep growing it and connecting with more amazing humans and it just feels good.

And this year I burned down everything. I changed countries. I basically closed down my entire six figure business that I've been running for five years straight. I'm discontinuing all the offers that I used to sell, and I've ditched Instagram and I've moved to Substack.

I've basically changed everything in my personal life. Everything has changed because I'm living in a new country, new friends, new food, new language, new everything and everything in my business has changed. Everything. It's crazy the evolution of this year and like I'm just so excited now.

Obviously, the death part and being in that like limbo phase of not being able to make the decisions and that middle messy part was really shit. And if you're in that, it sucks. It really sucks. But making the decision and actually following your energy and going with things that make you feel good.

Oh God, that feels so good. So if you're listening to this. Then this is your sign to do the same. You don't owe anyone consistency for what no longer feels aligned. I don't owe anyone anything. I just owe it to myself to follow what feels right and true. And that's it. And it's the same for you.

So discontinue the offer, close down the membership. If it's draining the life out of you. You don't owe anyone anything. You owe yourself peace, joy, good mental health, happiness, and you're the boss of your business. So do the damn thing, girl. So yeah, I've seen the light. Instagram is just not for me anymore.

I wouldn't say forever because I'm not like that. So for now, Instagram's not for me. Substack feels like a breath of fresh air. It feels the future of human connection. I see Substack growing insanely. People maybe don't know it now, but I think it's going to get much more traction, and everyone will start knowing what Substack is.

I see a lot of people moving to Substack as well. A lot of people are leaving Instagram and moving to Substack. So that's interesting as well. I'm excited to see where that platform goes and I'm just enjoying the journey, honestly. So just follow your energy, choose what feels alive for you.

If it means breaking up with Instagram, then you're in good company. Join the party. because there's a lot of us, especially on Substack. So, yeah, I'd love to hear your thoughts on this. Do you feel the same way about Instagram? Are you on Substack yet? Do you intend to move to Substack?

Maybe you've got a different experience of Instagram than I do. I'd love to hear. I think everyone's got their own experience. I'm sure it's amazing for a lot of people, it just didn't suit me. And if you are on Substack. What is your experience of that? Let me know. Send me a message.

Send me a message on Substack. You can also message me on Instagram because I still am there and I still check my messages and stuff. I just don't create content there. You can message me

on Instagram Substack, and obviously just email me as well. Anyways. I hope you have a beautiful rest of your day, and I'll chat to you soon.

Ciao.

Thanks so much for listening to today's episode. If you are an established woman in business who's ready to scale their business to the next level of success, and you don't just want strategy, you actually want deep, subconscious reprogramming and powerful identity shift.

Then email me mind shift, and let's see if you are a fit for my Millionaire Mind Shift one-on-one container where I help you rewire your subconscious so you can become the woman who can create and hold incredible success, visibility, and wealth with ease.

I appreciate you so much, and I cannot wait to connect with you in the next episode. In the meantime, go create a business and life you love.