

## **Collaboration is the Key to Success**

I love collaborating in the yoga world. My own business has grown significantly through several major milestones and working with others has proven the catalyst for tremendous change at each point. Many people thought I was crazy opening a Teacher Training Academy with cries of “you are only training your competition!” but I just didn’t feel that way.

I believe there is enough yoga for every teacher out there. It’s an abundance mindset. If you are anxious about competition however you may just miss the most important trick to improve your business performance: collaborating.

I can safely say collaborating has lead me to take greater risks, explore new markets, offer a wider range of services & grown my brand successfully from a humble attic with 6 students. Not all of my collaborations have got off the ground however. Several yoga projects are in the never again pile or the maybe later pile and this isn’t because the collaboration didn’t work but because the time, the financials, the logistics or the technical details just didn’t stack up. However, my business is all the richer for having explored these options in the first place.

In many ways it goes without saying that being able to work with others is an important part of being an entrepreneur. All of the major business schools will encourage it but with some provisos of course.

I know some of you will immediately think of the potential negatives of working with others: half the profits; not seeing eye to eye with your collaborator; the increased need for good communication; who really owns what here? How do you consciously uncouple when your collaboration is over? I do understand those reservations.

Very occasionally I have seen issues arise when projects don’t quite work out as planned. But with planning I feel the benefits of collaboration are worth it and if you are building your own business you will find it probably impossible to grow at any pace without it.

As the yoga market becomes increasingly competitive (and it will) businesses that can be flexible will have more chance of rolling with those changes too. You must find as a yoga teacher you have more competition now? All of our Teacher Training courses continue to sell out year on year. Please don’t view all your competitors as hostile. They may even see the benefits of working with someone as cool you and they may even bring something to the party you hadn’t even thought of.

Here’s my 5 top reasons why collaboration can be good for you and your yoga business.

## **Exposure in front of a different audience**

Your competitors don't have the same exact audience as you. Yes, there may be some overlap, but they have email subscribers, Instagram followers, and Facebook fans that may not know about your business. Collaborating can be a great way to get your business in front of a different audience that may not know your brand. Like, tag, share, use the same hashtags, you know what you are doing here . . .

### **People like supporting supportive people**

If you support others, then your customers will see that as a positive trait and feel like supporting you more. It really works. Your customers like supporting supportive people.

### **Two Minds are better than one**

When two great minds come together, extraordinary things can happen. Consider the value you can offer your audience by working together with another business instead of competing.

My own great example here is on developing our overseas Teacher Training Programme with Ambra Vallo & Fabio Fillipi. I would have never have taken it to Italy without them and our courses are now filling fast! Sandstone would have never been able to offer 60-hour CPDs in Yin Yoga & Yoga Nidra without our long-standing & mutually beneficial collaboration with Dawn Wright and these are just inspirational training programmes.

### **You can't do it all alone**

If your business is thriving, you'll get to a point where you can't do it all alone. You will need some help. And that help can come from someone that runs a business that's similar to yours.

Or maybe you use each other as a sounding board, to bounce ideas and get inspiration. You don't want to go through business ownership alone and you shouldn't. There are plenty of people who would want to collaborate with you, you just have to find the right ones. They may not be near you and I have found that facebook groups can have supportive members when they realise you are 100 miles away! You may even end up planning a workshop half way!

### **Grow your business**

Think of collaborating as like borrowing sugar from your neighbour. You ask for some sugar, they do you a favour by giving you some. The following week, you notice they need help starting their car so you help them out. It's a give and take relationship, where you help each other out when you need help the most, which is exactly what collaborating can do for your business.

On a personal note I am a social animal. I don't like working alone and as long as parameters are expressed clearly at the beginning then I tend to sit back and enjoy the journey. I have just entered my most collaborative relationship yet with Louise Tonge our first franchisee. We are borrowing lots of cups of sugar from each other and starting each other's cars a lot but the brand just doubled in size and I got a yoga sister for the long term. By collaborating my yoga family just got bigger.

*Michelle is a Senior Yoga Teacher with Yoga Alliance Professionals, the Director of the Sandstone Teacher Training Academy and the Founder of Sandstone Yoga & Pilates, a studio franchise model accredited with the British Franchise Association. Sandstone yoga.co.uk*

*Sandstone Yoga & Pilates runs Yoga Alliance Professionals 200 hour teacher training near Birmingham. In 2018 they are offering 3 week 200 hour intensive in Italy in September 2018 or a 2 week intensive followed by 5 additional days in Birmingham over weekends.*