

Lisa Messenger on finding her purpose

What's the secret to happiness at work? It's a tough question to answer at the best of times, let alone when navigating 2021's curveballs. Lisa Messenger says it comes down to simple principles.

Amy Marnie



This series was created in partnership with NAB Business Fit, a free health and wellbeing program to help business owners.

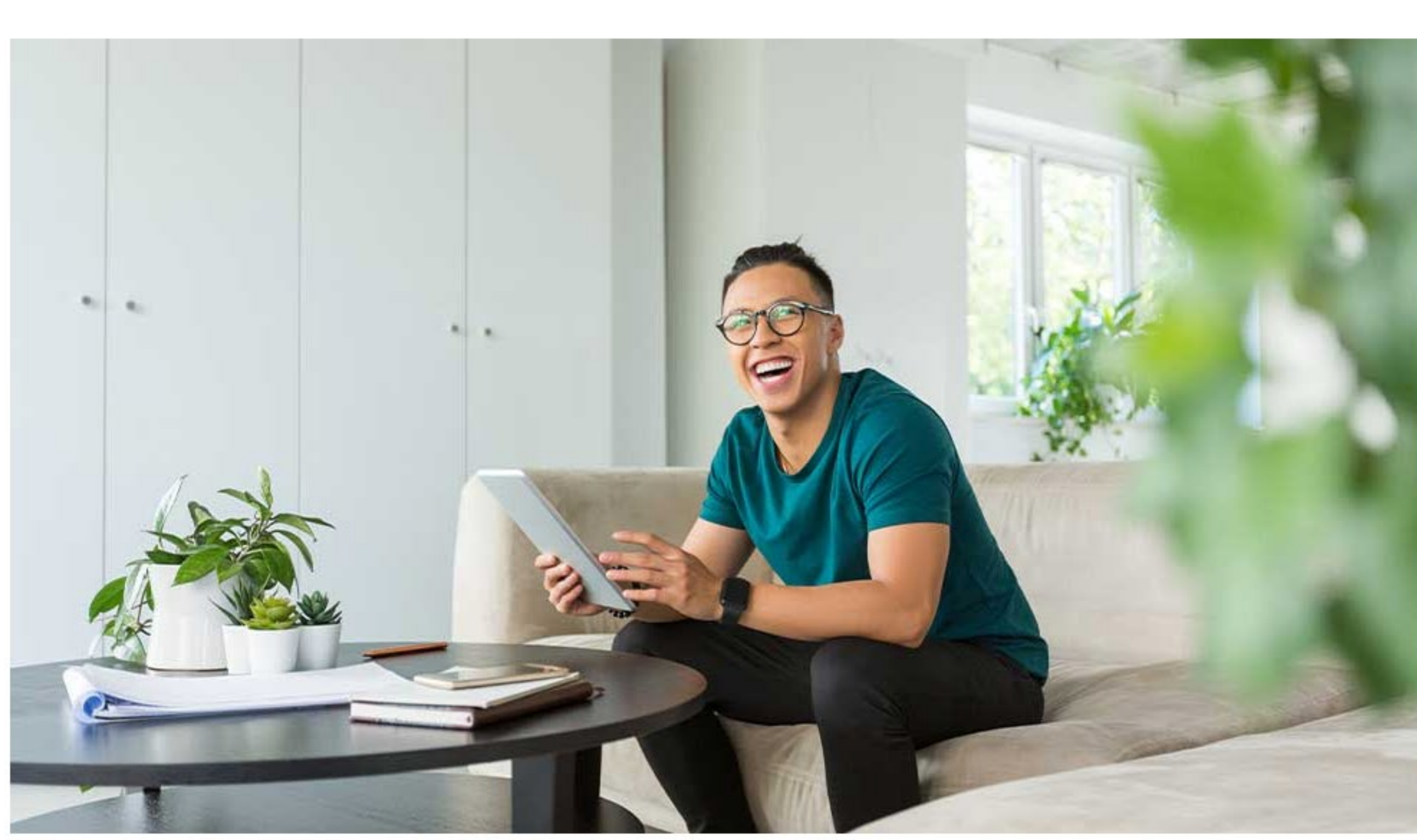
Four years ago, Lisa Messenger faced the possibility of losing her business.

From the outside, everything appeared rosy. Her lifestyle magazine *Collective Hub* was wildly successful and sold in over 37 countries. She boasted collaborations with some of the world's biggest brands. Her office space was *nice*. But here's the thing: it was hemorrhaging cash, fast.

"Like many small businesses, I had finally stepped into my true purpose, but I grew really, really quickly," she says. "I scaled too fast. I didn't have the right systems and processes in place. I'm a great founder. I wasn't necessarily a great global CEO."

Pulling her magazine from print bruising and letting staff go – heartbreaking, but doubling down on her purpose helped navigate through the fog of failure.

"I know 100 per cent what my purpose is: To be an entrepreneur for entrepreneurs, living my life out loud, showing that anything's possible," she says. "It's really important that we know what our purpose is because then we can move, iterate, pivot, change between different revenue streams."

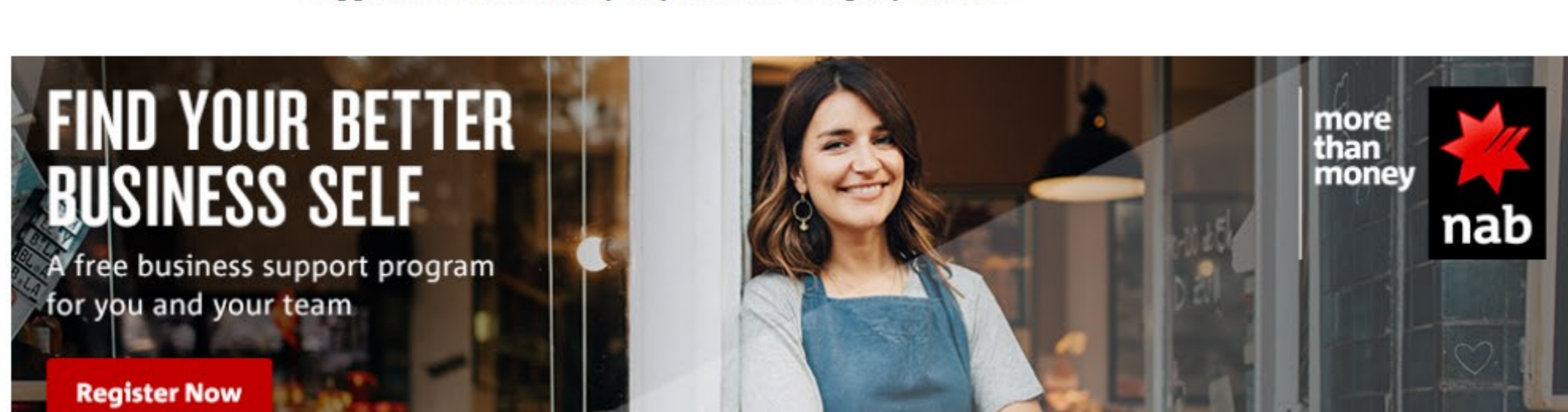


To move forward, she realised she needed to do things differently. She switched her business to digital, started an events arm and focused on corporate speaking gigs. Then, she got rid of the office and the draconian nine-to-five workday.

"I was guilty of watching the clock at 8am – *Why aren't they here yet? Where are they?* It's exhausting for everyone, and it took a long time for me to understand, 'Okay. Everyone has specific deliverables and actually, it doesn't matter if they go to the beach for the day or they want to do yoga,'" she says. "Now, people work from wherever they want; however they want, whatever time they want."

Next, she introduced productivity metrics over prioritising 'bums on seats'. She also prioritised her employees' personal goals and ambitions – helping them discover their purpose.

"I think, for me, for many years, everything was driven by ego. It's all about the company," Ms Messenger says. "It has taken me a long time to get to this point, but I think my team are much happier with flexibility. It supports them, and they buy into the company vision."



Investing ways to drive motivation and productivity is essential for all businesses. But not everyone is the likes of Google or Canva, with the budget to employ an entire team dedicated to designing and building engaged teams, and few could justify the same investment in attracting and retaining top talent.

That's why Ms Messenger teamed up with [NAB Business Fit](#), a free health and wellbeing program designed for business owners. The digital service provides practical and evidence-based learning presented by a range of experts in business, sport, entertainment and science, helping business owners prioritise their purpose.

"When people make [their business] just about delivering a boring thing, no one's connected to the purpose," Ms Messenger says. "People just become cogs, and they become disenchanted, discombobulated."

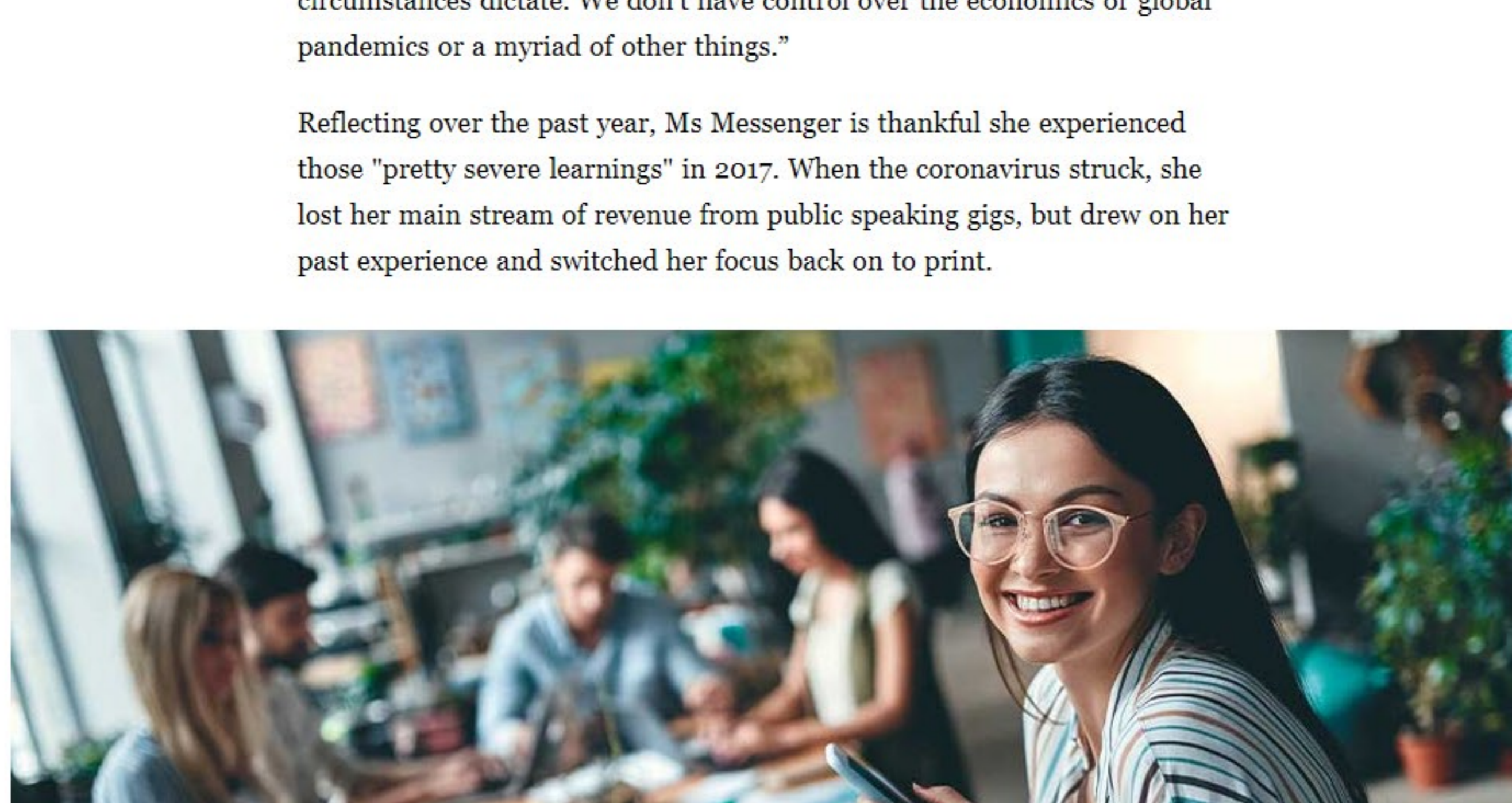
Identifying your purpose is a knotty task. Pull at questions around identity and work, and you quickly unravel life's biggest dilemmas.



"A lot of people say, 'I don't know what my purpose is. How do I find it?' I say, start and play and try different things," she says. She recommends business owners reflect beyond their product: *What's their why? What's their supply chain? What are they doing to make a difference in the world? What gets them out of bed every morning?*

"Asking really simple human questions will help people find the story that will make others fall in love with a brand," she says. "If you work out your purpose, then you can morph, iterate, pivot, change as the external circumstances dictate. We don't have control over the economics or global pandemics or a myriad of other things."

Reflecting over the past year, Ms Messenger is thankful she experienced those "pretty severe learnings" in 2017. When the coronavirus struck, she lost her main stream of revenue from public speaking gigs, but drew on her past experience and switched her focus back on to print.



"I was actually okay because I'd had the hard lessons and built the resilience muscle previously," she says. "I think, as a business owner, it's so important that we sometimes push ourselves to our edge and take the lessons from it. So, I'm very grateful for that period of my life."

Failure is one of life's cruelest educators. Still, effective.

"I think growing the resilience muscle, being courageous to try things, and making friends with failure is important," she says. "I think in the corporate world, people are often afraid to fail."

But here's the rub: "Do it once, learn the lessons. Just don't do it again."

NAB understands that running a business can be incredibly demanding. That's why they've partnered with Strive Stronger to create NAB Business Fit, a free digital service providing practical and evidence-based learning presented by a range of experts. From workshops to podcasts, the program is designed to help business owners and their staff be more resilient, transition to new ways of working and sustain physical and psychological wellbeing. Register today for NAB Business Fit.