

**JANINE OGG:** Today's guest and mother of two is Tara O'Connell, has successfully found two online businesses using partnership marketing. And she joins us today to share her story, and also to talk about how she juggles the growth of her two online businesses with family life. So Tara, welcome to the Get It Done Mum podcast. It's pleasure to have you here.

**TARA O'CONNELL:** Thank you.

**JANINE:** And in a moment we're gonna dig deeper into your story. but first, can you just give mum's an idea, you know, a bit of what, sort of what your two businesses ar. You've got Baby Diaries and also your newer, startup is Appsolute. So, you just wanna give us an idea of what happening on both of those businesses.

**TARA:** Sure, actually, I've working for myself now for about eight years and I've actually, I've had three companies in that time. And the two that I'm focused on at the moment, one is called The Baby Diaries, and it's an app. And I've had that for three and a half years now, going on four. And the other one is called Appsolute Results. And it's really a business that's all about empowering and inspiring other mumpreneurs to be able to have that global success that I've achieved with The Baby Diaries.

**JANINE:** Great. So we believe there is a lot to be learned from hearing, the stories of other mums and their journeys. So, would you be able to share with us, you know, how it all sort of started for you in terms of building an online business and, I think it was The Baby Diaries that kicked off for you?

**TARA:** The online business, the first online business I've ever had was The Baby Diaries. And it started because I had a huge gap between my two children. So, my first son, who is now in high school, in year eight in high school, is 14. He is born back in 2001. He may as well been born in the 60's because the devices that we had access to now simply didn't exist. So there were no online forums. You had to actually physically leave the house and meet people.

There were no blogs, our phones were really just used to make phone calls, so we didn't have Facebook, we didn't have apps, none of that existed.

So, it, having a 10 year gap, 11 year gap between my two children, as I said, the first one may as well be born in the 60's.

So when I had Alexander, he is now three and a half, I just assumed that all of those functions that you had to do as a new mum. So writing down how many wet nappies they've had and keeping track of their first tooth or, you know, their first tricks or baby books, I just assumed there'd be an app for that. And, of course, if Alex was born today, there are quite a lot of apps for that. But, three and a half years ago, when I started looking, there actually, there weren't. There were a couple of American apps, but they were very Americanized.

So the mum and the diaper and... So, I just thought, and at the time, my life was going thru a little bit of a crazy time. So I had a three month old baby, I've suddenly become a single parent without warning. So, life was a little bit chaotic. And then he got sick. And he got rushed to the hospital in an ambulance. And the first thing that they asked me in the hospital was how many wet nappies has he had 'coz, of course, that's an indicator of hydration. And I had no idea.

I had my sister with me and she happens to be a midwife in a different hospital. And I said to her, you know, there must be an app for these. And she said, actually, not that I'm aware of. I haven't seen any of the girls using them.

There's a new contraction timer app but I haven't seen anything post birth. And so, at that point in time, I was on leave from my consulting business. someone else was doing the work for me while I was on maternity leave. And so, I just sit about doing some research. And it just felt like the right thing to do. Like it was, in my first, after having my first baby I actually suffered post natal depression. And I know a lot of women suffer from depression particularly after having a baby. And even if they don't suffer from, what you call diagnosed depression, they get the baby blues.

And so, a lot of, can be managed thru having tools to make your job a little bit easier for the day. And if that's just an app in your hand setting up your tracker for the day, then I think that's a great thing because it's actually empowering women to get thru the day a little bit easier. So, I set about setting up an app, and that was just the beginning.

I've recently spoken to a group of female entrepreneurs who are all looking at developing apps. There were 35 in the room and I've done a presentation

about my journey. And then my concerns were about the tech side of things. So, my advice to them was, forget the tech. I am them; I have got the technical skills that would fit outside of a corn kernel. I have got absolutely nothing. So, forget the tech because there are people out there who do the tech. You just have to, you know, with any business, forget the tech. You can outsource that part.

But if you know why you're doing it, and it's, you know, thru, I guess, solving a problem for people. And you know what you wanted to do, and what you want it to look like, they're the main elements. So, so that was my online, my online, discovery. And then I've realized that everything I knew about marketing and PR for books and other businesses, which was my background, I've been CEO for a long time, had nothing to do with the online world. So, I like to see online businesses like stars in the sky. And I use these analogy a lot where there are millions of stars in the sky and there are millions of online businesses out there. And at any given time, you know, people may or may not be able to see you. But if you can shine brighter than the rest, you draw the right attention to yourself.

And so, my second business, which is Appsolute Results, is really just sharing everything I've learned in that journey with The Baby Diaries, with any other, you know, my market is, has been entrepreneurs – the mumpreneurs. And if I can share that with them so they don't have to go thru that two years of crazy stuff that I did.

I've condensed all it down to a six hour program for people. So, Appsolute Results is all about inspiring and empowering other mums to work 20 hours a week, have a successful online business, to have a profitable online business. And to not have to go back to, you know, working for someone else.

So, that's been my journey so far. And it's all because I've had a massive gap between my children that I identified a need for an app. And that's just sort of, turning into this, into my life. My life is now all about online business and I absolutely love it.

**JANINE:** Yeah, and it sounds like you've really, focused on following your intuition and you got a little bit there and just going where your nose leads you which is really exciting, isn't it?

When you can have the space to do that and I think, often as mums we, you know, we do, we create a different space for ourselves when we have children and it, it sort of challenges us to stick back and think differently

about what we might be doing. And yeah, things different to that space and they, so, it sounds fantastic, what you're doing.

And, for the mums that are listening who may be thinking of, well, you know, Tara's been doing this for years now. She's successful, she has all these knowledge, it's often quite useful to hear, you know, with the times that you felt like giving up on the businesses, 'coz a lot of that mums go thru ups and downs.

**TARA:** Absolutely, and in that first two years with my app, so it's coming to its 4th year now, the first two years, I thought about giving up so many times. Because everything I was trying, the traditional marketing methods, weren't working. So, I went as far as putting ads on the inside cover of magazines. That's a lot of investment. And it's what we call hope marketing. You know, you hope someone will see it and you hope it will drive sales or pay in pray marketing. You hand money over and pray that someone will buy. And it doesn't necessarily work and certainly didn't work for me.

And so, for me, the major learning I've had is that I had to invest in upscaling myself. This is, actually, I find this really interesting because when you work in traditional jobs, so we work for other people, we put you in training. We put you in development. We read books. We go to, you know, brainstorming sessions.

You know, we, usually the employer invest in our learning because if we don't learn, then the business stagnates. But when we start learning for ourselves, we don't necessarily do that as much. And because, you know, maybe the budget is tight and we don't feel we can justify spending money whether it's \$20, \$100, 500, a thousand, whatever. But without investing in ourselves, and gaining new skills, or getting, you know, you're actually kind of, you stagnate your own business. So you can't grow.

I always think, every time invest in myself I make more money and I spend less money because partnership marketing is a great example of that. So I invested in a partnership marketing course. Which was less than a thousand dollars, but its still, at the time, felt like a lot of money to me.

I invested in that but the return on that investment has been unbelievable. So, the amount of downloads that just partnership marketing has created for my app and the amount of sales in my other business, in Appsolute Results, that has come from partnership marketing, almost immeasurable because it's just so huge.

So, I guess that's been my biggest learning. My biggest learning in all of this has been that I have to keep investing in myself. And I have to, this is a business. It's not a hobby. And so, once I had that mindset shift, because I treated it like a bit of a hobby for a while, and it was a very expensive hobby at that because I wasn't making any money. So I had to mindset shift that this is a business. And I have to keep investing in myself and my business just like an employer would be investing in me and their business. That's when everything changed.

**JANINE:** Yeah, and that's a great turn around. That mindset stuff and definitely we see that time and time again, that hobby mindset. And it can really hold you back. But on, I'm the same with you; you have to be ready to take that leap. And a lot of mums are sort of testing the waters. Is this what they really wanna do? You wanna be doing, do they wanna take that leap and take a look at all this new learning and the commitment of your own business. but when you do take that leap and you decide to start investing and also re-investing in the same program with Simone Novello, who is another one of our podcast interviews, you know, like you say, you get it back tenfold. And so we're gonna touch a little bit more on partnership marketing in a moment, Tara.

I was wondering also if you could speak a little bit more about how you're making money from your two businesses. How are you supporting your, your revenue streams? 'Coz it's a great one for mums. They're always interested in hearing how you're making the money. What kind of income stream have you got?

**TARA:** So, in the first two years of The Baby Diaries, I didn't make any money at all. Everything I did make, which wasn't much, got reinvested into the app. And apps are an interesting beast in themselves. So, only 1 percent of apps are successful. If I've known that before I started, I may not have gone down that journey. But I did. And so, I wasn't prepared to let it go. I had to make it work. And, so how I make money from the apps is almost always thru partnerships. So, partners do most of the marketing. I do have advertising on the free version of the app, but advertising is all about volume. So they have to actually have volume of downloads before ads will bring in any income, which I'm at that point now.

So we have got a volume. A large volume of downloads. It's been downloaded on every continent on earth in 15 different languages. So it's

going really well. But the main way to really monetize apps is through partnerships like white label.

So I'm currently working to get a white label partnership or two happening. Which means the app would look like it's someone else's, say, a pharmacy chain or a major retailer. They give it to their mums who come in and get their babies weighed or measured, for example. And it looks like it's theirs. So it's like a value ad to their clients but what they did in return is they can send push notifications to those mums when the nappies are on special or whatever.

So it's great for them. For my partner, it's a value ad to the mums, and they pay me in license fee to be able to use it. So they don't have to go out and create and spend all that money on building an app. And large businesses aren't nimble enough to make decisions really quickly. And that's where mumpreneurs come in with our products because we're very flexible and nimble and we can make decisions quickly. And we've got products that they can use. And that's one of the benefits I think of having us involved in that partnership marketing mix because we are able to give them something they don't have. And identifying what your business assets are is a whole other process that we go through. 'Coz I find that a lot of mumpreneurs don't understand what they've got to give major retailers or major partners and that was something I had to sort of overcome as well. So, that's how I monetize the app. And hopefully, that will just continue to grow.

In terms of monetizing my other online business, Appsolute Results, it is all about online training. So, I have online training programs that people could purchase. And it's that simple. And it runs while I am asleep. It runs while I am at the school. It runs, you know, all the time.

And that's really about the beauty of the online world is it's running all the time. It's running now while I'm talking to you. So, I have to be physically in the business all the time. I've setup systems to make it, you know, something that I can work 20 or 30 hours a week. And it's still running. So, that's how I have monetised my businesses.

**JANINE:** Can you explain a little bit on how you're delivering the online trainings? 'Coz it's called Appsolutely, so, are delivering for an app as well as more traditional online stuff? Or can you just elaborate that for us?

**TARA:** Yeah, it's called Appsolute Results. It's six steps, the program is six steps to shine online and it's been developed for mumprenuers. And it's basically online learning program that's one hour a week for six weeks. And it's delivered via, it's basically, the desktop is probably the best place to use it so that you can be writing it at the same time. But you can also, access it via your phone or your notebook.

So, yeah, that's pretty much how it's delivered. It's, as I said, it's an online program because as a mum myself going away in attending physical training is a challenge. especially if it's more than one day. So I wanted to create something that would be flexible. People can do it on demand in their own time, in their own home. So, yeah, it's running, it's an on-demand training program. So, when people sign up, they can just do it in their own time.

**JANINE:** The test, it sounds awesome. And we will be linking to the resources and thanks to Tara's work in the show notes for those of you who are interested in taking, a closer look. Tara, I'm interested in how you're juggling all this with, your children and what maybe a day in the life of Tara looks like? Would you mind, sharing with us what your day looks? How it runs a little bit.

**TARA:** Sure. So, I only work four days a week, my little one is in pre-school. That's four days a week. So, on Mondays we have our day together. Then he goes and does soccer. Which is so cute when they wear their little uniforms when they're so tiny. It's very cute.

So he's at pre-school. My big boy is in high school. My day starts by a little craziness. I think you all with children understand the craziness of getting two children out of the house, that's just the beginning of the day. Getting them to school. And that's actually an hour for me, and hour round trip, because they're in different directions.

So, the day, I start work around 9:30 and my day is really all, I'm very much about routine. So, I got my day quite structured. And I use, I'm gonna show you one. I use this, I use these planners because it just keeps me on track.

The fun with working from a home base, you can be distracted really easily and so, I actually have a weekly blog on my, website where I talk about tips for mums who work from home 'coz things have boundaries.

I don't know about you, but, it took me a long time, and I've been doing this for years now, took me a long to get my family to understand that I'm working. Yes I'm at home, but I am working. So, they sort of would drop in for a cup of tea, ring me, you know? So I had to really manage my boundaries. Get really clear on my boundaries. And then very politely communicate those boundaries.

So, yeah, for me, it's all about, I'm having a structure and making sure I stick to my priorities. I know what I need to achieve in a day. And I pick the kids up from school. And I do that four days a week.

That's pretty much my life. In some days, I work every night but very rarely now. But in the beginning, certainly, you know, in the beginning of Appsolute Results, it's called Appsolute Results but it's actually it's just an online program for online businesses. That's not really to do with apps. So, in the beginning of Appsolute Results, when I was setting up all those systems and all those online, you know, automated emails, and databases, and messages, then I was working a lot more.

I was working nights. And I, you know, give up family time on a weekend and sort of waived as the family went out the door and I'd stay behind and set things up. But I knew it was quite short term, because that's not quality of life.

I thought, that's not why we've created lifestyle businesses. We've created lifestyle businesses because we wanna have life with our family and be a mum. And so, I think that's why online businesses are so perfect for us and we've come at this exactly the right point in evolution because most of us have all worked.

So we got the skills. We now have the technology. Even if, like me, I'm not that good at technology, but we've got it. Thru that access to technology, there's no better time to be working as mumpreneurs. There is not, there has never been a better time in history to be doing this. S

o, I think that we, being here, right here, right now, are really fortunate that we've got just the right combination of skills, knowledge, and access, to what we need to be able to do this. So, yeah, it's an exciting, it's an exciting thing.

Every time I see... I see businesses like dots, so, I can see... When I see a business, I can project and say where that business could go and how they could use the online world top really make more money and, you know, spend more time with their businesses. Its, yeah, I find that really inspiring for me. So, that's one of the reasons I love what I'm doing.

JANINE: Me, too. Me, too. The big picture, kind of visionary sort of person. I love that, doing that as well.

And, I agree, it's really an exciting time for us in such an amazing opportunity. And that's why, you know, we're doing this podcast, that is we wanna talk to women like you and other successful women and mums that are out there doing it 'coz that's, I think, so many of our mums still suffer from their self-doubt and their lack of confidence.

So the more women we can interview, the more we can put it in front of them and say, hey, look, you know, if these women are all doing it, you can do it too. So, that's fantastic. And it's fantastic to hear your story.

There's a bit of me at the back of my head going, I wonder where Tara's gonna go next? You obviously, you're a true entrepreneur, so yeah, eventually to see where you take things in the next few years.

But I just want to touch before we finish up a bit more on, partnership marketing, and, have you got a couple of other inspiring stories that you could share? Because like us, you are a strong proponent of partnership marketing and really believe in it.

TARA: Thank you.

JANINE: Yeah, if you could just share a couple more tips on that?

TARA: I can give you some examples of partnership marketing, if you like, and just break it down into what it looks like on a, on a, you know, on a day to day basis.

So, I'll use The Baby Diaries as an example, 'coz I've used a variety of different types of partnerships there. But the first partnership I created for The Baby Diaries, firstly it's about identifying other people who have the same ideal customer as you. And my ideal customers are new mums.

So, I had a look around in my current existing networks. And I knew the owners of an online antenatal, company called Born Online. So I called them up. This is literally minutes after finishing the partner fast training. I called them up and I said, "Look, I think we got some win-wins here. If you're interested in, providing blog content for me, I'll top and tail my blogs to introduce your business. You provide the blog content. And then if you can just refer to my app when you talk about timing contractions,

breastfeeding, nappy changing, I've got a blog on everything in their resources.”

So that was a simple partnership marketing. So, I started by promoting them to my social media and my database. Following, and they started promoting my app as the app to use as a new mum, but even prior to giving birth. So that was the first one.

The second one was a nappy bag company. And again, I contacted them and said, look, we have the same target market, would be great to do some, cross promotion. So, it's free, win-win and they loved it and said, and then, they were duffel bags, and they said, look, we'll give you one of our nappy bags to use as a promotion for a month.

So I marketed the bejesus out of the nappy bags. And in return, this is my brochure, so in return, my brochure is the same size and shape as a, as an iPhone. And, so they put my brochure into every phone pocket of every nappy bag they sold, they got a thousand of them, so they put it into a thousand bags which was way longer than the month that I promoted it. So, there. Really simple, zero cost, really. Put brochures in a nappy bag. Zero cost to either of us and win-win.

The third one was a sleep consultant, she actually contacted me. So, she has a book and an online program for mums, you know, who are struggling with sleep, which is probably every mum in the world, isn't it? I have a three year old and I'm still struggling with sleep so, if you noticed the bags. So, she's got a book basically from birth to, you know, toddler years on sleep routines. So what she does is she gets all of the mums or the parents who comes to her course or program, she uses my app to record baby's sleep. And in return, I promote her book as the best and her course as the best, you know, solution for mums with babies who might need some sleep assistance. And, so that went really well.

Just to have a different one, and that probably the only other one which was slightly different was with Gymparoo. Gymparoo, our global company, they got a very strong presence here on our home shores. And, so what they do is they promoted my app via every one of their centers to almost half a million, mums with babies in the first year.

JANINE: Woah.

TARA: Yeah, and...

JANINE: It's amazing!

TARA: I know! And in return, I promoted their brand new Active Baby Smart Kids program which is a free online program. For the mums who maybe kind of thought Gymparoo or maybe they don't know if it's for them. They can actually do this program from home and it really gives them skills they need for that first year to make sure baby crawls before they walk and so forth. So I then marketed that for them to my database and my following. And they pushed my app to my target market throughout their centers.

So, in that, in those partnerships alone, it was over four mil, over 1 million of my ideal clients. Ideal potential customers were shown my app by someone else they already trusted. So, that, you can't buy that. You know? That is just; I could have gone and told those million people about my app but it sort of sounds like I'm selling it.

Whereas, if someone else promotes my app, it's more of like a testimonial or recommendation. So, that's when partnership marketing is at its best. And I had so many other partnerships now and they're going all the time. But they are sort of just a couple of really simple ones, that just highlight the benefit of partnership marketing.

JANINE: Oh, those are incredible examples and it's just amazing, the results that you got from there. And so, what would you say to some of our mums who might be listening into this and they love the sound of what we're talking about with partnership marketing but they are a little bit cautious, you know, they're not quite sure, and they wanna dip their toes. Now, what's the one or two things they could do just to get themselves started?

TARA: Simply just, have a look at your one touch point. Who do you already know? As is, I already knew the ante, the people who ironed the antenatal program. The sleep consultant, heard about me through a network that we're both a member of. So just have a look at the people around you that you already know. And they have the same ideal customers as you. They have same values as you because this is a relationship.

So, any relationship, if you have the wrong values or mismatched values, it doesn't work. And, just make sure you go in there with a win-win mindset. And start small. Start with someone who you feel is at the same level as you. And then the more confidence you get, the bigger you'll get, and the braver

you'll get. And you understand what you're bringing to the table 'coz that's really important.

There are programs like Simone Novello's fast program which I did start with. And it was absolutely fantastic. In my six, six steps to shine online, module six is all about partnerships as well. So, there are, actually, there are ways you can invest in yourself to really upscale yourself really quickly to be able to go out there and confidently secure those partnerships. You can stop paying for advertising. So instead of paying for another ad, just pay, you know, pay for a course and get the skills you need to be able to go out there and do it.

JANINE: Yeah, and I think that with confidence is, that you mention in the end there, is really important. Just, just start speaking to people, believe in yourself and start reaching out and things may start to eventually start to happen, and so, we just want to finish off, Tara. Thank you for all those gems. That's really fantastic. There's a lot of...

TARA: My pleasure.

JANINE: A lot of learning there for me and the listeners, but to finish off with that little quicky closing question, around, you know, the world deciding it's absolutely crazy to work more than 20 hours a week. Which I'm quite a fan of that idea myself. So, you already sound like you're, pretty much on that path. But what was one piece of key advice you'd give people who are looking to build a model for themselves that allows them to work part time like that?

TARA: I think, firstly as mums, this working 20 hours a week should be a given because we, we don't have the Wonderwoman outfits, you know? We can't, we can't be absolutely everything. So, firstly, 20 hours a week for me is ideal. But the one key, I would say that, you know, I had to create a 20 hour a week profitable successful is to just get online and use all of the tools that are there to try to automate your business as much as you possibly can. So that it'd still, your business is still working when you're not. That would be my one, one key for that.

JANINE: Fantastic. Okay, thanks so much for your time today, Tara. And all the best for the future of your businesses and the new businesses you come up with in the future.

TARA: Thank you.

JANINE: Cheers, Tara.