

She Turned a Crippling Fear of Public Speaking Into a Thriving Business

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This article is part of the America's Favorite Mom & Pop Shops series. [Read more stories](#)

Key Takeaways

- Smith's "brain bully" method helps business owners silence self-doubt and speak with clarity.
- From interviews to responding to customer reviews, Smith teaches that presence, energy and preparation are what build trust.
- Smith shows that intentional communication at every touchpoint strengthens credibility.

Lynn Smith, former NBC and CNN anchor and founder of Lynn Smith Media, never imagined her fear of public speaking would one day become the foundation of her business. But after mastering the art of public speaking and overcoming her internal critic, Smith leveraged her professional expertise and personal experience to help small business owners and executives confidently connect with their audience and unlock growth in the process.

Despite spending over 15 years as a news anchor, Smith had a crippling fear of public speaking and was constantly held back by what she calls the "brain bully". "It's that voice in your head that's saying, *Nobody wants to hear from you, or You're*

gonna screw this up,” Smith says.

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Using this idea of beating your internal bully, she now teaches business leaders how to quiet that self-doubt and communicate with clarity, confidence and presence.

Smith pointed out that many businesses often focus on product, ad placement and distribution but overlook articulating their message – and lose money by doing so. Many business owners fall into one of two traps: overpacking communications with scripted language that sounds robotic, or underpreparing and rambling.

The solution isn’t to memorize or improvise; it’s to develop the skill of being a magnetic communicator. To stand out to your audience, Smith suggests you need more than just clarity. You need presence and visibility. That means showing up with confidence and intention. She calls it being a “magnetic communicator.”

“It’s not just about showing up; it’s about making sure when you do show up, that it’s magnetic,” she says. “And that’s 100% a learned skill.”

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Presence extends beyond the stage or screen. Smith emphasized that how business owners respond to feedback or handle a brand crisis can make or break customer trust.

“When you say no comment, in the viewer’s mind – whether that viewer is watching television or on the internet reading the review – they’ve decided that clearly there’s guilt.”

Rather than letting others shape the story, Smith suggested that a response to critical feedback can actually turn a

review into an opportunity to build credibility and a reason someone chooses to work with your business.

“If a crisis happens, acknowledge what it is, acknowledge the feedback,” she says. “Communicate what you plan to do about that. Take any responsibility that you might have.”

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In terms of branding, Smith also recognizes the trust and value that can be built through strategic choices that align with your target audience. Smith recently rebranded her own company, shifting from a pink-heavy color palette to bold blue and yellow tones that better engage her audience of enterprise companies and entrepreneurs. She encourages other entrepreneurs to revisit their branding as they grow, and not to be afraid of strategic change.

She also offered advice for small business owners looking to pitch themselves to the media: Tie your story to a relevant news topic, keep your pitch short and include video clips so producers can see how you’ll come across on camera.

“Find a topic that’s already being talked about in the news, and provide the expertise,” she says. “You become the subject matter expert in it. And in that pitch, start with a powerful headline or subject line that gets their attention and makes them want to open it.”

Her newest venture, a children’s book titled *Just Keep Going*, teaches kids how to manage fear and build confidence.

“There are actual physical techniques that we can teach children to ease their anxieties around fear,” Smith says. “We can raise the next generation of confident and magnetic communicators and leaders because they’re not hindered by these fears.”

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After turning a personal fear into a thriving business, Smith's advice for entrepreneurs is clear:

- **Beat your brain bully.** Fear, not lack of skill, is often the culprit of ineffective communication. Address that fear to begin building up your confidence and becoming a better communicator.
- **Presence builds trust.** Whether on video or in person, how you show up with confidence and clarity matters more than ever.
- **Respond with intention.** Thoughtful replies to reviews and criticism can strengthen your brand. A response to critical feedback allows you to build a narrative rather than having the audience shape the story.
- **Let your brand evolve.** As your business grows, your visual identity and messaging should grow with it. Don't be afraid to make strategic shifts to better match your audience.
- **Pitch with purpose.** When pitching your business story to the media, tie your narrative to something timely and be the voice of expertise on that topic. Craft a short and targeted email and contact the relevant press directly to get print, digital or broadcast mentions.

Watch the episode above to hear directly from Smith, and subscribe to Behind the Review for more from new business owners and reviewers every Wednesday.

Editorial contributions by Candy Vorasadhit

This article is part of our ongoing America's Favorite Mom & Pop Shops® series highlighting family-owned and operated businesses.

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