

Episode 3: What Does Running a Blog Really Look Like?

Lauren 0:01

Welcome to the Launch Your Blog Biz Podcast. I'm your host, Lauren McManus. I used to be a full time tax accountant and CPA with a whole lot of limiting beliefs. And "I can't's" whenever I thought about starting my own business. Fast forward a few months, and I quit my job after starting and growing my first blog to six figures in just a year. This is my space to share and yours to listen and grow, about how to build and scale your own blogging business and design a life on your terms. Let's get started.

Lauren 0:35

Hey, y'all, welcome to another episode of the podcast. I hope that you are all doing well today. I am spending another day in sunny Puerto Escondido, Mexico. And if you're not sure where Puerto Escondido is, most people have not heard of it. But it's a small beach town in the state of Oaxaca region in Mexico, on the southwest coast, and it has phenomenal sunsets and tacos. So it's where I'm currently hiding out from winter and lockdown and I 10 out of 10 would recommend.

Lauren 1:08

Alright, y'all, I have another great episode of the podcast today. It's in line with our last episode in kind of this beginner introduction into the world and lifestyle of blogging. But as I mentioned in the last episode, there's still going to be a lot of insight even for the more experienced bloggers, I do encourage you to listen, regardless of what stage you're at in your own blogging career.

Lauren 1:32

And the reason for this episode is really just because I think that there are a lot of misconceptions about what a blog really is and what a blogger does. And a lot of people think that we just write content all day long. And that can be what we do at times. But there's so much more to it than that. And I want to take a deeper dive today to show you what it's really all about.

Lauren 1:55

First, I'm going to cover the pretty basic question of what a blog is, and really just how it differs from a website. And I understand that this is something that a lot of you probably already know. So I won't spend a whole lot of time here.

Lauren 2:09

But from there, I am going to move on to what the real purpose for your blog is? And no, the answer is not money, it can't be to make money. So we're talking about a deeper purpose here. And this purpose is really what defines your content. We're gonna talk about that.

Lauren 2:24

And then lastly, we are going to talk about the different roles and responsibilities that you can expect to have as a blogger. And I'm also going to tell you, what I think is the most important role that you can be doing and really where I spend the most of my time in my own personal blog. So again, I think that there is going to be so much here for both the newbie and experienced bloggers, and I'm really excited about it. So let's dive in.

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Lauren 2:27

The very first basic question that I want to answer, and we won't spend a whole lot of time here because I'm sure a lot of you probably do understand this to some degree, but: what is a blog, and how is it different from a website? So what makes a blog, a blog?

Lauren 3:05

Well, a website can have absolutely anything on it, it can be as basic as just having a list of hair services and having a name and contact information for how to book a hair appointment. Right? That can be a website, a blog is really just a section of a website, that does have a lot more information or written content, although it doesn't quite have to be written. But it's usually a supplemental part of a website that has information that kind of reinforces the overall purpose of the website.

Lauren 3:38

So traditionally, it does just have mostly blog articles. But it's 2021 now, and there's so many different types of content that you can put on your website now. So having a blog is really evolved from what it used to be.

Lauren 3:53

What I think blogging really started out as is a place where people could share their thoughts and experiences, it was more like an online journal. And this brings us to the first purpose of a blog that I want to cover. And that's a hobby or a passion blog.

Lauren 4:08

It exists as a place where you can share your thoughts and experiences about something going on in your life. So people use them for documenting their weight loss journey, or their medical journey. Or people just you know that pickup gardening or other things in their spare time, they blog about it. But you can see how if you have that type of blog, it might define the kind of content that you create, because you're going to generally create content that is more personal and is sharing more of your own personal thoughts and experiences.

Lauren 4:40

The next kind of purpose for a blog that we have is just to sell a product or a service. And this can be anything from a software kind of service to actually just an e commerce store that maybe sells really cool t shirts. But depending on what kind of product or service that you're selling the content that you're going to have on that blog could be very different. So if you're selling in email marketing service, let's call it that or some other kind of online software service, you're likely going to have a lot of content around educating people, A, on what your product or service is, and how it can help them; but B, you might also have a lot of articles that have technical help and documentation on how to use that product or service.

Lauren 5:27

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But in contrast to that, if you have an e-commerce store, where you just sell some really cool t-shirts, you might have blog articles centered around, perhaps a movement, perhaps they are t-shirts that donate money to environmental causes. You might want to have content surrounding that movement, educating people on why that's important. Or you might have content just designed to drive as much traffic as possible straight back to the store, so that you can maximize your sales.

Lauren 5:59

There are also blogs out there that only provide technical help, or documentation or product reviews for other types of products and services that maybe they don't even own. But they just review them. And they get some affiliate commissions from recommending those products or services. I guess a good example here is when you Google technical help for your computer or other software, and you end up getting all kinds of articles from many different types of websites on how to fix that problem.

Lauren 6:30

Another purpose of a blog could just be for informational or educational purposes. And the types of blogs I'm talking about here are financial in nature, medical, educational, nonprofit, governmental, so think about all of those different types of institutions, and the different types of information that they do provide. They often have to be backed up by scientific studies. And they're generally considered to be a lot more credible than some other sources.

Lauren 6:59

And lastly, y'all the last purpose that I want to cover here is related to teaching and coaching. This is where Alex and I categorize our two blogs, it's important for us to define ourselves as teachers and coaches, because you'll notice that you might actually fall under a few of these different categories.

Lauren 7:21

So while Alex and I are teachers and coaches, we do actually blog about our experiences, and we share our personal thoughts. We also sell products and services on our website and discuss them in our articles. And we do provide other educational type of articles that help people you know, to accomplish things. But we define ourselves as teachers and coaches first and foremost, because this helps us keep the right mindset when we're creating content. It helps us to create content that provides value first, and asks for a sale later.

Lauren 7:56

So we always try to put our readers first. And the first thing that we think about when we create content is: How is this going to better help our readers or our listeners, our subscribers, all of our audience--how is this going to help them succeed? And of course, the end goal for us is still to make money, we are still running a business, but we make our money through building relationships and making connections with our audience. So it's something that is really important for all of our content to have, first and foremost, before any sale or pitch for any kind of product exists.

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Lauren 8:32

So it's really important to think about what your purpose is, because this is what is going to define the type of content that you create, and really the overall voice that you're going to have in your content. And when you're trying to think about where you fall on this different scale of purposes, just think about what your main purpose is, even if you have a few different purposes, think about the main reason why you want your content to exist and what you can do for other people, how can you serve other people?

Lauren 9:04

Okay, now that we've talked about what the purpose is, in the last part of this episode, I want to talk a little bit more about what bloggers actually do. What you do on a daily basis, and the different roles and responsibilities that you can expect to have as a blogger.

Lauren 9:21

The truth is that there are a lot of things you have to learn how to do. And you really need to learn how to wear all of the hats of a blogger, at least at first, because you are a one woman or one man show. And maybe you're two, maybe you do have a business partner. But there's a lot to be done. And I can dive into all the different roles and responsibilities, but this would turn into a three hour ordeal. So I just want to talk about some of the main things and we'll take deeper dives into all these different areas in future episodes Don't worry. For now I want to briefly discuss some of the biggest roles.

Lauren 9:56

And the first and foremost is that of content creator, or teacher, coach, however you want to identify it. I personally think of it as a content creator. And this comes in the form of free content that can be shared, you know, on your website and across social platforms. But it's also encompasses any kind of paid content that you sell, you know, through courses or coaching. This doesn't just mean that you have to write content all day long, which is what a lot of people think that bloggers do. I can tell you right now that I think Alex and I have created maybe two articles in the last year, we've created tons of different other types of content. And it might appear to some people that we haven't produced much, but I can tell you that behind the scenes, there's a whole lot more going on.

Lauren 10:46

But you do not have to continue to pump out articles constantly in order to be successful. To be honest, in the beginning, you do have to create a bit more content than you do later on down the road. Just because in the beginning, you do need to establish who you are and what your blog is about. And it does take time to build an audience and really just pave your way onto the scene.

Lauren 11:08

But the cool thing here is that this does not have to be done through blog content, doesn't have to be done through blog articles. It is what we often teach to get started because it's how we got

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started. And we still think that blogging content and articles are a really, really great way to grow, especially for Google traffic. But in reality content comes in many forms. And it could be YouTube videos, podcast episodes, Instagram photos and stories, Tik Tok videos, or written blog content.

Lauren 11:38

Each of these different platforms allows you to reach your audience in different ways. And it's up to you what route or what routes you even want to go to reach them. We personally really like blogs, because we feel like your website or your blog, it's sort of like your home. It's where all of your things live. And all of your social media connections really live as well. It's the one place that your readers and your listeners can come back to for more information to learn more about who you are, and what you can offer them, to sign up for your email list to check out your products and services.

Lauren 12:14

But that doesn't mean that this home, this blog has to be just full of long written articles. Now, if you are going after Google SEO, it's probably a good idea that it does look somewhat like that. But if you think that YouTube or podcasting might be more of your main space for sharing content, and that vibes with you more, that's totally cool, too. You can actually create blog articles that really are just a small summary. And you can actually embed content like a YouTube video or a podcast episode, and just have a shorter description underneath it. That in itself is enough content to live on your blog.

Lauren 12:52

But I do think that unless you love writing, and if you just love writing blog articles, and that's the route you want to go and you want to go after Google SEO, that's perfectly fine. But if you don't want to limit yourself to that, and you do want to open your mind up to the different ways that you can reach your audience, and you can share what you want to say, I encourage you to shift your mindset from that of a writer to that of a content creator. because ideally, you do have a few different types of content across multiple platforms.

Lauren 13:22

And the cool thing is that you can even share the same information on multiple platforms. You could have an article, a podcast episode and a YouTube video on the same exact topic. And the cool thing here is that you can reach different people with each different source of delivery. You know, some platforms allow you to go more in depth than others. Obviously, when I'm reaching you right here on, you know, a 20 to 30 minute podcast episode, it's a whole hell of a lot more than you're going to get out of a quick Instagram story. Although Instagram might also allow you to see where I ate for lunch today, which some of you might care about.

Lauren 14:00

Now to each his own on what kind of content you want to consume. But you can just see how you can deliver different types of information and make different kinds of connections with people on different platforms.

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Lauren 14:11

And y'all This is where a large portion of my personal time is spent, especially now that I've moved into podcasting. This is a whole new world for me to explore and learn. And I have to now spend a lot of time, yeah, learning how to create this type of content for y'all.

Lauren 14:28

And aside from the types of content that we just discussed above, the rest of my time is also still spent on content, but just in other areas in other areas that y'all might not see on the front end. So one of those other areas is actually paid content. And that's my course content. Alex and I currently have three blogging courses and we have another one on the way. And let me tell you that these courses constantly need to be updated. The world of blogging changes often, software, strategies, they're constantly changing. And Alex, I do always try our best to stay on top of these changing strategies, changing software. And we do try to update our courses as much as possible.

Lauren 15:10

So that's one area behind the scenes that I'm constantly working on. And it's one of those things where people might not see that content on the front end. But there's a lot of work going on in the back end, that we are doing to continue to keep all of our content up to date and as awesome as possible all the time.

Lauren 15:28

And the other aspect of that, that a lot of my personal time is spent in is related to content communication. And this is communication with you specifically, with our audience. Because once you're done listening to me here droning on in this episode, how do I reach you again? How do I get on your brain again, and make sure that you stick with this blogging thing, a topic that you seem to be interested in, because you're here, and the way that I reach you again, is I email you.

Lauren 15:59

So a lot of my personal time is spent just writing and updating emails to our audience. We have certain email funnels that have been written quite a while ago, but I'm constantly updating older emails, I'm constantly writing new emails to our audience, to you and to all the people that find us in all these various channels. YouTube, Google, Facebook, podcast, you sign up for our email list, and we now have a way to contact you in the future, to let you know what's going on in the business and what we aren't sharing on social media and on other platforms. And to stay up to date when new content is published.

Lauren 16:33

This is how we build deeper relationships with our readers and listeners. And it's where a majority of our sales honestly in both businesses come from. And don't worry, we're gonna dive way deeper into email marketing, and how to make sales from it in other episodes, super pumped for that. But just know that this is now where the largest portion of my time is spent.

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And this content creation side of it is super important, whether it's the content that people see brand new all the time on the front of your blog, or various channels, or it's the back end content of updating the paid content, the email communications, it's what I personally believe is one of the most important things that you can do.

Lauren 17:14

And yes, I could outsource some of this if I wanted to. But I honestly don't want to because this is my favorite part about what I do. It's what makes my business still feel like mine. Like I could run my business in a way that's more corporate-y, and have a lot of my communication sound like that. But I just don't want to I like to be able to be real with y'all. And I like to be able to still have that contact with y'all and still be able to share that with y'all. So it's one thing that I just I think it's really, really important to be able to make that connection with your audience.

Lauren 17:49

And I would encourage all of you if you really want to continue to grow what you do, and also just continue to keep that connection open and make more sales and optimize what you do. Just think about what the most important thing that you can do for your business is. For my business and the way that I run it, this is what I believe is the most important; but definitely take a step back and think about what the most important thing that you can do for your business is.

Lauren 17:55

On that note, we're next going to talk about some of the other things that you can expect to be responsible for as a blogger. And this is important to note all these different things because at some point, you will have to outsource some things to grow because you simply cannot do it all all the time.

Lauren 18:35

Alright, y'all. The first other thing other than content creation is sales and marketing. You have to learn how to connect with your audience, how to build trust, and ultimately how to make money with this free information that you're providing.

Lauren 18:48

Something else you have to learn is a bit about web design. And I'm not just talking about images and social media here, but also the design and layout of your blog, the structure of it. Thankfully, there is a lot of software out there that does a lot of the backend designing and coding for you. So this area isn't too difficult. And it can really even be fun.

Lauren 19:08

Next, you also have to manage your customers and manage your readers. And you know, this is this is customer service. And it's not just about the products that you sell. So if you're thinking, Okay, I'm not at that stage yet. That's one major part of this.

Lauren 19:22

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But it also really encompasses everything from responding to emails, comments, questions that you might receive through your website, through social media, through emails that you send...It encompasses all of those communications with your audience.

Lauren 19:40

Next, you also have to be concerned about the finance, legal and tech side of the business because you are running a business here. Now this one isn't of major importance when you're just barely starting out. But when you do start to make money, it does become a lot more important.

Lauren 19:56

And then lastly, the other job that you have to do is really what I want to call research and development. And this is really just an umbrella topic for all the other stuff you have to do. And that really just makes up continuing to maintain your current level of success or working on growing it and expanding it.

Lauren 20:16

This can really be anything related to learning about new avenues for growth, like different traffic platforms, running paid ads, taking courses to expand your knowledge, any kind of overall growth, improvement and optimization. And this is actually another area that Alex and I spend a lot of our time right now. We're constantly researching new strategies, identifying areas for improvement, and continuing to grow.

Lauren 20:42

And, you know, starting this podcast was actually a huge part of this job, you know, thinking about why would start a podcast if it's the right time, what kind of content we might include in it, and then actually doing the research. I bought a course on podcasting, and I started to learn about it, because I wanted to make sure that I was doing it right. And that's been a lot of my time in the last couple of months is working on getting this alive and bringing it to you.

Lauren 21:08

But the good news, here y'all is that there's a lot that does have to be done, of course, but you don't have to do it all at once. We actually have a team of seven behind this blog, including Alex and myself. And our best advice is that you should learn how to do all these things yourself first, but you don't have to do all of it at once. Part of what we teach you create and go is to take the right steps in the right order. So that you can learn each of these new roles and responsibilities, but at the right time. You don't have to do all of it at once.

Lauren 21:41

When you are able to stay focused on, you know, one task or two tasks at a time, if you're focused on just creating the best content you can be without thinking so much of how you're going to make all this money from it. When you're able to really focus in on that one task, you're able to just do it a lot better, and be a lot less stressed and have more headspace for it. And I will say, ya'll, that if you have a bigger budget, and you have some extra money to invest, and

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you want to outsource in the very beginning, because maybe there are certain aspects of business that either you do not want to learn or you just know that you suck at, it's absolutely okay. And it really can help you.

Lauren 22:19

I'm not gonna lie, of course, that Alex and I having each other did help us tremendously. And it really allowed us to focus on different aspects of the business. You know, he started with content creation, and I absolutely wanted no part in that. But I had a financial background, and I started learning about social media. So while he started learning about ads, I then got better at email marketing, because he didn't have as much time to work on the emails. So you can see how having some help can definitely help you move forward faster.

Lauren 22:49

But one benefit to learning all these different areas of your business first, before outsourcing anything, is that you can get a chance to learn all these new skills and truly understand every different aspect of your business and how they all connect, and most importantly, how your audience fits in every step of the way. That way, when you do start to get help with certain tasks, you know exactly how things should be done, and you can teach and train someone to take over that task for you.

Lauren 23:18

I can give you a real life example here and tell you that we have hired out multiple writers to write content on both of our blogs. And in every single case for both blogs, we found that the content was never quite up to our standards. And it wasn't that these weren't good writers, because they were, it's just that they didn't write like we did. And they didn't know our audience and how to reach them like we did. So every time we read the content and edited, it just fell flat, it just felt flat of what we really believed that our readers wanted and needed.

Lauren 23:55

And we've seen an experienced this happen also with paid ads. So creating ads that worked for the masses, because people were good at creating ad campaigns, but those ads didn't particularly work as well for our audience because that person didn't know our audience as well as we did. So I truly believe that if you can get a deep understanding of your business and how it works first, you're going to be in a much better position to start hiring out to help for these tasks.

Lauren 24:22

Y'all I know that it does seem like a lot of work. And I'm not going to tell you that it's not because it definitely is. But one thing I have found is that I do truly love the experience. I've really enjoyed learning and growing my business in every which way. And I've loved learning about how everything in my business is connected. And I've been able to try to do my best to optimize everything in order to maximize my personal free time and of course, increase the income that we earn. I've learned tons and tons of new skills. And I've also learned what I like and what I really just don't like some things I really excel at and some things I'm just not as good at.

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Lauren 25:02

So it's honestly been a really fun process for me to learn and to grow personally from. And I think it's just really important to find the roles that you're best suited for in your business. And, above all, remember to remain aware during this process, aware of what you're doing and how much you're doing and where you're spending your time. And also aware of when it might be time to get some help, or to take a course or to learn a new skill to take the next step in your business.

Lauren 25:33

And as always, ya'll, Alex and I are a resource to help guide you through every step of the way. I really hope that you enjoyed this episode and that it taught you a little bit more about what a blog is and what a blogger really does behind the scenes because, as I said, it's so much more than what you see on the front end. So I hope that it helps you understand what you can expect and how you might need to shift your current focus if you do feel stuck. So Alright y'all, I'll see you next time.

Lauren 26:03

Thanks for listening to the Launch Your Blog Biz Podcast. Don't forget to subscribe so you don't miss future episodes. And please share the love by leaving us a review if you loved this episode. And if you want to learn more about how you can launch and grow your own blogging business, make sure to check out our website at createandgo.com.