

Episode 9 - Building and Audience Pt. 1 - Getting Visitors to Your Blog

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 back to the podcast. I am still in Costa Rica. So you might still hear some birdies chirping and the general sound of the jungle behind me. It's actually amazing how much these microphones pick up background noise. I'm actually moved as far away from the frigerator as I can be, because when it picks up and it does, its cooling or whatever, it makes this weird humming noise. And yeah, it picks up in the background of the mic. So all kinds of noise as you can probably hear, but yeah, I hope that you are doing well today.

Lauren 1:12

And today's episode is going to be all about getting visitors to your blog or your website. In the last episode, we talked about creating content. If you still need some guidance on what kind of content you should create, and how to connect with your audience, make sure you listen to that episode. And today we're going to talk all about where you then share that content. So driving traffic to your blog or website and what platforms you're going to use in order to do that.

Lauren 1:45

Really, this is the first episode of a series of three that we have on building your audience. And driving the traffic, getting the visitors, is the very first step that you need to take to start building your audience. And in this episode, we're really going to be talking about driving traffic. So when you're driving traffic and getting visitors to your blog, these people aren't yet part of your audience. Because you are beginning to build a relationship with that person. If they are consuming your content, they're beginning to learn a little bit more about you and what you teach. But you don't yet have their email address or have a way for them to reach you again. We're going to talk way more about email in the next episode, which is part two of building your audience. But today's is going to be all about getting those visitors to your blog, which is the very first step.

Lauren 2:44

And in this episode, we're going to talk about why I think it's important to build your audience first, before you start getting too deep down the path of monetizing, and also the different platforms that exist out there for getting traffic to your website. And just some pros and cons and my personal opinion on some of them.

Lauren 3:06

First, let's talk about why you should start driving traffic and focusing on the traffic side first, before monetization. And the best reason that I can give for this, the most important reason is

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that the feedback that you get from having traffic is so incredibly valuable. I've already talked about this in other episodes, and this won't be the last time that you hear me tell the story. But remember that we first in our first blog that failed, we created a product first before we drove any of the traffic. And we ended up creating a product that no one wanted. And that was a complete mismatch for our audience, because we didn't yet know them. We didn't have enough people to be able to get to know them.

Lauren 3:54

And you know, if you're someone that has a very good idea, or you're so dead set on what you're going to create in terms of monetizing, let's say a course or an ebook, if you're so sure, I don't want to discourage you from doing that. But if you aren't totally sure, like I think most people aren't, then I encourage you to take the time to begin to drive traffic and build that audience first. And then think about creating the product. And y'all, back on this topic of feedback: It's so important because when you have traffic, you are able to see where people are clicking, you're able to see how many email opt ins you're getting per day based on the number of people visiting your website, you're able to see who is clicking on what headlines. You're able to see in your emails, which content people are responding to, which links they're clicking to your products, you're able to see how people are interacting with your sales pages. This data is so incredibly valuable when you're testing out ideas and when you are trying to create better sales pages, write better emails, and create better opt ins.

Lauren 5:04

If you don't have these people, you have no idea what's working and what's not. And then you end up just sitting, and waiting, and waiting, on what you've already built with no idea if it's actually working or not. So when you drive this traffic, you have the data to really track every step, every phase in this process, to actually making the money. And you can actually know exactly where people are falling off in the process or in the funnel. And when you are getting to this point, it's important to know that you're trying to get what I call significant and consistent traffic to be able to track anything.

Lauren 5:46

So I get this question a lot, you know, how much is consistent traffic, and it really just depends. But if you're only getting 15 or 20 views on your website a day, that's really not enough to be able to track whether anything is working or not. Now, if you get 100 to 200 views a day, and you get that pretty consistently on a day to day basis, that's going to be a lot more consistent. And you're able to then see if people just aren't bothering to sign up for your email list, or if they are, if they're not clicking over to your sales page. And the consistent part also matters because if you just have one random article that goes viral on Pinterest, or Instagram or Facebook, and one day you get 500 views, but then all the other days you only get 15 views. Well, that's not any kind of consistent traffic to know whether what you have is working or not.

Lauren 6:39

Alright, I digress on why traffic is so important. I want to next talk about how to get that traffic. There's so many different things that you need to consider here, you need to consider where

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your people are at, based on their age, based on their demographics, what your message is, and what the purpose of your content might be. You need to think about how you want to reach them, and also the kind of relationship that you want to build with them. And lastly, you also need to think about the nature of the platform that you're using, and the behavior of the consumer. So how that consumer interacts with your content, what action you want them to take, and how easy it will be to get them to take that action.

Lauren 7:24

So y'all, think about all those different things as you think about which platform you're going to use. And next I want to talk about the different kinds of platforms and just give you an overview of what I think that they're great for and what I think they're not so great for, and just a little bit of my personal opinion. And y'all, the last thing I want to say here is that, as I'm covering these different platforms, I want you to really think about what each of these platforms could do for you, and how they could benefit your audience, your business and the way that you communicate. Because ultimately, it doesn't really matter that Facebook is great for this, and Google's great for this. I mean it does. But it also really depends on how you want to use that platform.

Lauren 8:11

There are people using YouTube or podcasting in very different ways to accomplish very different things with their business. So it's not just about these pros and cons and benefits, this generic information I'm going to give you, that's why I'm going to give you my personal opinion on how they're awesome or not so awesome for bloggers, and how I use these platforms, because it really does boil down to how you use them and what you want to accomplish. So it's more than just throwing content out there on a platform and waiting for people to arrive. You have to be intentional about it. So, alright, on that note, let's dive in.

Lauren 8:51

Alright, the first platform I want to talk about is Facebook, I want to just go ahead and get that one out of the way. Don't want to spend much time here. I am personally not a big fan of Facebook whatsoever. And I only use it for two purposes. And I'll be totally happy to jump ship when there's a better platform for these purposes. But the first one is for paid ads. The ads on Facebook are very expensive and very competitive, but they still work better than pretty much every other platform. So if you are trying to use any kind of paid traffic, I definitely recommend giving Facebook a go. Maybe not at first, you might want to test out Pinterest ads, as they're a lot cheaper and a lot less competitive if you're just starting out. But when you have ads that have a profitable ROI, meaning that you do make money off of them because you have an Email Setup, you're selling products, when you are a bit more in the advanced stages of that, Facebook is still a really great platform for this.

Lauren 9:55

But that's paid traffic, not organic traffic. Facebook is the really terrible for organic traffic. And it has been for years, I don't think that's much of a surprise to anyone. So I won't go much more into that. But the other thing that I think Facebook is still great for is community groups. And this

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is not because Facebook is a great platform for that, because there's actually so many incredible community platforms that have just come onto the market in the last year or two. But the problem is that so many community groups for businesses are run on Facebook already. And people just don't want to leave.

Lauren 10:34

I actually surveyed my audience, after I saw a couple of my competitors moving over to companies like Circle, and I thought, Oh, my gosh, this would be so great people would get such better results from our courses, if they had an awesome platform like this to communicate on. And y'all I surveyed y'all, my students, and everyone was like, we hate Facebook. But we ain't movein'. They're like we're already on this platform, and we log in for other various purposes, you don't want another platform to log into just to have someone's community group on it. So I totally get it. I think that people will be migrating more and more off of Facebook, but we're not quite there yet. So again, Facebook ads, community groups, it's still a pretty great thing for both of those, but definitely look elsewhere for organic traffic.

Lauren 11:24

The next platform I want to talk about is Instagram. Just gonna also talk about this one early on, because people still love Instagram. I don't personally get it. But you know, it's just, it's just not my thing. I think that Instagram works really well, when you have an influencer type of model, business model. So if you are really selling yourself, whether you're selling your look, because it's makeup or because it's travel, and you're really needing to showcase your own life to really sell something, I think that Instagram is a great place for that. I also think it's a really great place to provide insight into your personal life. So if your readers really do care what you ate for lunch, or you post some stories, where you just talk very openly and honestly, if people love that, then Instagram can be a really great place for you. Also, I think that it's a great place to sell e commerce products.

Lauren 12:22

So any kind of visually appealing products, like I mean goodness, anything from makeup, to purses, to hiking shoes, and I'm now speaking from the ads that I get served up on Instagram, because that's what I see all the time. And man, y'all those ads work. Like I know when I'm clicking on one of those ads, I'm like, oh, they're getting me right now. But man, these shoes are really cool. No, I don't buy that many things off Instagram, but I've definitely succumbed a few times.

Lauren 12:53

And the other thing that I think Instagram is good for, unfortunately, is still just looking popular. The amount of followers that you have on Instagram is still really important to many people for whatever reason. I know that when I was evaluating podcast shows to go on to actually be interviewed on I had actually a company outsourcing this work for me. And they would list the podcast in like an Excel spreadsheet for me to review. And then next that podcast link would be a link to their Instagram channel. And it's like, you know, how on earth are those two related? But they give it information for me to be able to see whether or not this person was popular. So I

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really hate that that is a thing, but it still is. And I think that Instagram can be good to have some likes, have some followers just for that popularity contest aspect. But other than that, if you're going to use Instagram, you need to really think about why you're using it. Because people pour a lot of time into this platform.

Lauren 13:56

And y'all, think about it at the end of the day, if the platform is not helping you build incredible relationships, or it's not making you a ton of sales, or it's not driving a lot of traffic to your blog, then what is the point? Or, okay, of course making you look super popular. But what is the point, right? So just make sure that you're evaluating the reason that you're using for Instagram. If your focus right now is on driving really long term sustainable keyworded traffic, well, you're not going to get an Instagram. You need Google or something else for that, because Instagram is not a search platform. So you're not going to get that long term traffic.

Lauren 14:38

And y'all Alex and I definitely evaluated all of this in our business. And at one point I had to come to a crossroads because we were selling yoga products and there are so many amazing yogis on Instagram taking all these incredible photos, and I thought I need that to be successful. And so man, I tried it and I just sucked at it. Alex and I would fight constantly because you know, he would have to take the photos and I would hate how I looked at all of them, I'm just not great at taking photos. That's why you don't see a ton of photos all over my Instagram, they're often of my travels. Not a lot of me personally, because I just don't really like taking photos that much, I don't think I look good in them. And at the end of the day, I had to decide here, whether I wanted to be some famous yogi, or whether I wanted to be an awesome entrepreneur that had my head down, driving tons of search traffic from platforms like Google and things that would serve me a lot better than that really finicky Instagram traffic.

Lauren 15:42

So definitely think about this. There's also that really deep dark side of social media that I personally just don't like Instagram, for, if you've ever watched "The Social Dilemma" on Netflix, I think that some platforms like Instagram can be very, very harmful to people. So please just make sure that you are using this platform for good, and that you're able to really know the value that you're getting from it. Whether it is building a connection with your reader, or it is just for popularity, you know, just know what that purpose is, and make sure you're getting something out of it.

Lauren 16:19

So on that note, we don't personally use Instagram to drive traffic at all, I have just started posting some stuff about the podcast. But really just to get some activity on the account is that when people do follow us, because many of our students still do, there's still stuff going on. So if you do want to support us, go to Instagram and follow us, we would appreciate it, you know, mostly for the popularity because people still look at that these days, but totally understand if it's not your thing.

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Lauren 16:49

Alright, next y'all, I want to talk about Pinterest. And this is because Pinterest is the traffic source that we started out with. And it's still one of my favorite sources of traffic for new bloggers to get started. And there's a couple reasons for that. Number one reason is that Pinterest is a search engine. I personally believe that search traffic is so much more valuable to your business than really any other type of traffic, because you can get a lot of it, it's consistent, it's sustainable. This kind of traffic is really good for scaling, and funneling through your email funnels, your sales pages, whatnot, this has served us super well. And the great thing with Pinterest is that we call it a dumb Google because it's just not as evolved as Google, it's a lot easier to rank your content.

Lauren 17:41

And you know, y'all, it's not for everyone, it's a predominantly female audience, and like a middle aged female audience. So if your audience is male, or they're very young, it might not be great. The algorithm here can also be pretty fickle and unreliable. But as I said before, it can be a really great place to dabble in paid traffic. If you use Pinterest at all for organic traffic, it's a really great place to even just throw five bucks at random ads to kind of see what's working and what's not working. This is how Alex and I definitely started out with our paid ads. And it's been a fantastic source of traffic for us for both of our main blogs.

Lauren 18:23

Next, I want to talk about YouTube, because YouTube has also been a fantastic source of traffic for Alex and I. And another reason why we like it is because YouTube is also a search engine, it means that you can create your content around keywords, and you can have that rank better without having to be super popular or famous or seek that viral traffic from many social media platforms, you can actually carefully use SEO to help to rank your content. And again, it provides that consistent and sustainable content. One of the great things about YouTube is also that it's not as competitive as Google, because it's pretty difficult for some people to get their faces on camera and actually be decent at it. But the good news here is that you don't have to be super professional and amazing. Our YouTube channel started from Alex doing these videos in Nicaragua, and y'all, honestly he was just literally reading over blog posts and just talking about them a little bit in his own voice. And there was just a little picture of him at the bottom of the screen with his all messed up surfing hair. And that's really just how we got started on YouTube. Our videos are a bit more professional now. But those early videos are the ones that people love the most because we're talking about making money, and when they see that some random dude who looks like he did just get off of a surfboard in Nicaragua is making this great money and doing it without having to have these amazing professional videos, it inspires people to believe that they can do it too. So YouTube can be really great for building relationships with people, because they're able to see you and hear you, it's a totally different thing than just reading a blog post.

Lauren 20:16

Another thing about YouTube is that it is generally better for young people. And remember that you want to have a YouTube channel for people that want to watch videos. After this initial success with YouTube that Alex and I had with Create and Go, we decided to mimic some of

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those strategies on our health and wellness blog. And we have a very successful mini course that's been successful for years now on Create and Go, which is a five day free ecourse with some videos, and we decided because of that success, we would create those same videos for our email funnel on our health and wellness blog. And y'all they absolutely bombed.

Lauren 20:57

On our health and wellness blog, we have an older audience of mainly middle aged women, and they did not want to watch videos. A lot of our traffic was coming from Pinterest, and they were then you know, clicking and reading articles signing up for our email list and then getting served a bunch of videos. And that just didn't work very well, because A, their demographic doesn't really like to watch videos, and B, a platform like Pinterest is meant more for blog articles. Videos don't work very well on that platform, despite how hard Pinterest is trying to make them a thing on that platform, because people want and expect to see blog content, they just do. They go to YouTube, if they want videos, they go to Pinterest if they want blog articles. So keep in mind, what type of content and what medium is better for your audience based on their demographics, and what you're teaching. And then make sure you're putting that type of content on the right platform.

Lauren 21:53

Alright, next, y'all, let's talk about podcasting. Which is super exciting, because we're on episode nine now, and this is a new space for me. But me and I already have a lot of things to say about it. Similar to YouTube, I think that podcasting is an awesome way to build better relationships with your audience, because people can hear you. Again, it's a step above just reading an article. And you can just talk and make jokes and be yourself a lot more so than you can when you're writing. And you can just get more real with people. But it does take some time getting used to. And some people might worry like I did about how their voice sounds. It can take a little bit of time to get adjusted to your normal production style--I'm still working on this. I find that some of my episodes are coming out very conversational and natural. And then some of them I just feel like I'm kind of teaching at y'all, which is how I kind of feel like this episode is turning out. But y'all that's just part of the learning process for me. And I'm still figuring out what the best style is, I'm still getting comfortable teaching in this format.

Lauren 23:00

But it can definitely allow you to get more real with people, like I just did. And the other great thing about podcasting is that it's still a much newer platform than some of the others I've just talked to you about. So this means that it's easier to rank on this platform, and it's definitely still on the up, it's still evolving, the tools for it are still evolving. And if you get into this a little bit earlier, you can definitely get yourself more established a lot quicker than you can get established on other platforms that are already that have already been in the game for many years.

Lauren 23:37

And the last one I want to briefly mention is TikTok. I don't know, y'all, I'm 32 years old, and I don't really get it. It's not my thing. But I know that it's a new platform, and it's working for a lot of

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people. I think that it's great for a much younger audience. And you want to consider here, whether you're doing it for entertainment purposes, or what other purpose you're creating this content for. Because I think that platforms like this are just a quick way for people to get a dopamine rush in their head and they just scroll on the next video two seconds after yours. So make sure that you are paying attention to the traffic that you're getting from a platform like this, very similar to Instagram, and make sure that there's a good purpose behind that. Make sure that people are actually taking action based on what you're doing and what kind of action you want them to take. Whether that's, again, visiting your website, signing up for your email list, buying a product. Are they actually doing those things that you want them to do?

Lauren 24:37

And I think that's pretty much it. You know, there's LinkedIn and other various platforms that I don't really want to go into much detail because they only for most people bring a very small amount of traffic. But y'all, when you're thinking about these different platforms, I want you to think about--other than everything else I've already said in this episode--but think about also what you want your main source of traffic to be, and what might be a little supplemental.

Lauren 25:04

So for Alex and I, we have our main source of traffic as our paid ads, our Google SEO. But we use things like podcasting, and YouTube, again, to be supplemental to what we do, because those are platforms that help us build really great relationships with our audience. So everything has a bit of a purpose and a place in our business. And we are really maximizing our efforts on these platforms to accomplish that one thing. So make sure that you're super intentional here.

Lauren 25:37

Another couple of things about algorithms and whatnot, is that definitely pay attention to new platforms as they crop up. I'm definitely not the earliest adopter of platforms. But if you can get on them early enough, you can get more followers and get more traction. And as these platforms get older, they do evolve, and y'all, content starts to get a lot harder to create and a lot more competitive. So one thing that drives me bonkers on tik tok, and it's now on Instagram a lot, too--and sorry, no offense, if you love this type of content, or you know, if it's working for you, then more power to you. I know it's popular. But these dumb videos where people are just sitting there, there's like a song playing, and they're like dancing, and they're just like pointing randomly to like random spaces, having text pop up. I just think it's really basic, dumb content, and I just don't really like it.

Lauren 26:41

And that's the kind of stuff that I know, it's popular now. And it's super easy to create. But it's the kind of stuff that won't last that much longer. Because as more and more people realize how easy it is to create that content, it's going to get phased out. And something even harder to create will happen. It's just the same way that you know, Instagram started out with very basic images that didn't even have a filter, you know, there's that whole hashtag, no filter. And it's evolved into very complex videos do really well, and tons of editing, Photoshop, whatnot. So the content on all these platforms is going to evolve. And it's going to be more and more competitive

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as these platforms grow. So definitely pay attention to what's working right now. And if it's those dumb videos, where people were pointing at things with text on them, then you know, go ahead and create that. And if that's getting a lot of traffic for you, right now, that's great. But pay attention as things evolve and make sure that you're evolving with it.

Lauren 27:43

And sometimes that means getting off of a platform or abandoning it entirely. There are platforms that we have dialed it back a little bit, as we have then turned into Google SEO, and podcasting, we've kind of turned our sites to other things in our business as we've grown. And just again, make sure that you are evolving yourself, your content, with these platforms as your business needs to evolve and as the platforms are evolving. And also consider diversifying with multiple forms of traffic, just because you never want to put all of your eggs in one basket, because there are algorithm changes on every platform. And things can change overnight, people have had their traffic dry up overnight because of algorithm changes.

Lauren 28:29

So as I always say, get really darn good at one source of traffic, maybe two, and then diversify with more later on as you grow, and as you get really freakin good at that one or two platforms. As you continue to grow, you can think about things like paid ads and outsourcing a lot of what you do. Hiring Pinterest account managers or ad managers to help you scale your traffic. That's definitely where you're in the stage of you are making some money and you're able to afford that outsourcing and that growth. But for now, wherever you're at, start small, master those one to two platforms, whatever you think that you will be able to really maximize your efforts for your audience. Let the rest of them go for now and expand as you grow.

Lauren 29:20

And y'all, as you begin driving more and more traffic, make sure that you are doing your best to capture as many email addresses from that traffic is possible. And that is what we're going to talk about in the next episode: Turning your readers and listeners and viewers into subscribers who will return back, and who you can start building those relationships with; and how you can really begin building what we call an audience of people, people that are listening. This is the first step towards making real money with your business. Alright y'all, I'll see you on the next one.

Lauren 30:01

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 love 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.