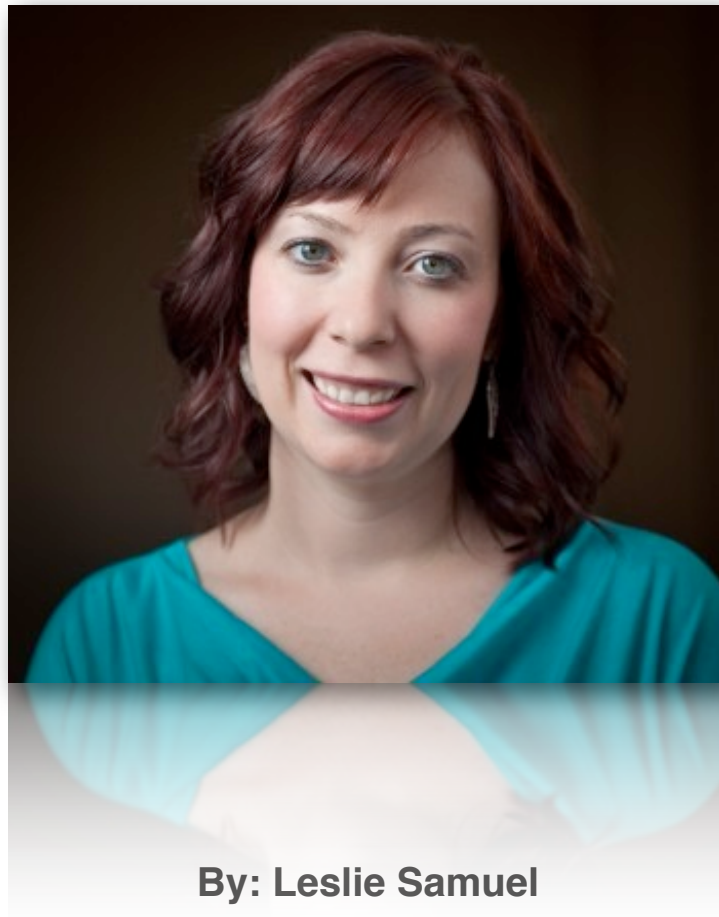




Presents:

Podcast Episode 089: How to Outwit and Outlast Your Competition - With Crystal Collins



By: Leslie Samuel



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Introductions

[Intro by Guy Kawasaki, Gideon Shalwick, and Farnoosh Brock]

LESLIE: Hello, hello and welcome to another episode of Learning with Leslie, the podcast where you learn, I learn, we all learn about how to build an online business with a blog. No, I'm not talking about one of those blogs that will fall by the wayside when Google has a mood swing. I am talking about one that will thrive no matter what gets thrown at it.

I'm your host, Leslie Samuel from BecomeaBlogger.com, and as usual, I have another exciting episode for you today. I have an interview. I'm on the line with Crystal Collins, a very good friend of mine that I met at Blog World in New York this summer. We had a blast.

She is the creator of thethrifty mama.com, a blog that she started back in 2008 with a goal of helping her readers live more healthy and natural while saving money. The blog has grown to be a huge resource for people all over the world with over 22,000 likes on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/thethrifty mama.com). She writes for other blogs. She's the co-founder of Savvy Blogging Summit, obviously she's doing a lot.

My goal for today is to find out how to **outwit and outlast your competition**. That's what we're going to talk about today.

Crystal, my friend, how are you doing today?

CRYSTAL: Hey, I'm wonderful. How about you, Leslie?

LESLIE: I am just fantastic, cannot complain and will not complain.

CRYSTAL: I'm digging that intro music. It's very exciting, very preppy just like your personality.

LESLIE: Awesome. You're feeling that?

CRYSTAL: I'm feeling it.

LESLIE: Awesome, awesome. We met back in, when was that? June? July? When was it?

CRYSTAL: I think it was... was it June? Yes, I think it was June.

LESLIE: It was June in New York at [Blog World](#). We met there. We hung out there. We had a blast.

CRYSTAL: Yes, good times.

LESLIE: Really good times, and we're looking forward to meeting up again and doing some more fun stuff and all that jazz. But, we were just talking on Facebook like 20 minutes ago, and we were talking about doing an interview at some point, and we decided, "Hey, why not do it right now?" So, this is our interview. I'm so glad to have you on the line. Thank you for joining me.

CRYSTAL: Thanks, I'm glad to be here.

LESLIE: Awesome. So, let's talk about your story because I know a little bit about what you've done and what you are doing right now, which is a whole lot. But, I don't know the full back story and most likely, the people that are listening may not know that either.

Can you talk to me about what you were doing before blogging and we'll get into how that led into blogging.

How Blogging Started for Crystal

CRYSTAL: It's kind of interesting. Actually, I have a background in music and I went to school to study music. I just have a passion for music and for writing as well. My husband and I both found ourselves out of work at the beginning of the recession. I had to create an income. You know, a starving musician is really true. It's hard to make a living with that.

So, I went into blogging to try to create an income online and started my site and within about a year, I had been earning a full-time income supporting that's my family.

LESLIE: Oh, nice!

CRYSTAL: So, that was pretty exciting and I was helping people with something that was needed. Saving money, everybody was struggling and still is struggling. So, it's been great, to not only help people but, to have an income by doing so.

LESLIE: Got you. Now, you said you were into music. What aspect of music? I ask because I'm a musician and I love anything to do with music. I'm just curious.

CRYSTAL: I actually majored in voice. So, before I started blogging, I was a music teacher and did voice lessons, played guitar, a little bit of keys, probably not as good as you. I've seen that video of you playing. I'm not as good as you.

LESLIE: My wife actually did the same thing. My wife also did voice and she taught a choir and so on, and voice lessons at a school and all that stuff. Awesome stuff!

CRYSTAL: Interesting... our world.

LESLIE: So, you were teaching with music but then, you decided to start this blog. But, the blog wasn't about music. What was the blog about?

All about Saving Money... at First

CRYSTAL: Well, the blog was initially about saving money because we found ourselves without work, and needed to save money in every area as possible. I did that through saving money at the grocery store, cutting our grocery bill budget down. I cut it down to about \$35 a week for our groceries and then, people wanted to know how I did that.

That was how the blog started. Then, after a year...

LESLIE: Wait, before we move on there. You said, down to \$35 a week on groceries, right, that's what you said?

CRYSTAL: That's what I said.

LESLIE: Now, is this a family of one?

CRYSTAL: Four. It's a family of four.

LESLIE: A family of four! \$35 a week.

CRYSTAL: Yes.

LESLIE: Oh my word! I know you can't give us all the secrets here, but how in the world were you able to do that?

CRYSTAL: That was through watching the sales cycles. Every store has a sales cycle.

LESLIE: Okay.

CRYSTAL: And, every store has their marketing planned out for the year and everything runs on a, usually 4-6 sales cycle.

LESLIE: Okay.

CRYSTAL: So, following those sales cycles and then, matching coupons when the items are on sale to get the lowest rock-bottom price. A lot of times, items were free or mere pennies when they were matched with the sale and the coupon.

LESLIE: Okay, so you were doing this. You were saving, well, obviously a ton of... I mean, it's just my wife and I... *[alert sounds]* Oh, I need to turn off my alerts. It's just my wife and I, and we spend significantly more than that!

In other words, if someone wants to learn how to save that kind of money in groceries and all that kind of stuff, which is a valuable thing right now, head on over to your blog at thethrifty mama.com, right?

CRYSTAL: Well, yes. But, it has changed a lot. I do help people save money but, after a year of being in it, I was discouraged because I felt like I wasn't helping people live healthy.

LESLIE: Ah!

From Saving Money to Saving Money AND Living a Healthy Lifestyle

CRYSTAL: And, I am really super passionate about **healthy lifestyle**, healthy living. So, I re-focused what my site was about. It is about saving money but, it's more about doing it from a healthy perspective. Living an organic lifestyle, helping the environment with recipes, and then, shopping trips as well.

I will show people how they can save just as much money but, eat healthy as well. I actually spoke recently to a group and I went out to Kroger, it's a grocery store in our area, and I, without any coupons, without even like going with a plan, I went and shopped and I got organic items, healthy items and I got the matching, you know, the other guys that are not organic and healthy, and compared it. This was with me trying to get a good deal on both. I wasn't trying to just get a good deal on the organic stuff and not the other stuff.



When I got home and I looked at my receipt, it was actually \$3 cheaper for the organic and healthy stuff.

LESLIE: Wow.

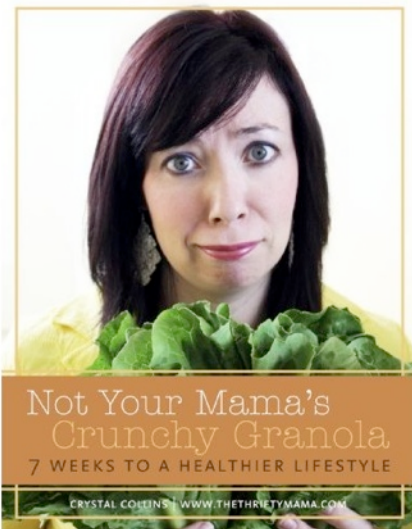
CRYSTAL: So, I'm really passionate about showing people that it is possible to eat healthy and save money and you can cut your grocery budget and you can make good quality foods for your family and not spend an arm and a leg.

LESLIE: Okay, I need to check out your blog because my wife and I are very much into trying to eat healthily and live healthily, exercise, and all that kind of stuff. We shop locally. It is... at least, it seems as if it's extremely expensive to eat healthily.

So, if you were sharing those types of tips, I need to check it out because...

CRYSTAL: I actually have an eBook. It's called [Not Your Mama's Crunchy Granola](#).

LESLIE: Not Your... Say that again, I'm sorry it was breaking up.



CRYSTAL: Not Your Mama's Crunchy Granola.

LESLIE: I love it.

CRYSTAL: It's 7 Weeks to a Healthier Lifestyle and I walk you through seven weeks where you can totally turn your life around and turn your budget around with your food.

LESLIE: Awesome. How do we get there? What's the URL to get into that?

CRYSTAL: You can go to thethrifty mama.com/ and then, there's a page for my [eBooks](#).

LESLIE: Got you. Go to page... We'll make sure to link that up.

CRYSTAL: Just go to thethrifty mama.com/7-weeks-to-a-healthier-lifestyle, and it takes you to the book.

LESLIE: Okay, I am going to link that up in the show notes. So, you said you were doing this thing, saving a lot of money, and people started asking you how you were doing it. When you say people started asking you, you mean these random people coming up to you in the street

and say, "Hey, how do you do that?" Or, were people asking you online? How is that happening?

CRYSTAL: It was both. When we go shopping and you're checking out and you're paying two boxes for \$70 worth of groceries, people are going to ask you. How are you doing it?

LESLIE: Got you.

CRYSTAL: So, it was that. And then, it was also family and friends. I was involved in some forums online. We'd all talk about the deals that we get and people were like, "How are you doing that? How are you doing that?"

So, I found that I was repeating myself too much. So, I started the blog and then realized, "Oh my gosh! I can make money with my blog, too."

LESLIE: Awesome.

CRYSTAL: That was how it all turned around.

LESLIE: Now, and I was going to ask you, when you started your blog, when going into it, did you know that this could be something that you could make money from? Or, was it just, you just wanted to share the information?

CRYSTAL: It was a mixture of both. I really didn't understand the potential for making money on it. I was hoping maybe that I could make an extra \$30 to pay our light bill. So, that was what I wanted. And then, when I just really focused on it, it just exploded.

LESLIE: And, what made you decide to really focus on it in terms of, okay, yes, first you're thinking, okay, maybe \$30 to help to pay a bill or whatever the case might be. But, was there something that happened that caused you to start changing your perspective and saying, "Okay, maybe I could really do something significant from this?"

CRYSTAL: It's probably when I saw my traffic just skyrocket.

LESLIE: Okay.

CRYSTAL: I was making a lot of money but, as soon as the traffic became a lot more, I started seeing bigger checks. I was like, "Wow! There is something to this."

LESLIE: Got you. I see. I like it. I like it. So, **traffic** started skyrocketing. When you say that... Do you share your numbers in terms of how much traffic the site sees?

CRYSTAL: I think within the first year, I was up until like maybe 300,000 a month.

LESLIE: Woah, woah, woah! That's some serious skyrocketing.

CRYSTAL: Yes, like I said it exploded.

The screenshot shows the homepage of 'The Thrifty Mama' website. The header includes navigation links: Home, About, Contact, Categories, FAQ, Terms, and Advertise. The site's logo features a sunflower and the text 'NATURAL AND THRIFTY The Thrifty Mama'. Below the header is a search bar and social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and RSS. A secondary navigation bar lists 'Freebies', 'Grocery Stores', 'Drug Stores', 'Coupons', 'Organic Deals', and 'Links'. The main content area features a blog post titled 'Organic/Natural Online Shopping for \$3.16!' with a sub-headline 'WRITTEN ON MAY 3, 2010 BY CRYSTAL IN MISSION ORGANIC, ONLINE DEALS, SHOPPING TRIPS'. The post includes a photograph of various grocery items: Ziploc bags, 20 Mule Team Borax, Zoe Extra Virgin Olive Oil, and 100% Organic oats. Below the photo, the text states 'Total Cost: \$3.16' and describes the author's shopping experience. To the right of the blog post is a 'Sponsors' section featuring an advertisement for Honey Bunches of Oats with the slogan 'THE MAGIC'S IN THE MIX' and a 'GET A TASTE' button. Below that is an HP advertisement for a 'MOTHER'S DAY SALE' on an HP Pavilion dv6t Quad Edition laptop, highlighting a 'SAVE UP TO \$335' discount, 'FREE Shipping', and 'SHOP NOW' button. The HP ad also mentions 'Intel Core i7 processor' and includes navigation links for 'HOT DEALS', 'DESKTOPS', and 'LAPTOPS'.

Focus and Passion Helped Increase Income

LESLIE: Within the first year. And, where are you now? Is it around the same or is it better?

CRYSTAL: It's the same. When I re-focused my content to just talking about healthier eating, I lost a lot of people because when I started I was just targeting people who were looking to save a buck on anything.

LESLIE: Okay.

CRYSTAL: Which is great, and, I think there are sites that need to be there for that. But, that was not what I was passionate about.

So, I re-focused just to organic and healthy living thing. Then, my traffic dropped until a lot of people would probably think it was a bad move but, it wasn't because my income actually went

up because my niche became so focused. My readers became so passionate for me and what I was doing. They saw that I was willing to sacrifice numbers or whatever for my passions and what I was really passionate about helping people with.

My traffic did drop, but it was the best move I made for my site, I think.

LESLIE: So, you had a blog first and it was going well upto 300,000 unique visitors a month. You were doing that on something that you weren't necessarily very passionate about.

In your opinion, you compare now to what you were doing then, how important is it to be passionate about what you're doing when it comes to your blog and building an online business?

The Essence of Being Passionate with What You Do

CRYSTAL: For me, it's the most important thing. I know a lot of people will not necessarily agree with that because most people, they're chasing the hard-earned dollar, and that's fine. Some people are like that.

But for me, I can't do something unless I'm 100% on board and passionate about it. I feel like I'm making a difference because otherwise, what's the point of me doing it? Just more money will not make me happy. It will pay my bills which is nice. I like money because I like to pay my bills.

LESLIE: Yes, that's nice.

CRYSTAL: I want to be super passionate about everything that I'm doing and I want to help people.

LESLIE: Got you, got you. And, of course, your audience is going to notice that you're passionate about it and they're going to get even more passionate about it because you are and they can see that in you, right?

CRYSTAL: Right, exactly yes.

Monetizing Her Blog

LESLIE: Awesome, awesome. So, now just in terms of monetization, how do you monetize your blog?

CRYSTAL: I monetize my blog through ads, **Google AdSense**, ad networks, paid ads. People can buy an ad on my site and I also do it through **affiliate links** that are within content. That's probably where the majority of it comes from, that and Google AdSense.

Then, there's also sponsored contents. So, if a company wants to work with me for me to write about them, they do have to pay for that. I don't do a lot of those just because I'm so picky about the companies I work with. Those are a lot more rare for my site. But, occasionally, there is sponsored content. And then, also through consulting just with what I've built and what I've done. A lot of people want to "pick my brain." But, I don't allow that to be for free because I've worked hard for where I am. So, I do consulting as well, for that.

LESLIE: Okay, do you sell any of your own products?

CRYSTAL: I have my [eBooks](#) on my site, yes.

LESLIE: Okay so...

The Marketing Calendar Blueprint

CRYSTAL: I have another product that's not related to that site.

LESLIE: Okay.

CRYSTAL: It's the [Marketing Calendar Blueprint](#).

LESLIE: And, what's that about?

CRYSTAL: That is something that I worked on with Dan Morris and Darren Crawford, and we created it. It's [Marketing Calendar Blueprint](#) and it helps you plan out your marketing strategy for your business.

LESLIE: How do they find that? If someone is interested in checking that out, where should they go?

CRYSTAL: It's marketingcalendarblueprint.com. Basically, what it does is, and I wanted to talk about that a little bit with this is planning out your content, planning out your strategy for your business so that, you're not just flying by the seat of your pants. There needs to have to be a

plan in place. This is something that took me a little while to learn actually. It was trial and error, deciding I'm not just going to put up anything. I'm going to be very strategic in what I'm putting up and how I'm doing it.

Becoming More Strategic with Content Planning



LESLIE: Okay, and I want to get into that. I want to unpack that. But now, let me ask you this before we get into that. What made you... Okay, first you're blogging. You're putting whatever content that, I don't know how you're deciding to put the content on your blog. But, it seems as if you went through a progression from, "Okay, I'm just going to be putting content to my blog," to where you're thinking now, "Okay, I need to be more strategic about the content that I put. I need to be more strategic about my planning for my business and all that kind of stuff." What brought about that change?

CRYSTAL: I would say that change came about last summer specifically after the second [Savvy Blogging Summit](#). I just met some incredible people there and started making connection with **Dan Morris** from [Letters from Dan](#). He taught me a lot about how ad words work and Google AdSense then, we just started talking about marketing together, just the whole aspect of actually having a plan.

A lot of bloggers don't really have plans in place. I hadn't had a plan in place either to be fair. He just really opened my eyes, and he was like, "Do you want to work on this with me? Do you want to create this product with me?" I was coming from the point of view of a blogger whereas, he was coming from more from the, his background is marketing specifically.

LESLIE: Yes.

CRYSTAL: It was a good combination. So, we worked together, well, actually learned a lot from each other and then, created the product together along with **Darren Crawford** who was also extremely smart guy.

LESLIE: Awesome. I spoke to him about it already, but I'm going to have to get Dan on an interview because I know he has some awesome things to share.

CRYSTAL: Oh, yes definitely. The guy is a genius.

How to Outwit and Outlast Your Competition

LESLIE: He is indeed. He is indeed. We'll make sure to get him on the show.

Okay so now, let's talk about this whole concept of how to outwit and outlast your competition because I know you have a number of things to share where that is concerned.

Walk us through that process. How do you go about doing that? What are some of the important things that you need to keep in mind as you're trying to build, not just a blog, not just a place where people can come and say, "Hey, this is a great blog," but really, trying to build a solid business around your blog.

CRYSTAL: Right. I tipped the phrase, "Outwit and outlast the competition" from the show Survivor. That's the theme of the show is outwit and outlast granted that's a lot more hard core than I like to do with my business but, it's a good metaphor because during the show, when they show you... (sorry, my daughter is coming here to say...)

LESLIE: No, that's 100% fine.

CRYSTAL: *[Conversation with daughter]*

LESLIE: Oh, this is priceless!

CRYSTAL: Yes, I'm a mother, too...

LESLIE: This is great! Did she want to say, "Hello?"

CRYSTAL: She's back in bed already but, she will come out and be a ham.

LESLIE: I love it.

CRYSTAL: Oh, okay she heard you.

LESLIE: This is great!

CRYSTAL: Okay.

LESLIE: You're a first. You're a Learning with Leslie first. I love it.

CRYSTAL: So, back to the whole Survivor thing. The reason I like that metaphor is because when the show is on air, before the first episode even goes on TV, they already know who's going to be at the end and they know who's going to win. They know it.

So, they are creating every single episode, they're not just throwing random content in there, random video content from the people on the island. They are being very specific in what they show you to help create drama, to help create you to be attached to the characters, so that it sucks you in. You totally just... you're on board with the show from the first episode and they keep moving you from episode to episode.

And then, they move you from season to season by doing things like the All Stars where they take past favorite characters from the show and then, they put them all into the next season. So, there's a whole strategy involved with that. And how that applies to bloggers is we need to be **planning out our strategy**, our content to be moving our readers to the next blog post, to the next thing or product that we're creating, the next thing we're doing on our site and keeping them coming back season after season—fall, winter, spring, all of it.

In planning that strategically, we need to know what the end goal is. Where do we want them to be in the end? Do we want them to absolutely love this character on the show? Or, do we want them to absolutely hate this character on the show? We do that by planning out our content very strategically.

How to Plan Out Your Content Strategically

LESLIE: Now, in planning out that content strategically and so on, what is the first step that you recommend for people to take? Is it trying to decide what your end goal is and then, deconstructing from that? How do you recommend, if you were coaching someone right now, how would you recommend for them to go about doing so?

CRYSTAL: Well, I would obviously say they need to get the [Marketing Calendar Blueprint](#).

LESLIE: Definitely. We're going to send them there [MarketingCalendarBlueprint.com](#).

CRYSTAL: All of these are the answer to that question. But, to start out, I would say, people need to know where they want to be in five years.

LESLIE: Five years, okay.

Where do you want to be in five years?

CRYSTAL: I ask a lot of people that. Where do you want to be in five years? What are your business goals? And, people look at me with like a blank stare. They have no idea. That's not good. If you really want to be a business versus just somebody who has an online diary, you have to be very strategic. You have to **know where you want to be**.

So, for instance with me, hopefully by five years, I've got two books written and published, and I want to establish my platform more in the health and natural organic living niche. I want to be seen as an authority in that niche. So, everything that I do between now and then needs to help me reach that goal.

LESLIE: Okay, so the first step is answering the question, "Where do you want to be in five years?"

CRYSTAL: Yes.

LESLIE: I like that. That's not something that bloggers usually talk about because you think about blogging and it almost seems like this casual thing that you do and hopefully you make some money with it. But, thinking strategically and thinking long term, what do I want to do in five years? That's not something that you hear often. I like that, I like that.

And when I think about for myself, when I think about where I want to be in five years with Become a Blogger and I'm just going to use myself as an example, I want to build this into, as you said, I want to have a stronger stand in my niche in terms of helping people to build online presences and platforms to help them to really change the world and influence people in all different types of ways. I want it to be a one-stop shop for anything blogging related. So, if you want to get Wordpress themes, you want to get plugins, you want to get resources and training, I want Become a Blogger to be that place where you can come to and get all of those things get taken care of.

That's how I would answer that question. But now that I've answered that question, where do I go from there?

Create a Keyword Theme Map

CRYSTAL: I think the next thing that you need to do is to **create a keyword theme map** for your sites.

LESLIE: A keyword theme map, okay.



CRYSTAL: That's a little more intensive and that's something that actually Dan Morris can do for people if they're just looking for someone to hire to create a theme map for them.

What a keyword theme map is is pulling all the keywords that are relevant for your niche and planning out your content based on the keywords that are going to help bring you traffic and that are relevant for you. So, for my site, [The Thrifty Mama](#), I have a keyword theme map that is related to organic things and I have evergreen content planned out which is content that's basically being searched throughout the entire year.

And then, I also have seasonal content that I'm working on. That would be like Thanksgiving is coming up and everybody is looking for all the holiday recipes so, I'm planning out .my recipes according to what people are going to be searching for.

But specifically, I don't want to go for just any kind of recipe search. If people are searching for how to make Smores, that's not going to bring readers to my site that are going to want to stick with.

LESLIE: Yes, yes.

CRYSTAL: I need to be going for the one step or pulling in the readers that are looking for a healthier site to visit.

LESLIE: Got you.

CRYSTAL: Planning out the keywords out like that.

LESLIE: So, this keyword theme map, is it you're creating one keyword theme map? Is it just a bunch of keywords in terms of, okay, for evergreen content, these are the keywords that I want to target? For the last quarter of the year, these are the keywords that I want to target? Is that how that goes? How exactly does that play out?

CRYSTAL: Yes, that plays out like that. Then, there's also if you're going for something that's very specific that's highly competitive, you will go for a lot of relevant keywords that maybe you don't want to rank for but, by ranking for them, you are showing Google that you are an authority in that niche.

LESLIE: Got you.

CRYSTAL: So, getting everything that's relevant to support the big one that you're going for that goes along with just all the regular content that you're going for throughout the year.

LESLIE: Okay so, first I ask myself the question, “Where do I want to be in five years?” Then, I create a keyword theme map in terms of the keywords that I want to be targeting not just this week but, over the long term.

And then, what do I do?

Write Your Content



CRYSTAL: Start writing your content!

LESLIE: Start writing the content.

CRYSTAL: Yes. Work on it. Start writing it. Write your blog post. Get them out there, and start trying to rank for those keywords. I found that actually having all planned out for me like I have this entire group of Google spreadsheet of everything that I’m working on for the next... through February right now so, it’s planned out. It makes it easy for me to go and then, write something.

Sometimes, you know, as a blogger, you’re struggling what I am going to write about? What do I need to write about now and if it’s all planned out like that, there’s no guessing. There’s no... I’ll just put something up and it’s funny because I’m actually not wasting my time now. I’m writing content that has got a purpose other than just writing something. My number one purpose obviously, to help people, which is what my passion is.

So, I’m doing that because I am looking for things that are relevant to my readers and then, secondly, I’m writing it to go for certain keywords to bring more readers to my site so, I can help more people bring more traffic and hopefully more income, as well.

LESLIE: Awesome. A perfect example is coming down to today. This podcast episode is going to be posted tomorrow. But coming down to today, coming into the evening, I found myself thinking, “Man, I don’t have a podcast episode recorded yet. What am I going to record an episode about today?” I started thinking about the different things I could have recorded on. I spoke to you and now, we’re doing this interview.

If I had it all planned out in terms of the types of content that I want to cover at specific times, I could just go to my list and say, “Okay, so this is what I’m supposed to be covering now? Let’s go and talk about that.”

CRYSTAL: Exactly. That's how big businesses work. That's how corporations work. And, if you really want to be a business, you've got to have some kind of strategy and have things planned out.

Spreading the Word and Building Relationships around the Online Community

LESLIE: Awesome. Now okay, so when you were building your blog, in terms of getting people to your blog, how exactly were you doing that? Was it just you're putting good content out there so, people were searching in Google and they found your blog? What were you doing? Was there anything you were doing actively to bring people to your blog?

CRYSTAL: Actively, I was emailing other bloggers to say, "I found this. This is great. I think this will help your readers." And then, they would post it and then, thank me in the post.



Honestly, it's the community of bloggers that initially helped me get off the ground and I think that that is so wonderful and it shows me that you can be in business but, you can still work with other people who are also blogging and want to grow their businesses.

That community aspect was what initially helped me get off the ground so well... It's something that I'm always going to be thankful for and it's

something that I, that's why I want to help that community, as well which is why I started [Savvy Blogging](#) and why I started and worked to create the [Marketing Calendar Blueprint](#) because I want to give something back and I want to help people to grow their income online like I was able to.

LESLIE: That's one of the things I love about the online community because when it comes to business, we tend to look at the other people in our niche as competitors. But, from what I found, it's not really about competition. It's about a community that's online that's willing to help each other, willing to grow alongside each other because really, there are so many people out there looking for the same thing and there's no need to be that competitive where that's concerned.

CRYSTAL: Right.

All about Content

LESLIE: Love it, love it, love it. All right, so outwit and outlast the competition. You want to think like a big business and you want to ask yourself where do you want to be in five years? You create that keyword theme map. Start writing that content. That to me sounds like this whole outwitting and outlasting your competition thing is all about content. Is that an accurate statement?

CRYSTAL: Yes, I do agree that content is huge when it comes to a blog. You can have really great content but, if you have no strategy involved, people aren't necessarily going to find you. It's rare. It happens. There are some bloggers that are huge now because they just found that magic spice or whatever that made them just blow up online. But, for the rest of us, there has to be a strategy. There has to be good content. There has to be a strategy to go along with that content.

The Setbacks

LESLIE: Awesome. Now, as you've built your blog and built all the things that you're doing today, have you encountered any setbacks or road blocks or things that you're trying to get it to a certain point but, it didn't happen or was everything always smooth sailing?

CRYSTAL: Hmm, I'm not sure if I could think of anything big. There are always the little everyday frustrations. You get a mean email from somebody who is not happy with what you wrote or your site crashes... *[audio cut]*

LESLIE: You there?

CRYSTAL: Oh yes, I'm here. Can you hear me?

LESLIE: Yes, I can hear you now. It went blank for a second. So, what were you saying there?

CRYSTAL: Actually, I can't remember now.

LESLIE: I'm trying to even remember the question that I asked you because it just got cut off and I paused it and then, coming back to...

CRYSTAL: Struggles with blog.



LESLIE: Struggles yes, there we go.

CRYSTAL: Yes.

LESLIE: Mean emails. You were talking about mean emails and all that jazz.

CRYSTAL: Yes, getting a mean email from somebody saying they don't like what you're doing. It's usually a lot nastier than that. Those types of things, I think they're probably the most frustrating part for a blogger is when like maybe something on Pinterest goes viral or your traffic spikes or you get featured on some kind of news story. And then, your host goes down. There's nothing more frustrating with that. I had that happen a couple of times.

LESLIE: I've had that happen once and it was not fun.

CRYSTAL: It's not.

LESLIE: I did notice though that you've been featured on some pretty big sites and have done some videos for those sites. How did those things come about?

CRYSTAL: Are you talking about like media?

LESLIE: Yes.

CRYSTAL: Working with the media is something that I've had worked at. It's making connections with my local media with national media and just creating good rapport and submitting good ideas for stories because the media is constantly looking for stories. They are wanting people to reach out to them and you can submit a story and sometimes, you won't hear back from somebody for three months and they'll be like, "Hey! You remember the story submitted for me. Can I interview you tonight at 9 o'clock?" You just got to be ready because the media always works fast.

So, it's pitching good ideas to people that will get featured and then, it's being ready at a moment's notice for random interviews at late night.

LESLIE: Got you. That's still awesome. That is awesome stuff. Now, in terms of who to contact, how do you know who to contact? Do you just send it to anyone that you can find when it comes to media? How do you do that?

CRYSTAL: Well, I actually created my own little database of media contacts and over time, I created it by meeting people at events, [Twitter](#) is a good place to find media connections, [LinkedIn](#) is another one... just making those connections wherever I can... [Facebook](#), too.

Making those connections and then, I build relationships and rapport and then, submit ideas and create that database in my Google spreadsheet for media contacts.

Some Pieces of Advice

LESLIE: Got you. I like it. All right so, parting words of advice. Somebody is listening to this and they heard about blogging and now they are actually getting into blogging and they're excited about it. But, let's say they've started and they're a bit discouraged because they're not sure if this can be something that can turn into something significant. What would you tell to that person?

CRYSTAL: Well, not to be too discouraging but, I'd say if you don't have a passion for what you're doing then, you need to find something else because **blogging is hard work**.

LESLIE: Mm-hmm.

CRYSTAL: It's not for the faint of heart. It's not something that is going to be a quick buck. That first year, I worked my tail off to build my site up, to build my traffic. I was working probably more than 40 hours a week doing it. And, I didn't see anything for a few months. So, that can be discouraging. But, because I was so passionate about it, and honestly, I had nothing else to do because we were out of work, it worked for me but, it won't work for everybody. And, you need to be passionate. You have to have that passion to help get you through that so you're not discouraged, so you're not frustrated.

LESLIE: Definitely agree with that whole-heartedly. If someone wants to get in touch with you or check you out, check out what you're doing, where should I send them online?

CRYSTAL: Just have them come friend me, [facebook.com/crystalecollins](https://www.facebook.com/crystalecollins).

LESLIE: Crystal E. Collins and they can find you at thethriftymama.com. Anywhere else?

CRYSTAL: Yes, I'm probably everywhere.

LESLIE: All right so, we'll send them to thethriftymama.com. Thank you so much Crystal for joining me on this call.

And, yes that was it for this episode guys. I hope you got a lot of value from it. I know that I sure did; lots of stuff even for me to think about especially with planning out all that stuff. I have not been the best planner but, I'm going to have to start working on that.

Hey, if you would like some information on how you can start your very own blog, I invite you to go to freebloggingvideos.com and there, you're going to find the ten free videos on how to set up your blog. Now, I'm talking about how to get your domain name, how do you get hosting, how do you install Wordpress, get a nice design, install plugins, all that fun stuff. And then, how do you start adding content? That type of content that we were just talking about. How do you go about doing that? You can check it out at freebloggingvideos.com.

That's pretty much it for this episode. We have a lot more coming up, a lot more interviews, a lot more lessons, and just a lot more valuable stuff to help you to start an online business with your blog.

This is Leslie Samuel from becomeablogger.com. That's it for this episode. Until next time, take care and God bless!