



Presents:

Podcast Episode 110: How to Effectively Offer Coaching From Your Blog - With Marlee Ward



By: Leslie Samuel



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Introductions

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

LESLIE: Hello, 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](#) where we're changing the world one blog at a time. As usual, I have another exciting interview for you today. I am on the line with my good friend Marlee Ward from [MarleeWard.com](#) where she provides savvy business and marketing tips design to help you grow your business and your bottom line for free. Free is good. I like it.

She is a licensed attorney and five years ago, that's exactly what she was doing, practicing law but, she felt a calling to do something more. After being laid off from her company job, she decided to take a leap of faith. She started to do, to become self-employed and was able to replace a salary within one year.



I brought her on to talk about something but, I don't really know what it is. So, that's what we're going to talk about today.

Marlee, how are you doing?

MARLEE: Oh, that has to be one of the best intros I have ever heard [laughs].

LESLIE: [Laughs] This is the experimental podcast episode.

MARLEE: I love it. I'm so glad I get to be a part.

LESLIE: Awesome, awesome. I'm excited and I don't even know why but, I just know that I am excited. So, just for everyone that's listening, Marlee is on here. I have my intro written, you just heard me go through my intro. I have my outro and I have nothing in between.

Whatever comes from that, we're just going to see what comes from it because I know she has an interesting story. So, we're just going to talk like we're just two friends hanging out and getting to know each other and all that good stuff.

Are you okay with that, Marlee?

MARLEE: Yes, anyway, it is the truth. We are good friends getting to know each other so, it's perfect [laughs].

LESLIE: That's true. There's a lot of pressure because we don't know how this is going to turn out. It could be a flop. It's all on you to make this amazing.

MARLEE: Wooh!

LESLIE: [Laughs] All right, so are you ready for that challenge?

MARLEE: I'm ready.

LESLIE: All right, so let's do it.

I'm looking at your About Page right now just because that's what I'm looking at. I just skipped over all the stuff at the top and I'm jumping down to the bottom, "born of a Jamaican father, American Swedish mother, the best of both worlds, a licensed attorney, member of the Florida Bar, practicing law, blah, blah, backpacking over Europe and all these different types of things, the fitness enthusiast, a passionate equestrian..." You ride horses?

MARLEE: I do. I was just riding this weekend.

LESLIE: So, do you actually have a horse?

MARLEE: I do. His name is Cowboy.

LESLIE: Oh, that's a cool name for a horse.

MARLEE: [Laughs]

LESLIE: How long have you had Cowboy?

MARLEE: I had Cowboy for two years but, I have been riding since I was seven.

LESLIE: You know, once I went to St. Maarten which is where I am from and I rode a horse in the sea. That was like the most amazing experience to me.

MARLEE: Yes, they are good swimmers.

LESLIE: They are! It's cool and I want to learn to ride horses. I've always wanted to learn but, I never really got into it.

You are someone that's passionate about a bunch of different things. What are you most passionate about right now, today? When you think about your passion, what comes to mind?

From a Lawyer to an Entrepreneur

MARLEE: Oh, this is fun. I am actually most passionate about empowering other entrepreneurs to do more than just be profitable in business.

LESLIE: Okay, what does that mean?

MARLEE: That's really the core of what I'm about. What that means is that as entrepreneurs, we have a lot of opportunity to be catalyst for change and a lot of times I think that we hear people encouraging this idea that we can serve people in our business through our products and services and while I believe that that's true, I think

that we have a greater opportunity to serve the world at large because being an entrepreneur and being an income producer and having the talent and the time and the resources to build the business means that you also have the time, the talent and the resources to make major world changes.

I believe that if enough entrepreneurs bound together and support this idea that you can profit for good and for business that together, we can make a bunch of small events in the world that would make major change in the universe.

LESLIE: Oh, I'm so excited. Okay, so you're like touching on everything that I am excited about right now. I just have a feeling that you would be the right person to do this with. I'm glad that you have that same type of a mentality of changing the world and doing something more than just this make money online stuff.

MARLEE: Right.

LESLIE: Awesome. You were a lawyer.

MARLEE: "Was."

LESLIE: Oh, not "you were." You are a licensed attorney still, right?

MARLEE: Well, yes. I'm absolutely licensed. I can go into court any day if I have to. Hopefully, I don't have to. I suppose if I wanted to I could but, I'm not practicing. The reason I keep that license current is because it's quite an ordeal getting a current license to practice law so, I would not want to have to go through that again. I rather just keep it active.

LESLIE: Why did you get into law the first place?

MARLEE: You know Leslie, I didn't really have much thought about what I was doing as I got an education in the law. It was like I was at a place in my life where I knew I wanted to do more. I knew that I wanted to get out of corporate America and have a bigger impact and I had no idea how.

In fact, I knew back then that I wanted to start a business but, I felt like I didn't have the resources or the connections or the money and so, I felt like the best way to do that

would be to get a secondary degree and maybe get my MBA or my law degree but, I'm really bad with numbers and I was afraid of the GMAT.

I thought, "Well, let me try my hand at law school," and I did really well and I also got into school, and I loved the legal education. The Socratic method where they ask all these questions and it's very analytical and you can debate two sides of the coin. I just love that experience.

But, that experience is nothing like the practice of law. And so, I was very disenchanting with it and when I actually started practicing law, I realized very quickly that I was out of my sweet spot and very miserable.

LESLIE: So, while you were doing that, you realize now, okay what you thought this was going to be, this is not exactly what it is. How long did that go on?

MARLEE: You mean my awakening that I knew I was in the wrong spot?

LESLIE: Yes and then, you're still being in that spot while knowing that you're in that spot.

MARLEE: Honestly, I knew after my first year of law school that I was in the wrong place.

LESLIE: Oh man.

MARLEE: I know. And so, this is one of those lessons where it's important to follow your heart because I knew that I probably needed to make a transition and figure out something else but, I had a lot of pressure from my family and from a lot of people around me who loved me and they all meant well.

They just were like, "You know, if you leave you may never go back," because I was going to just take a leave of absence and explore my options. They said, "You might never go back and you'll be the first in our family to be a lawyer..." There was all of this pressure to stick with it.

I felt like, they are right and I don't really know what else I'll do so, I'll just write it out and I did it my eyes wide open knowing that I wasn't really in the right place.

LESLIE: Got you. And, how long did you stay in that place?

MARLEE: I stayed there until I exhausted all of my options as a lawyer. I tried practicing every area of law where I could get a job [laughs] because I was so determined to try to make it work.

I did everything from civil litigation. I did big law firm works, small law firm work. I went to work for legal aid which is like the volunteer organizations in your communities where you can get legal help a few, need pro bono, basically free legal help.

Then, I went in-house which is like every lawyer's dream is to get a job working in-house for a corporation and I landed a job in-house at a bank which is even better because then, you have bank holidays and bank hours.

LESLIE: Nice.

MARLEE: So, everyone, I was the envy of all my lawyer friends and I was miserable [laughs].

LESLIE: [Laughs] How many years or months or days, or hours was that?

MARLEE: Yes, so the whole legal career was about three years.

LESLIE: Okay, three years after law school.

MARLEE: Yes.

LESLIE: Okay, so you're doing this for three years and then, you got laid off?

MARLEE: That's right. So, I'm working for the bank and I distinctly remember. I was visiting my parents for vacation. That was around the holidays. This was in 2008 and I remember watching President Obama on the television talking about the financial crisis and the bailout and what they were going to do.

I remember saying to my parents in the living room, I'm going to go home and not have a job. They were like, "Oh no! No, that's not going to happen."

But, I just knew being in the bank, working in finance in the bank from a legal perspective, we had too much that was invested in the problems that Wall Street was facing.

LESLIE: Got you.

MARLEE: And so, lo and behold, within a few weeks of getting back from vacation, I was pulled into the HR department and given a choice—I could either take a severance pay and be on my way or, I could work for them on a contract basis, they would give me work as needed.

LESLIE: What's going through your mind at this point because in the back of your mind, you know that you're not happy doing what you're doing but, it was a job and you were getting paid for doing that job so, there's that uncertainty as to where the money is going to come from. What's going on in your mind? Is it a, "Yay! I get to go and explore my passions," or, "Oh no, what in the world will I do?"

MARLEE: It's funny, Leslie. You're the only person that gave me the "Yay!" option because that's exactly where I was. I was ecstatic. I actually remember this huge smile coming on my face and the HR woman cocked her head like confused because she's been giving lay-offs week after week and here comes someone who is actually excited and I said, "When is my last day?"

LESLIE: [Laughs]

MARLEE: Her face was just like, "Oh, okay." The thing is the whole time, I had been praying for a way out. I knew that I was in a position where I was on auto-pilot. I was just on the train. The train was just going and I was really waiting for a breakdown. I wanted something to happen.

I joke about it and I say I was cheating on my job because the whole time I had this job, I was out looking for other opportunities, applying for opportunities with non-profits in New York, applying for position as executive assistant, applying for all kinds of different things like you said, explore my passion and I didn't actually land anything the whole time but, I knew that I needed to do something else and I needed a way out and if I

didn't get a way out, I don't know if I would have left, or if I would have just stayed on the train.

It was a complete blessing when they called me in that office that day.

LESLIE: Okay, so you're fired and you're happy about it. What do you do?

MARLEE: I asked my parents if I could move back home [laughs].

LESLIE: [Laughs] There you go.

MARLEE: I'm like, "Can I come live with you because I don't think I can afford my lifestyle anymore."

LESLIE: And, they said, "Yes," right?

MARLEE: Yes, they did.

LESLIE: Okay, good. So, you're at home now and then, what do you do?

MARLEE: Then, I just start thinking about how can I make money? What am I going to do? I have student loan that I have to pay and I don't live at home for forever so, I've got to do something.

LESLIE: How long ago was this?

MARLEE: That was in 2009. Actually, it was 2008, right before we hit the New Year.

LESLIE: Okay, so this is about five years ago. You're single at this point?

MARLEE: I was, yes.

LESLIE: You were single at this point and trying to figure out what to do. What do you actually do? How do you make money? How do you, you're passionate about all these things. What do you do to fill that void where there's no more money coming in?

MARLEE: So, at that time, I knew that I had to move towards whatever was closest to cash. I had to pick from the skill set that I knew I already had. It wasn't the thing that I believe I was called to do at that time but, I had to do it in order to get to where I am now.

And so, at that time, I decided I would go back to my roots, which was in marketing and public relations. I had worked in marketing public relations right out of undergrad and I did that for a while before I went to law school.

I knew that I could tap back into that. One of the things that was true for me was that I really loved marketing so, I had stayed on top of marketing even though I was no longer working in marketing. I still had a lot of cutting edge, a lot of the newest things that people were doing in marketing under my belt.

So, I thought, what group, what subset, what industry do I have the most connections in where I could kind of focus in a niche business around that industry and offer marketing and public relation types of services.

And so, I molted over for a while and I decided that considering the economic circumstances and considering who was in my roll of deck, so to speak, that the healthcare industry would be the best thing for me to target because I have a lot of friends and family who are in healthcare – doctors, nurses, things like that.

I decided to start healthcare marketing firm. I started a firm called, "[RX MD Marketing Solutions](#)." We're a full service marketing and web firm and I built a virtual team where we offered full service web design, PR campaigns, traditional marketing materials, print, brochures, and content marketing and online marketing and that was where I started and I literally went and knocked on doors, knocked on medical offices doors.

I remember I hit seventy offices in one day, prospecting...

LESLIE: Oh wow!

MARLEE: Yes, I had blisters the size of acorns.

LESLIE: [Laughs]

MARLEE: It turns out that none of those people converted into customers but, I ended up getting one customer online and I ended up getting one customer through a referral. I set my fees to be a premium brand. Within two months, I was profitable.

LESLIE: Nice, okay so, you go knocking on all these doors, you get nothing but, you get one lead online. How did you get that one lead online? What did you do? Because a number of people that may be listening to this maybe are offering some kind of service whether it's marketing or something else, how did you go about getting that lead online?

MARLEE: I'm a big fan and student of [Dan Kennedy](#) and I was studying a lot of his things at that time and he talked a lot about Internet Marketing. At that time, it was still the thing to go into forums and post your link in forums and trying to get links everywhere kind of thing?

LESLIE: Got you.

MARLEE: So, I spent a lot of time doing that. I spent a lot of time answering questions in different types of forums and finding all kinds of directories and posting links in directories and lo and behold, someone found me through some link on a forum. I think it was called like, "Sales Fighter," or something. Completely unrelated, right? That's how they found me.

LESLIE: Then, from there, how do you go to building it to where you're getting regular clients?

MARLEE: Then, once I had that income, I just turned around and re-invest it into the business and I started doing pay-per-click advertising and I started really aggressively pursuing the niche platforms for the medical industry so, I wrote articles and tried to get featured in some of the leading publications for healthcare. I did that successfully.

I was able to leverage that into speaking at conferences for healthcare practitioners and it just grew itself from there. One of the things that I did was because I was so low and because everything was virtual in terms of my team and the help that I got, I made sure that I positioned myself as a boutique firm with premium pricing. That way, I could make a significant income without having to have a ton of clients.

LESLIE: Got you. I like it. So, that's what you were doing then. Where do you go from there because you're no longer doing that? You have your blog at MarleeWard.com, you're doing that now. How do you get from what you're doing with your healthcare marketing business to what you're doing today?

MARLEE: I learned a lot in that endeavor but, one of the biggest lessons that I learned was I really hadn't followed my passion. I had just created another job for myself. And so, I didn't enjoy it and in fact, until this day, the website is still active and I now use it as a referral generation for other companies and I send people when they call me and stuff like that. I send them to referral partners. But, I would get calls from new clients and I would turn away the business because I just didn't want to do the work. I was like I don't want to do this anymore.

I realized that I didn't really have an affinity or a passion for the niche that I was working in. I chose it out of necessity and I also felt like that's not what I was called to specifically. I wasn't called to necessarily help doctors make more money by growing their practice.

I felt like I really had a bigger message for entrepreneurs and for entrepreneurs in general that I needed to get out. And so, I knew I had to shift my platform and do that in another way. That's how MarleeWard.com began because I had the personal URL and I started playing around with these other ideas that I had and it just started out as a personal blog and it's evolved, oh my goodness, three or four times over to where it is today.

Actually, it's getting ready to have another evolution as I'm actually going with the name of my company. I'm going to brand my website with the name of my company instead of with my name as I step more into what I believe I've been called to share.

LESLIE: I'm interested in that because a lot of people ask, should I brand my website as my name? Should I come up with something that's keyword optimized? Should I come up with a business name? What is the thought process, first of all, in deciding to go with MarleeWard.com and then, now to changing it to what your brand is going to be?

MARLEE: Well, I started with MarleeWard.com just because I had it and because I didn't know where I was headed. I didn't know if I wanted to necessarily have a personal

brand or if I wanted to brand myself as a corporation but, I knew I had these ideas that I wanted to share and I knew these ideas were my own. I figured to build the platform on MarlessWard.com would not be a bad thing.

The other thing that I think is true is that when you are the face of your business, whether you brand yourself as your name or as the name of the company, I think it's not really that important. It's not really that relevant and that is because you're still going to be the face associated with the brand.

I think a good example of that is like if I say to you, "Microsoft," you think "Bill Gates." Or, if I say to you "Apple," you think "Steve Jobs."

These people did not personally brand these products but, they are still the person you associate with that brand and so, they can be equally powerful. It's really a matter of positioning.

For me, I feel the need to expand or I should say, move away from MarleeWard.com as a brand because I want other people to be able to embody this message. I feel like as long as I'm branding it as my message, MarleeWard.com, instead of the message that I believe it is, which is to be a radical entrepreneur, it cannot be as easily adopted by the people who believe the same thing I believe.

And so, in order to, I think get more traction and be able to share the message in a greater way, I need to move away from that Marlee Ward brand.

LESLIE: Are you sharing what the new brand is already or is that something we have to wait to find out?

MARLEE: Yes, no. I'm sharing it now. Actually, it's not really new. This is also funny. This is a really big lesson that I want everyone to really understand and embrace and that is entrepreneurship truly is a journey. Don't be afraid to evolve. Don't be afraid to turn in other directions. You might be headed one way and then, find out that's not really where you wanted to go. And, I think that you have to give yourself the freedom and permission to turn around and change things at any moment if you know and believe that it's the right thing to do.

And so, what's happened for me and this has happened a lot to me but, what's happened for me is that, the name of my company, if you would look me up in the Department of Corporation, is **Radical Entrepreneurship, LLC**. I came up with that name for my business intentionally and there's a message attached to it. There's this really solid mission behind that and when I came up with the name for my business, I already had MarleeWard.com so, I just thought that it's not that important. It's really just the corporate name. It's the name of my corporation. It's not really essential.

What I noticed is that, as I've gone out especially locally, dealing with entrepreneurs locally, and then, speaking more, people keep asking me, "What is radical entrepreneurship?" because whenever I'm introduced somewhere, people always introduce me as Marlee Ward of Radical Entrepreneurship since that's the name of my company.

I had to explain it. I also, you know, in the bottom of my email newsletter have the name of my company and my address and this Radical Entrepreneurship and every once in a while, someone will email me and say, "What is Radical Entrepreneurship? Is that your company?"

I explain, "Yes, it's the name of my company." I realized that I have actually been sitting on my message. I've actually been sitting on the thing that is really probably the most powerful thing that I have to share with people which is this concept of being a radical entrepreneur.

And so, now I'm in place where I am flipping things and leading with radical entrepreneurship and I might be the face and the messenger of that but, that's the brand that other people can embrace.

LESLIE: That's the concept that you're trying to portray to people that come to your blog.

MARLEE: Exactly.

LESLIE: Okay, I think I know where this is going in terms of what I want us to really dig into in terms of being able to teach a specific lesson.

You're a business coach. A lot of what you do is coaching, is that correct?

MARLEE: It's all of what I do [laughs].

LESLIE: That is all of what you do. A lot of people that follow what we do at Become a Blogger and listen to this podcast, Learning with Leslie are interested in coaching, offering coaching, getting coaching, and all that kind of stuff but, specifically those that are interested in offering coaching.

It's something that I've thought about myself.

What is your process that you take people through where someone comes to you, they're interested in starting a business around their passion. They want coaching. What do you do with that person?

The Coaching Process

#1: Determine your target audience for coaching.

MARLEE: Well, I think the first thing I have to do, Leslie is determine whether or not that person is really an ideal customer for me. And so, I'm really clear on that and I really have some criteria that I'm looking for.

Typically, if a person is uncertain if they are in a place where they are still making a decision about where they want to be, they are actually not a good fit for me. They probably need to talk to someone who work specifically with people who are in transition.

I work with people who are really clear on what they want to do, they just don't know how to do it. They don't know how to get it to that next level. They're not sure how to market or package it in a way where they can get the traction that they need to get.

My process at that point...

LESLIE: Before you move on to that process, I'm interested in this question. I come to you and I am not sure as to what I want to do. But, I know I have great ideas. I maybe have a bunch of ideas. What do you tell me at that point?

MARLEE: Well, I have a free 5-week eCourse called, "[Find Your Sweet Spot](#)" and I usually direct people to take the pre-eCourse. Through that eCourse, they are able to work through some exercises and maybe come to a conclusion or have some kind of an idea of where they want to go at that point.

LESLIE: Got you. But, now, let's say I've gone through that and I still haven't figured it out and I have a lot of money and I'm willing to give you that money to help me to figure that out. What do you do? Do you turn me away?

MARLEE: I'll find someone who can help you, yes.

LESLIE: I wanted to ask that question because I thought that would be your answer. You would rather turn someone away because they are not your target audience then, take them on because you can make a good amount of money from that person.

MARLEE: Yes, and I do it all the time [laughs].

LESLIE: Oh, that is beautiful. Number one, you want to know who is your target audience, even for you coaching, especially for your coaching. If someone does not fit that, turn them away. Maybe give them other suggestions that someone that can help them to accomplish their specific goal but, if that's not something you do, you need to know that upfront and be willing to say, "You know what? I'm not a good fit for you."

MARLEE: Absolutely.

LESLIE: Awesome. Okay so, that's point number one and I love it. You know what? I didn't even write that down. So, know who your target audience is. That's something that I've been coming back to over and over recently so, I'm glad you mentioned that.

Okay, we've got that done. Then, what?

#2: Know your audience's vision for business and for life.

MARLEE: In terms of the process for bringing someone in, if they are a right fit for me then, I ask them to share with me a clear and compelling vision for their business and for their life. I have an exercise that I have them do to complete that.

I have been doing that because you cannot achieve what you do not see. If you do not have a clear vision of what you want for your business, what you want to achieve, you can achieve it.

I believe that success is attracted to clarity. So, when you know what you want then, you can figure out the "how." But, you have to be able to put in writing the "what." I have them do that.

LESLIE: You provide them with a resource for them to be able to do that activity before you start the actual coaching.

MARLEE: Right.

LESLIE: Okay, so first it's knowing who your target audience is, being willing to turn everyone else away. Number two, once you know that they are a good fit, you have them come up with their clear and compelling vision as to where they are trying to get to.

MARLEE: Exactly.

LESLIE: All right, I love this. That's number two. And then, what?

#3: Review your customer's vision and determine any obstacles.

MARLEE: Then, I'll review that because a lot of times, we don't recognize how we limit our own thinking. We all have limiting beliefs. We all have assumptions about the way things must be done or what's possible for us and sometimes, it takes someone else to look out what we believe to point out areas where we might have opportunities for growth or maybe we are looking at things the wrong way and so, I take an opportunity to make sure that we clear out any limiting beliefs before we start working on whatever we're going to work on together.

LESLIE: Okay, once they have given you that clear and compelling vision, you then, take that. You look at it. You review it to see if there are certain limiting beliefs or certain obstacles or something that's going to be holding them back. You discuss that with them.

MARLEE: Right.

LESLIE: Okay, so you reviewed it and now, you have a similar mindset in terms of what you are trying to accomplish. You know where the limiting beliefs are if there are any and then, what do you do?

#4: Create a plan of action.

MARLEE: And then, we create a plan of action for achieving whatever it is that you decided that you want to achieve. Typically, most of my clients come to me because they need help with marketing and so, most of the time, they go through, what I call my **prospects and limited blueprint** which is where I help do exactly, what we were talking about earlier, identify their ideal buyer, make sure they have what I call the magnetic marketing message, make sure they commit to a marketing strategy that they can follow through on and then, creating a marketing funnel and ways to fill that funnel, and then, being able to convert those customers.

Depending upon where my clients are in the spectrum of things, we work on a variety of those things. Maybe, we're just focusing on the ideal customer. Maybe we're working on the entire thing, maybe we're working just on the sales process or something in their funnel but, typically, those are the key issues that I will work with people.

LESLIE: Okay, so let me ask you this question. Let's say this person is your target audience. You think they are a right fit, they have a clear and compelling vision but, what they want to achieve is not something that you have done before or you have a lot of experience with. What do you do at that point?

MARLEE: Well, I guess, it really depends because if I believe that I can help them even though I have never done it before and that might sound crazy but, I have had experienced where I have tried things for people because I believe that I have a good idea or strategy that we can test, I let them know that upfront.

I say, "Listen, I have never done this before but, I'm willing to try it with you but, you have to recognize that that's what you're getting into. And, if you would prefer to work with someone who has done this before, I'll help you find that person but, if you want to carry this out with me, I'm willing to do the work to help you get this done."

#5: Execute the plan.

LESLIE: All right so, we have a plan of action, What do we do next?

MARLEE: Now, we execute. One of the things that I like to do is make sure that you not only know what you need to do but, that you have the tools to do that.

We might have a session where we are hammering out thing about your brand and you might need start to bring that brand to life through your website, through logo design, through copy writing and so, I might have you create a draft of what you want to say and then, I'll have you submit it to me and I'll review it and I might add some comments to it or help tweak it in some way. I'll connect you with a graphic designer that I have in my virtual team who can help you bring those things to life and we'll work with you at a fair price that you can trust.

Maybe you're not so text savvy. I'll connect you with a virtual assistant who can help you implement these things because I think one of the areas where the coaching industry fails people most is they give people all these information and they don't help them actually get stuff done.

So, they have all these information but, they have nothing to show for it at the end. That's where I feel like I'm really different from most coaches because I give people access to those things so that, at the end of whatever period of time we work together, you have something to show for that.

LESLIE: Okay, I love it. So, not only do you create the plan of action then, you start to execute that plan but, in executing that plan, you want to make sure that the client has the tools that they need in order to accomplish the things that they need to get done.

MARLEE: Exactly.

LESLIE: Then what? Actually, with that... no actually, yes, go ahead. Then, what?

#6: Evaluate results.

MARLEE: [Laughs] Then, typically, we have something that is able to generate results. We look at your results and hopefully, you've achieved what you want to. If you don't, we look at what we could do different, what we need to change, what worked, what didn't and if our time of working together is over then, the client has the opportunity to renew and start coaching again on the new issue or if we've done a great job and they want to move on to something else, they can do that, too. Or, if they want to maintain coaching with me for accountability and for growth then, I'm available for that, as well.

LESLIE: Okay, so this is like you monitoring the results of the plan that you're executing and see where things go.

MARLEE: Exactly.

LESLIE: How often, with an ideal client and you doing it the way that you normally do it, how often are you trying to meet with that person?

MARLEE: It depends on the person. Some people are great self-starters. They are very motivated. They will just take, they'll get one session and they are emailing me, "Hey, what else can I do before our next session?" They are ready.

A person like that who is a little more hands free might not need to meet as often because they don't need as much coaching through the process. There are people who want to really check in often. They want a lot of feedback. They want a lot of insight and so, they might want to meet more regularly.

I offer different plans, different levels of coaching depending on a person's need.

LESLIE: Got you, got you. Like it, like it, like it. Love it, love it, love it.

I'm thinking about my audience right now and I'm thinking for example because there's someone in the community, Holly from HappyFoodHealthyLife.com that just started offering coaching and she's basically teaching people to have a healthy relationship with food, kind of a health coach but, a little more than that.

So, if I were Holly and I were trying to do this coaching thing, number one, I would try to identify who my target audience is. I would say for example, and you could correct me along this artificial journey that I'm going through right now.

But, I would say for example that my target audience are women between the ages of 18 and 32 or whatever the case might be who are struggling with their weight. Then, I would say, when that person approaches me, I would ask them the question, "What are they trying to accomplish?" What's the ultimate vision? How much weight are they trying to lose or something of that sort?

So far so good?

The Ideal Customer

MARLEE: So far so good but, I would add something to the ideal customer because one of the things I think, most people do is they think of their ideal customer in terms of demographics – age, location... the general.

But, the truth is that they are a person. When you're creating your ideal customer, you need to dig deeper than that. You need to think about one specific person who is the epitome of your ideal customer and you need to bring that person to life.

What is their lifestyle like? Are they very busy young professionals who are eating on the go all the time so, they are making bad food choices and their self-esteem is low and they can't really wear the clothes that they want to wear because they have this bad self-image. They are constantly feeding themselves the wrong things. They have no time for exercise.

When you can get that specific about the person you're dealing with, you can also get equally specific about the results that you can deliver and you can communicate that in a way that your ideal customer can come to your website or come across some of your marketing materials and go, "Oh my goodness. I need Holly. She is perfect for me because I am that young professional with no time to work out and I'm eating terrible and she can give me a plan that's going to help me lose 10 pounds with only working out three times a week and changing my diet slightly or whatever it might be that she can do."

You want to really dig deep into who that person is and what their life is like and try to see their problems through their eyes so that, you can communicate your solution to their needs.

LESLIE: I love it. So, this is coming up with a customer avatar.

MARLEE: Exactly.

LESLIE: And this is an activity that I've gone through recently coming up with a customer avatar for Become a Blogger and I have an elaborate story that describes my target person. She has a name. Her name is Cristina Simmons. I have a very detailed description of the things that she sees, the things that she hears, the things that she experiences and what her family is like and how they respond to her and all those things.

That is the level of specificity you're talking about getting down to.

MARLEE: Yes, absolutely.

LESLIE: And then, based on that then, the coming up with the compelling vision is much easier because you know who that person is and what their goals are. It just makes it easier for that process to happen.

MARLEE: Exactly.

LESLIE: Then, you create that plan of action in terms of how we're going to be eating, how we're going to be exercising and what are the different things that we're going to be doing, what time are we going to wake up in the morning, whatever the case, whatever is involved in that specific target audience, in their lives and helping them accomplish their goals.

You come up with that plan and then, you work on executing that plan.

MARLEE: I would recommend that anyone considering coaching look to create some type of system that they bring their clients through. So, my system is focused on marketing because that's how I typically help my clients. I can determine based on where they are in their current state where they need to enter into the system.

Maybe, they are very clear on their ideal customer but, they are not so clear on their marketing message. Or, maybe they are clear on their customer in their marketing message but, they are not so clear in their marketing strategy.

You want to have something that you can plug your ideal buyer into so that, you know where to pick up with them and how to make sure they get the most out of what you are offering.

In the health coach scenario, she might have an assessment of like what are your current eating habits. What are your current fears or your current frustrations with food? When do you eat most and why? Those kinds of things so that, they can get an idea of where the customers at and then, create a system of how you would work with a customer who is in that place.

What you'll find is that if your ideal buyer is really specific, most clients who come to you who fit into your target market will run through the system that you've created seamlessly.

LESLIE: Got you.

I'm thinking about something that I'm doing right now which is not exactly this but, it kind of reminds me of it. I've hired a copywriter. For this copywriter to create a sales page for me, they sent me a questionnaire to figure out exactly where I was.

The questionnaire was kind of extensive. I remember seeing that questionnaire and thinking to myself, "Oh man, I got to go through all these?" But then, I started to answer it and it made me much clearer as to what I wanted to accomplish.

When I gave that to her, she had a very good idea of what she needed to do and it made the entire process much easier.

My question is this, how much work do you put them through before they actually get into this coaching thing in terms of questionnaires, in terms of trying to figure out exactly where that person is at that particular point in time?

MARLEE: Well, once I know that they're an ideal customer, I send them that questionnaire right away and I ask them to submit it to me before our first session. I'll put the session on the calendar and then, I'll give them a deadline.

Typically, it depends on how quickly the person wants to meet. Some people come to me and they want a session as soon as possible in which case they have to do their questionnaire as quickly as possible.

So really, it just depends on when we're going to schedule our session but, usually, I require that they submit it to me a day or two, typically two before our session so that, I can review it.

That's most of the preliminary work. At that point, everything that they need to do in terms of preparation is going to depend on what we talked about in that first call, where we identified the goals that we're working towards.

LESLIE: Got you. Okay, this is good stuff. If I want to start coaching, I think I have a lot of resources, a lot of information now to be able to do it in not just the way where, hey, I'm just going to put up a page and start calling people and doing coaching. But now, I have a solid plan that I can follow if I were to offer that kind of service.

So, if someone wants to get this type of coaching from you, how do they go about doing that?

MARLEE: They would visit my website and click on the "Get Coaching" tab where they can learn about the kinds of things that I can help them with and then, they would schedule a little session for us to just chat and see if we're a good fit for one another.

It's not a consult but, it's a free opportunity to talk to one another and I get to ask you what it is that you're working on and why you think you need my help and whether or not I can actually help you.

So, I assess that first.

Once we have that call and I decide we really are a good fit and the feeling is mutual, that's when we move forward. That's when we talk pricing options and the level of coaching that you'll need and how long we'll coach together.

LESLIE: Okay, so this sounds pretty extensive. I like it because it's extensive. But, my question is this, when you first started coaching, was it this extensive or is it something that evolved over time?

MARLEE: It's something that has evolved over time [laughs].

LESLIE: Okay, so I'm just getting started with my coaching. What do you recommend for me to do in terms of preparation beforehand? Do you recommend for me to come up with all these systems or to start with this core and then, add on in the future?

MARLEE: I recommend that you focus on solving one specific type of problem when you start. Let's say for the health coach, she wants to focus on weight loss for people who have bad eating habits.

So, let's say that's the person she's going to target. I would create a system or a process for coaching someone in that specific scenario and then, I would offer only that and I would start there and I would try to get as many clients as I could for that type of issue before I expand because what you're going to find is that as you work with people, you'll learn things about your clients that you didn't anticipate or you'll see things that you didn't expect.

That will allow you to expand your coaching with greater information. Then, as you expand your offering, as you expand how you help people, then you come up for different processes for each one. But, I would start small. I would start with one. I would start with one that's simple and then, work through it with real people.

LESLIE: All right, so in this way, you can start very professionally but, not be overwhelmed because you're not trying to take on everything at once. You're perfecting one system, one thing that you're trying to help people to accomplish and then, you're moving on from there. You're growing from there organically.

MARLEE: Exactly.

LESLIE: All right. I don't even think we need to talk about anything else because I think you offered a lot of value there. So, my last question is, somebody is listening to this

right now and maybe they are in that position that you are in five years ago or however long ago that was where they are not happy with that they are doing.

What do you tell to Marlee five years ago? What did you need to hear at that point to help you to reach to a place where you are doing something that you are passionate about?

MARLEE: Wow, I would say you have permission to change direction. It's okay. It's okay if where you are is not where you thought you were going to be. That's okay because there's a lesson there and you don't know it yet.

But, you'll see the lesson when you take the next step. So, look for the next step and just take that one and take it day by day and continue to move in the direction that excites you. I think that is where all the doors will start to open up.

LESLIE: I just had to start the music. It seemed like the perfect time after that [laughs].

MARLEE: [Laughs].

LESLIE: Marlee, thank you so much for coming on here and offering as much value as you did.

MARLEE: Oh, it was an absolute pressure and a blast, Leslie. You're so fun to talk with.

LESLIE: And, you did well. We didn't even know what we were going to talk about. I like it.

MARLEE: I know, I know.

LESLIE: I should do this more.

MARLEE: Yes.

LESLIE: Anyhow, if you guys want to check out what Marlee is doing, head on over to MarleeWard.com and in the future, there'll be another URL but, I'm sure they'll redirect you there.

Head on over there and get the value. She makes videos. She's doing a podcast. She interviewed me on that podcast. So, you can check it out over there – MarleeWard.com.

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