



Presents:

Podcast Episode 121: How to Build A Community Around Your Blog



By: Leslie Samuel



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Introductions

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

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 puts you in detention. I'm not 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 episode for you today.

In today's episode, I'm going to be talking about *how to build a community around your blog*.

If you got to build a blog and not just any blog, I'm talking about one that is going to have an impact, one that is going to change the world, you've got to build community. No, it's not just about putting content out there. It's about conversations and relationships. Well, there are things that you and I can do to increase engagement and build community when it comes to our blogs.

Today, what I'm going to be doing is I'm going to be breaking down ten tips that I have seen work very well for me as I've built my online businesses. And, if you implement these ten things, you can build something awesome. That's what I'm going to talk about today.

I am so excited. I am so pumped right now. I am so hype. I am just ready to go with this podcast and I'm excited. I'm just excited man. I think you know by now that I'm excited so, I guess I'll just get in to the episode.

So, I'm going to be talking about how to build a community around your blog but, just to give you a full idea, first, I'm going to give you an announcement, just an update on the whole Become a Blogger re-launch stuff that's happening, that I am so excited about.

Then, I'm going to answer one listener question that was called in from Carey from ChristianHomeandFamily.com about how I manage everything that I am doing right now and then, I'm going to get into the ten tips that I want to share with you on how to build a community around your blog.

But, before I get into that, of course, I got to let you know that this podcast is brought to you by my ten free videos at FreeBloggingVideos.com. If you are trying to get a blog started where you can create content, inspire others and change the world, sign up 100% free, FreeBloggingVideos.com.

So, let's get into the update about the re-launch of Become a Blogger, yay!

Update on the Re-Launch of BAB

August 1, that's in about, it's almost three weeks, it's about two and a half weeks from now, we are doing the re-structuring, re-launch, re... whatever you want to call it and we're going to have multiple authors contributing multiple awesome articles, and contributing a lot of value, actionable content that you can use to build your blog, build an online business around your blog that can have an impact, create content to inspire others and change the world.



We have about fourteen writers so far that have been working on writing content so, I want to give you a sneak preview about some of the types of content that we have in the pipelines. We have things like *3 Tips for Increasing Engagement on Twitter*, that's always good stuff. Social Media of course, is always part of blogging so, you want to know how to use thing like Twitter and Facebook. We have people that are experts in these different areas.

Another article, *How to Turn New Visitors into Leads* is one thing to get people to your website but, how do you get them to subscribe? How do you get them to take action. We have one article on that topic.

We have an article on where to find free images for your blog. Now, when I looked at this article in particular and I found out about sites that I never knew about because when it comes to your blog, images are so important. It helps to draw people's attention to the content even more. We know a picture is worth a thousand words and there are free places online where you can get some awesome images and I was so impressed.

I spend a lot on images. Well, no. I shouldn't say that. That's not really true. I have sponsors for image sites that cause a lot of money and to be able to get those types of images for free, I think that's awesome.

How to Speed Up Your Wordpress Blog, that is important because if someone comes to your blog and it takes a long time to load, that's just not cool. They will end up leaving. You don't want that.

And then, we have a series on guest posting. We have someone that started a blog just recently in an extremely competitive niche and that niche is teaching people to build online businesses and he just started, came out of nowhere and he has gotten a significant amount of traffic in exposure and engagement already so, he's doing a series on how he strategically used guest posting to get a significant amount of traffic to launch his brand new blog and he's going to be sharing that in a series.

Lots of content. I am excited about it. I'm just excited about it because you know what? I am learning as I edit these posts. I'm not the only person editing them but, I give the final approval. And, as I go through them, I am learning just from reading it.

That to me, is awesome. In a few months, I see *Become a Blogger* being something where if there is something I personally want to learn how to do when it comes to blogging, I'm just going to *Become a Blogger* and do a search for how to speed up my blog or something of that sort.

I've learned these types of searches, I had to go all over the Internet to find these types of articles but now, they're all going to be in one place and that is exciting. Can you tell I'm excited? Oh man!

Okay, that's the update. It's coming. I hope you're going to be here with me. I'm looking forward to sharing the value with you that I know is going to be coming. I'm excited. A lot of people seem to be excited and that's just exciting.

So, that's it for the update. Stay tuned. We're going to be doing a hangout soon. I'm going to share more information about that later. I just want to get together with you guys on a Google+ hangout so that, we can just talk about certain things, not necessarily about the re-launch but, just about helping us take things to the next level, doing awesome things online with our blogs.

So, yes that's it. Let's move on.

A Question from You – How I Manage Everything

To the listener question from Carey, he has a question about managing all the different aspects of your life when you are a busy entrepreneur. So, take it away, Carey!

"Hi Leslie, this is Carey Green from ChristianHomeandFamily.com. First of all, I went to say congratulations to you on the birth of your son. I don't think I have been able to tell you that, so far. I've been watching the blog and seeing those pictures. He's a gorgeous little guy. I wanted to say, congratulations also in your PhD being accepted. That's exciting! I know you'll have a lot of learning and things passed on through what you're learning there, as well.

And, I want to say, 'Thank you' for accepting me as one of your writers on the new Become a Blogger as of August 1, 2013. Excited about that and here to contribute what I can.

Hey, my question today has to do with the balance between work and entrepreneurship and family. You're a busy guy, obviously and your family is very important to you. And so, I'm very curious. I'm always wanting to pick up little tidbits of wisdom from folks who are in that setting, who seem to be doing a good job so, I'd love to hear what you have to say about that. I'm sure all the blogging community could benefit from that.

Thank you, Leslie. Again, this is Carey Green. Thanks and God bless!"

Carey, thank you so much for calling in that question and also thank you for the congratulations on my son. Yes, Noah is doing well and well, today, he was a bit fussy. I don't know what's going on. But, overall, he's doing very well bringing a lot of joy to our lives. We're just extremely blessed.

Also, thank you for the congratulations on my PhD. Today was actually the first day of my orientation for my PhD and I am extremely excited.

Okay, I need to talk a little bit about that before I get answering your question.

My PhD is going to be in leadership and today, we had our orientation. I'm beginning to see even more clearly how this PhD is going to enhance everything that I'm doing because you can build it around your passion. What is my passion?

You know what my passion is. My passion is helping people like you do great things using blogs, using the technology we have today to be able to accomplish awesome stuff. I'm starting to see this PhD is going to work directly into that.

It's going to cost me to have to step up my game on my blogs even more and I am excited about that.

Anyhow, and thank you Carey for being one of the writers on Become a Blogger. I am just excited.

Now, to answer your question, this whole balance thing – work, life, entrepreneurship, all those types of things, as you know, there's a lot that I'm doing. I'm a University professor. I have a family. I have two online businesses – my [Biology blog](#) and also [Become a Blogger](#). Lots going on in my life. How in the world you manage all of that?

First thing, I want to give you five quick tips. I have spoken about this in another episode so, I'm going to reference that but...

#1: I understand my "WHY?"

Tip number one, you need to understand your WHY?

Why are you doing it? That is something you need to be clear of. If what you're doing does not line up with your "why?" then, you need to change what you're doing, first thing.



#2: Everything I do is related.

Second thing, this is something that I don't know that I have spoken about but, if you look at all the different things that I'm doing, a lot of what I do is related to the other things that I do. I have my Biology blog and I'm making Biology videos.

Now, when I'm making my Biology videos and the content for my Biology site, that is stuff that I can use directly in my job. And, because of that, it's not that I'm duplicating my efforts where that content is concerned, but the work that I'm doing for one applies to the other. That has been extremely significant.

What I'm doing at Become a Blogger and the team that I've built over there helps me on my Biology site. So, they are all kind of related and that helps so that, it's not a whole bunch of different things.

There's still different things but, not as much as if everything were different.

#3: I get help.

I have great help. I have two half-time virtual assistants. They both work about 20 hours a week. One deals with a lot of the general stuff with my business. The other one deals with all the technical stuff.

I don't have to do any of that and that helps me to save time.

#4: I package my time into chunks.

When I'm working on my business, I'm working on my business. When I'm working at my job, I'm working at my job. When I'm with my family, I'm with my family and I try to structure it that way so that, early in the morning, I'm working on my business. Then, I go to my job. I work throughout the day. I come back. I spend time with my family and then, I work on my business.

So, I try to package it into chunks.

#5: I mess up all the time.

... But, I get back at it. It's not about being perfect. It's about making progress. That is how I live my life in a way of continual learning, sharing tips, getting tips from others and trying to refine and make things better.

I want to reference Episode 115. If you go to becomeablogger.com/episode115, it's about *How To Be A Very Productive Blogger (Even With A Full Time Job)*.

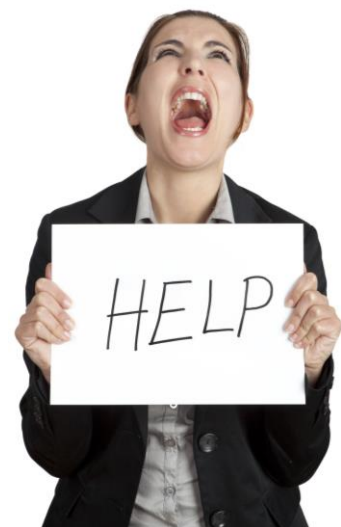
I kind of expound on those things a little bit so, you can check that out in that episode.

All right, let's get into the main content.

How to Build a Community around Your Blog

When I first started to learn about blogging, it was mostly a one or a two-way type of a situation. Someone is creating content and people come and they read. Or, people come, they read, they comment and you can have a dialogue with the person that created that content.

Then, I got into [Yaro Starak's](#) Blog Mastermind Program which is not open anymore, used to be open. That's the first place I really got to learn about blogging and that was the first time I was able to experience a community online, a real community around one particular topic. It gave you a sense of belonging.



When you are in your apartment, your office or wherever you are, you're creating content for your blog. It can be somewhat isolating. The people around you probably aren't into blogging so, you're probably that weird blogger somewhere wherever you are if you are anything like me, but in that community that we had online, I was able to communicate and collaborate with people that were passionate about the same things or similar things that I was passionate about.

That **sense of connection** went far in terms of helping me to build what I'm building online. Since then, I have been involved in multiple online communities and have taken many relationships to the next level even by meeting in person, by going to conferences and by connecting to people.



That sense of connection really helps to build something massive. If you want to build a blog that can change the world, if you want to build a blog that can have an impact, you've got to build community when your audience feel as if they are a part of a community, the audience members feel as if they are a part of a community that you are facilitating, you're going to have something that is so powerful, not just for building a business but, just for building something that is going to have an impact.

Community is important, extremely important and if you're not thinking about community as you're building your blog, if you're just making about being that person that's providing that good content and you're not thinking beyond that, you should probably re-evaluate what you're doing, how you are doing it, and think about these different ways that you can go about building something even bigger.

So, I want to give you ten tips.

#1: Know and share your WHY

This is a tip I shared a little earlier in response to Carey's question. That tip is to start with WHY. Not only start with that WHY. Not only that you need to know what that WHY is. You need to share that WHY.

I'm actually in the process right now of re-doing the Ten Free Videos at freebloggingvideos.com and I realize that this WHY thing is so important that I wanted video number one to be starting with WHY.

This comes from a book that was written by Simon Sinek. The name of the book is [Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action](#).

In that book, Simon made a very important statement that I want you to know, I want you to internalize, I want you to write it down somewhere and look at it as often as you can to just keep your mind on that concept because it's so significant.

That statement is this:

People don't buy what you do. They buy WHY you do it.

I don't care that you have a blog that teaches you how to style your hair. I don't care that you have a blog that teaches people how to build an online business. I care about why you are doing it.

My blog, Become a Blogger is not just about the technical aspects of building a blog. No. I want people to know that they have the ability to change the world and a blog is a great way to help them do it.

That is why I do it because I believe that you that are listening to this right now, has that ability and I want to be able to facilitate that. I want to be able to help you with that. In the book, *Start with Why*, he gave a number of examples.

One of the examples that I love so much is the example of Martin Luther King and his speech:

"I have a dream."

He was basically telling people the WHY. He was telling people what he believes and because he was sharing what he believes, they were showing up. They did, they came along on this journey, not just for him but, for themselves.

It's because they believed what he believed. They saw his WHY and they were drawn to that WHY. He gave the, "I have a dream" speech. He did not give the "I have a plan" speech. If he gave an "I have a plan speech," it would not be something that we are quoting today because people would not have caught on to the vision and people would not have followed.

So, it's important for you as you build your business, as you build your blog to understand why you are doing it and to share that clearly with your audience or your developing community.

That's number one.

#2: Communicate with your audience.

Now, this is something that takes a lot of work especially if your audience continues to grow. I can't tell you how many times someone gets in contact with me and then, I respond and they are extremely surprised when I respond to them.

That to me is a shame. But, it's because there are so many bloggers out there that maybe, they are popular now so, they don't need to connect with people. They don't need to really communicate with their audience. They don't care about that.

You need to be different. You need to be communicating. You need to be connecting with your audience.

Respond to your comments. Someone leaves a comment. Respond to that. Someone connects with you on Facebook or on twitter or whatever the case and they tweet at you. Thank them.

Thank them. Communicate with them. That goes a long way.

So, number two, communicate with your audience.

#3: Be one of them.

The fact is you are one of them. You are blogging about a topic that you are passionate about. They are passionate hopefully, about that topic, too. Be one of them.

Don't try to be this person that's on this pedestal that everyone has to look up to. You can't talk to this people because they are lower than you or anything of that sort. You want to be there with them. You want them to feel as if the person they are communicating with is someone that you can relate to, someone that they can connect with. Be real and be one of them.

That's point number three.

#4: Get to know the individuals.

Now, I want to point out something really quick before I move on and get into this point. A lot of what I'm saying is easy to do in the very beginning. And then, as things grow, it gets a little crazier.

I'll give you one perfect example. In the beginning, I used to respond to all my email. However, as things have grown, as I started my new job, as I have a family and all these different things,

I've had to focus my efforts and say, "This is how I'm going to communicate with people and I can't communicate with people in every single way."

I have my assistant, for example, go through my email and respond to my emails unless it's something that's only I can deal with. But, I make my blog available so that, anyone that leaves a comment, I communicate with them directly. I want them to know that I am connected with them.

In the beginning, when your audience is significantly smaller, it's much easier to get to know individuals and when your blog grows, to where hopefully, you're getting thousands of people checking it out, you're going to long for the days when you can reach out to those individuals. Take full advantage of that especially in the beginning but then, even as you go on, it's a good idea to connect with individuals.

Just before I got on, started recording this podcast, I connected with someone on Facebook. Her name is Anne Kibler and she blogs at CVilleMakeupArtist.com. I connected with her on Facebook because she connected with me because she was listening to my podcast and she sent me a friend request. I just randomly sent her a message and we started to talk and then, we got on a Facebook video chat and we were talking about what she's doing and I got to know her. She got to know me.

We found out we had so many things in common. She mentioned that she speaks Dutch. Then, I said, "I speak Dutch." And then, we started talking in Dutch and talking about family and business and blogging and podcasting and by reaching out there, and connecting with individuals, not just putting a blog post out there, but by connecting with individuals, you are taking the relationship to a different level.

I feel connected to Anne now because of the type of conversation that we had today. And, when she hears my podcast now, she's going to relate to it probably in a slightly different way. When I see her posting on Facebook, I will see someone now that I'm connected to and be more likely to communicate with.

That is so significant. I want to encourage you. As you build your blog, and you see people commenting on your blog and people maybe interacting with your content, try to reach out to them, get to know them as individuals.

Social Media is becoming this thing where everyone knows everyone superficially. I have two thousand something friends on Facebook and I don't know all those 2000 something people personally but, by reaching out to one today, one tomorrow, one next week, and so on, you are helping to nurture that community on a different level.

I want to encourage you to do that. That can be extremely powerful. Get to know the individuals.

All right, so that's point number four.

#5: Start a conversation.

Once again, this is not a one-way street and is not even a two-way street. It can be a one-way street or a two-way street and there are many popular blogs that are out there that function in this way. But, you want something more. You want something bigger. You want to be asking your audience to share.

It's not just about you. You want them to contribute. You want them to not only contribute but, also have an ongoing conversation with other members in the community.

For example, when I finish my blog post and some of my podcast episodes, I end with a question because I want you to come back and interact. I want you to come back and answer that question. I want to start that conversation and keep that conversation going on.

This can even go to guest posting. As you see, I'm starting that process now of getting guest posts to contribute to this ongoing conversation, to enhance the conversation even more.

So, whatever you can do to start and continue that conversation, that is exactly what you want to do. That's tip number five.

To recap what we have so far, number one, start with your WHY. Share that why. Number two, communicate with your audience. Number three, be one of them. Number four, get to know the individuals in your developing and your thriving hopefully, community. Number five, start a conversation.

#6: Make your content EASY to share.

All right, number six, let's move on. Number six, you want to make it as easy as possible for your community members to share your content. You want to be using plugins on your Wordpress blog that's going to encourage them.

For example, the [Digg Digg](#) plugin. Of course, I'm going to be linking to all these resources in my show notes. The Digg Digg plugin, if you go to [BecomeaBlogger.com](#), hopefully, when you listen to this, I still have it but, if you go to [becomeablogger.com](#) and you go to one of my blog

posts and you scroll down, what you're going to see is that there is a share bar to the left that moves as you move down.

If someone wants to like it, they can click on that like button. If they want to tweet it out, they can click on that tweet button. If they want to +1 it or Pin It, they can do it all right there. You want to make sure you have that. I am tired of going to blogs and not seeing an easy way to share their content on Social Media.

Make sure you are not making that mistake. This helps for, not only just, the community that you have, but it's for them to help you to expand that community. Expanding your community is always a good thing and if they can share your content easily, they are going to be more likely to do it.

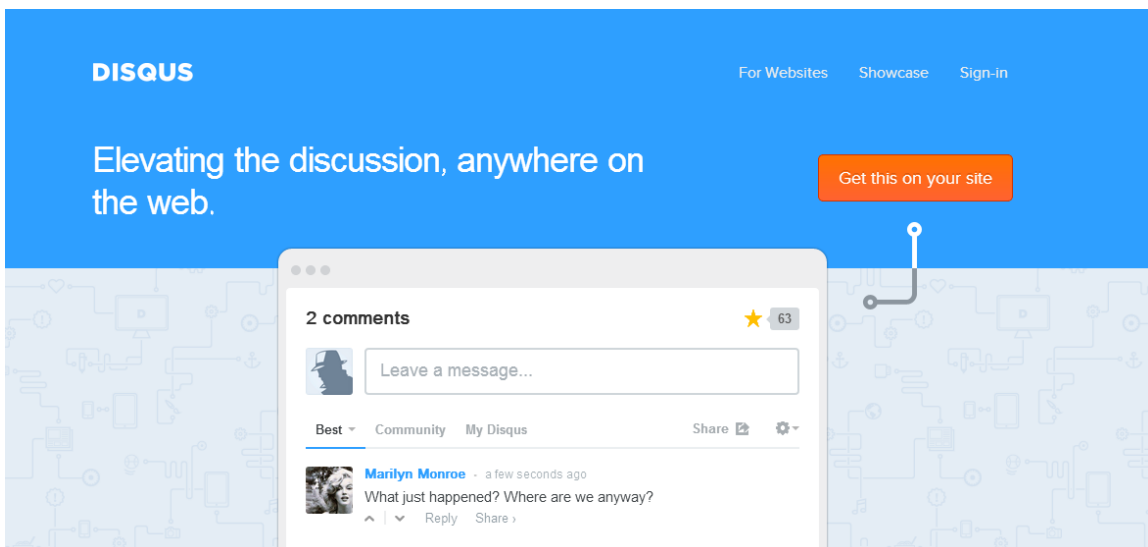
If you make it difficult, if they have to go and copy your link and then, go to Facebook and then, post your link in there, they are not going to do it.

So, make sure you're making it as easy as possible for them to share your content. That's number six.

Let's move on to tip number seven.

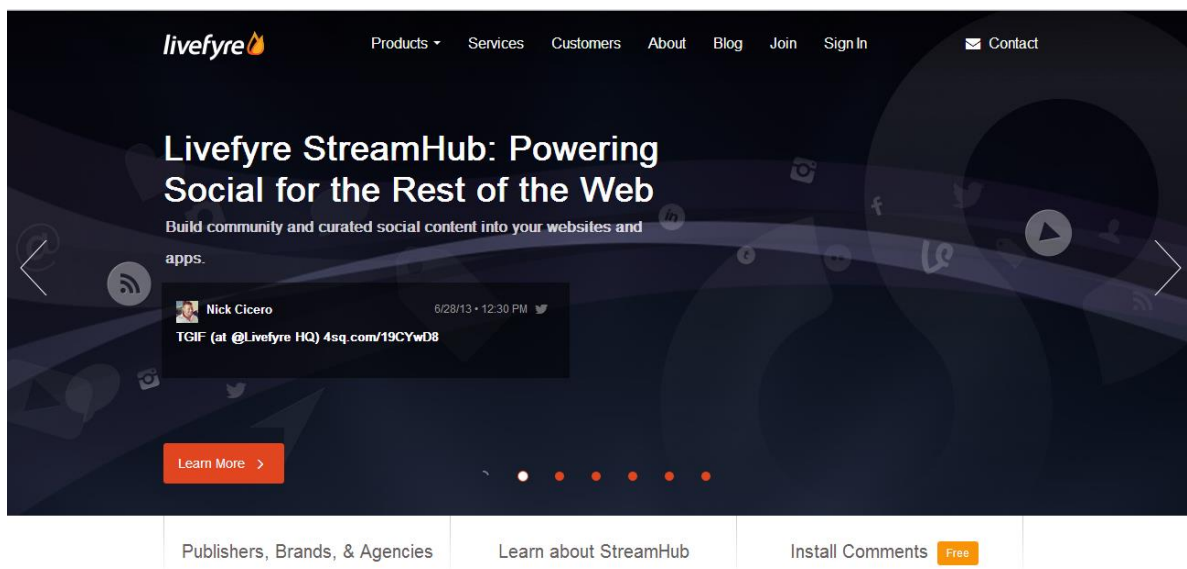
#7: Use a commenting plugin like Disqus or Livefyre.

This is something that I have gone back and forth on and over the last two weeks, in my Mastermind group, Michael Stelzner has been saying, "You need to use this plugin. You need to use this plugin." I had used it in the past and I decided, you know what? It's not for me for a number of reasons.



But then, he pointed out a few things to me.

Number one is the single sign on feature. That single sign on feature that [Disqus](#) has and also [Livefyre](#) has it in a similar way, if someone comes to my blog today and they leave a comment and they come back to my blog next week, when they come back to my blog, they're going to see that they're already logged in to the commenting system.



They'll see a picture of themselves and they don't have to enter their name and their URL and all that stuff. They can just comment. That lowers the barrier of entry. It makes it easier for them to leave a comment the next time.

Not only that, but if they are at [Social Media Examiner](#), and they log in there to leave a comment, when they come to my blog and they see that they are already logged in, that is going to make it, once again, easier for them to leave a comment. It lowers the barrier of entry and makes it more likely that they are going to leave a comment. He's done some research on that and verified it and he finally convinced me and I put it on my blog.

I would encourage you to do the same thing. The main feature is a single on. Number two, they can sign in with Facebook and Twitter and Google and all those different services so that, they don't have to enter those details. It just makes it easier. It's one less step for them to do so, it will increase the likelihood that they are going to leave comment.

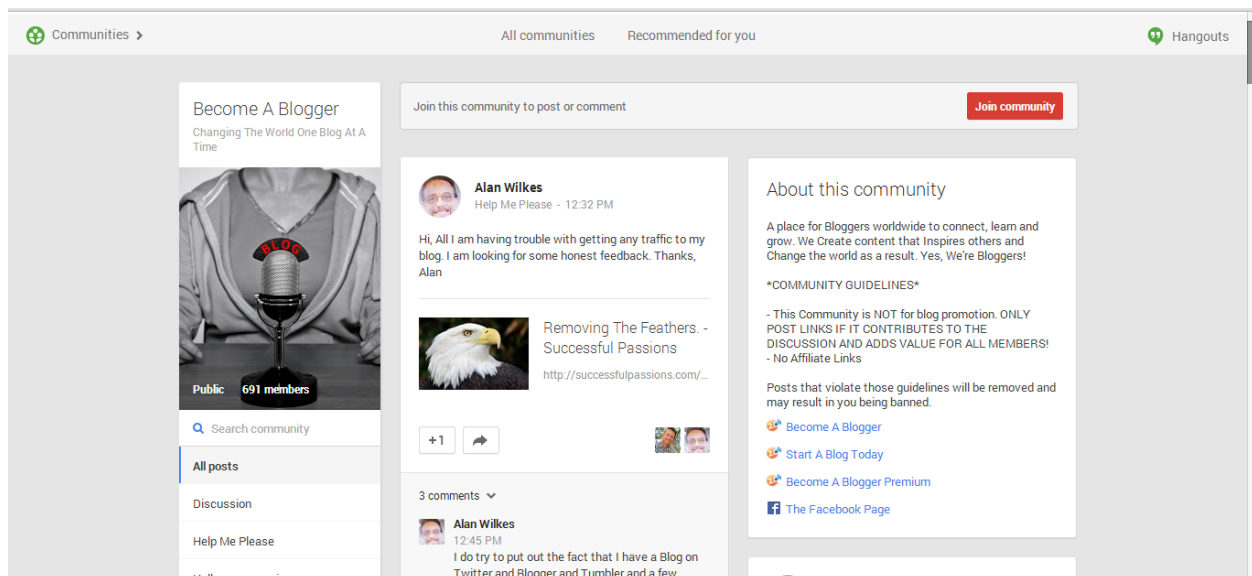
This is something that I am testing out myself now to see how well it works but, I would encourage you to check out Disqus and of course, I'll leave the link to that in the show notes or Livefyre.

They both do similar things in different ways. For now, I'm sticking with Disqus.

#8: Use social media platforms that allow members of your community to connect with each other.

Now, this is something that, I think comes later on. As you have been building your community and you know you have enough of an audience that you can actually set up a community on social media where people can interact with each other, that helps to take things to the next level.

I think the perfect platform for doing this is Google+ communities. We have our Become a Blogger Community if you go to becomeablogger.com/community, it's going to take you to the Google+ community where you're going to see Become a Blogger Community members engaging in discussion, connecting with each other.



If you can facilitate that connecting with each other, you have just upped your game. I have seen great things happen with that. I have seen people asking for input and feedback on what they are doing and getting different ideas for projects that they are working on. I have seen mastermind groups form within that community and to be able to facilitate that is extremely powerful.

Tip number eight, use social media platforms that allow the members of your community to connect with each other, not just with you but, with each other.

#9: Use Google+ Hangouts.

Number nine, since we're talking about Google+ Communities, we might as well talk about Hangouts. Use Google+ Hangouts. In fact, as I mentioned, we're going to have one coming up

soon, probably not this week but, next week, Thursday and I'll give you some more details about that as time moves on.

But, Google+ hangouts are a great way for you to get on video chat with up to ten of your community members and you can have as many as you can have watching live and interacting on your blog and all that kind of stuff awesome for engagement, awesome for rallying the community, awesome for sharing valuable content, live and it's free! It doesn't get better than that.

And, it's extremely powerful. I would invite you to use that and leverage that to build your community.

#10: Do unexpected nice things.

My friend, Pat Flynn calls it "Random Acts of Kindness." I'm talking specifically about doing things that your members may not expect.

For example, when someone, this happens not 100% of the time but, someone might come to Become a Blogger and purchase **Become a Blogger Premium**. It's not for sale right now but, when it was for sale, we had a bunch of people go ahead and purchase it. What I try to do is give the members that I can call, give them a call and ask them how they are doing, thank them for signing up for Become a Blogger and ask them, "Hey, do you have any questions that you might want me to answer?" Or, just kind of get some insight on what they are doing.

Some of the things that I have spoken about like getting to know the individuals and starting a conversation but, just connecting with them.

I can't tell you how many of them are extremely surprised when they answer the phone and I say, "Hey, this is Leslie Samuel from Become a Blogger. How are you doing?"

They are surprised because they don't expect that. Those types of things are priceless. You can surprise your unsuspecting member or an unsuspecting member of your community with just your time, where you can give them some free coaching or something of that sort.

You can do something like recognizing individuals in your community. I do that all the time. I highlight individuals that I believe are doing great things and I congratulate them publicly. I link to their site and recognize them that way and that goes a very far way when it comes to building a community.

That's ten tips. Yes, that's ten tips! Yes, but of course, I got to give you a bonus. I got to throw that. I always go that. It almost seems like it's no longer a bonus. It's just unexpected that when I say ten, I mean eleven. When I say five, I mean six.

Bonus Tip #11: Do face-to-face live meet-ups.

Anyhow, tip number eleven, once again as you build your community, this is something that I have seen really connect people in your community. Doing face-to-face live meet-ups. I've been involved in a number of meet-ups from other friends of mine online that have done meet-ups. I have done my first meet-up last month... Was it last month or this month? Yes, last month in Cincinnati, Ohio and we had about seven people show up and it was just great to meet in person, to shake hands, to hug, to just get to know each other face to face.



Take things to the next level. If you can do that with your blog, you would be surprised at the type of impact that it can have. So, I want to encourage you to do that.

Okay, you might say, "I don't have a big enough audience for that," and maybe that is the case but, as you build even with one person and meeting with that one person in person, you get what I'm saying, that is powerful because the next time they see your blog post, the next time they hear your podcast, they watch your video, they have not only a face to attribute that to but, they have some face to face experiences that they can tie that to.

It makes them feel even more connected.

So, those are my ten plus one tips.

To recap,

- #1: Start with WHY and share that WHY.
- #2: Communicate with your audience.
- #3: Be one of them.
- #4: Get to know the individuals.
- #5: Start a conversation and carry on and continue that conversation.
- #6: Make it easy for your community to share using plugins that can help with sharing buttons.
- #7: Use Disqus or Livefyre for your commenting system.
- #8: Use social media platforms that allow members to communicate directly with each other.
- #9: Use Google+ hangouts.
- #10: Do unexpected nice things.
- Bonus tip #11: Do live in person meet-ups.

Yes, that was it. Man, I hope you got a lot of value from that. I have one question for you. Come back to this episode, becomeablogger.com/episode121 and answer this question:

"What tip do you have for building a community with your blog?"

Head on over to the blog, becomeablogger.com/episode121.

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If you are trying to get your blog started so that, you can create content, inspire others and even change the world while building your online business, head on over to my free blogging course, freebloggingvideos.com where you get to follow me as I show you exactly how I've done it and how so many others have done the same. It's free, it's actionable, and awesome--freebloggingvideos.com.

That's pretty much it for this episode. I'm going to let the music lead you up.

Until next time, take care and God bless!