



Presents:

Podcast Episode 139: How to Turn a Blog Into a Business -- with Toni Anderson



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 has a mood swing. I'm 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.

Just imagine this -- homeschooling seven kids, doing household chores, managing blogs, managing conferences, speaking at conferences... All of these and more while her spouse is away from home more than being at home. Today's guest does just that. Seems impossible?

Well, Toni Anderson is the multi-tasking Happy Housewife and blogger. She brings real-life experiences to her blog to help other families manage their homes. Despite everything she has to juggle every single day, she manages to take care of everyone in the family, (man, that's serious stuff right there) and build a successful blog and online business.

In today's interview we're going to be talking about *how to take a blog and turn it into a successful business*. That's what we're going to talk about today.

LESLIE: Toni, my friend, how are you doing today?

TONI: I am awesome, how are you?

LESLIE: You know, I just can't complain. I'm alive so, that's a good thing.

TONI: That's right.

LESLIE: And, I'm glad to have you on here.

TONI: I'm excited to be here. Thank you so much for having me.

LESLIE: Not a problem. So, we met when I came down to **Savvy Blogging Conference** and we connected there and then, we connected again in Chicago. It's obvious to me that you have a lot on your plate. For those that may not know you, tell us a little bit about yourself.

TONI: Okay, well, I am a navy wife. My husband is currently stationed in Afghanistan. He's on a nine months deployment so, it is me and these seven kids holding down the fort right outside DC in Maryland. I am a homeschooling mom like you said. I have actually six kids still at home in school and one that we just graduated a year ago and she's living at home but, we don't have to school her anymore. So, that's good. Military spouse for 20 years so, we've lived a lot of places, moved around a lot.



Homeschooling's been great because there's been so much flexibility with the kids in moving, not having to switch schools and then, of course, I blog. I have been blogging at [The Happy Housewife](http://TheHappyHousewife.com) since early 2008. I had a blog before that and then, also, I'm involved with the business side of blogging and in helping other bloggers achieve their goals and help start businesses, doing something that they love and they are passionate about and hopefully they are already writing about online.

LESLIE: Okay, so here's the deal.

My wife and I just had one child. I said, "One child." Since having this one child, a lot in my life has changed. I've come to realize that having children takes a lot out of you. I'm thinking to myself, I have one child. This is a lot of work. I can do this. I can do this.

Seven children is what you said, right?

TONI: Yes.

LESLIE: So, how in the world do you manage seven kids, homeschooling and still doing all these stuff that you're doing online because people ask me about it all the time with my one little child. How in the world do you do it?

TONI: Well, I think first of all, after you have a couple, you give up on a lot of those things that you thought were important. They can wear the same clothes two days in a row. It doesn't really matter. No one's noticing. You start lowering your standards for certain things in your life.

Frozen pizza isn't that bad anymore. There's definitely, I think in all parents, whether they work or they stay at home, once you get a couple of kids, you've seen them, the first kid drops the pacifier and you go and you boil it and put hot water and sanitize it for two days and the third kid drops the pacifier, and you blow the dust off and stick it in their mouths.

LESLIE: [*Laughs*]

TONI: So, I think there's definitely something to be said about having a couple of kids, getting a little more experience and sort of knowing how to work the system with kids for sure. My kids, I do have older children and they are very helpful. I definitely have help at home.

It's nice when they have siblings, they all tag along each other. There's not a kid that can sneak off very easily when you have a lot of them.

LESLIE: Okay so, after four or five, they can help out a lot. So, that's what I need to do, get four or five more?

TONI: Yes. Get a couple more.

LESLIE: All right, we'll see how that goes [*laughs*]. All right. Sweet.

When you started your blog, did you start it as a business? Was that your intention from the beginning?

The Origin of The Happy Housewife Blog

TONI: I did not. I actually started sort of a full circle thing. I started blogging in 2006 when my husband deployed to Iraq and he couldn't read certain email servers and I think that was back when we were all on AOL and so, he couldn't always get emails that I sent him.

So, I started blogging basically to tell him our story at home while he was gone and updated it almost everyday with just what happened that day or what crises we were facing and it was basically for him although it wasn't a private site. I didn't try to get out there and there was no Facebook and things like that to publicize your site back then.

Through a series of odd events, I got an email from Oliver North, Col. Oliver North, who somehow stumbled upon my blog and had write a post about patriotism to my husband thanking him for his service and he basically said, "I love your post. I'd like to re-publish it. Would you be okay with that?"

I deleted the email thinking, there's no way Oliver North wrote me an email. And then, I got an email from his publicist saying, "Hey, did you get the email from Col. North?" I thought, "Oh, this isn't a joke."

So, it hit me at that point that blogging was something more than just telling your story. It could be. And, it's okay to just tell your story but, I realize that, "Wow, there's people out there that I have no idea that I could be influencing with this site."

I knew in the back of my head that there was something more but, I wasn't quite sure how to get there and I knew I didn't want to get there with my site as it was because it had so much personal information because it truly was letters to my husband.

I started thinking about how I could transition into something that would be more resourceful as a military wife knowing that we had spent most of our lives away from family and without that sort of mom influence to tell you how to cook something and how to solve a problem.

In my mind, I knew I wanted to be that mom away from home to other military wives basically. So, it took me about a year to figure out what I wanted to do and then, I launched with The Happy Housewife in the beginning of 2008.

Transitioning the Blog into a Business

LESLIE: How was that process for you? How did you figure out what you wanted to do because I know a lot of people start off just blogging for whatever reason, whether it's a personal diary or whatever the case might be.

And then, they realize man, there's potentially more here and they go through a transition phase. What was that like for you and how did you make the decision as to which direction you wanted to take it in?

TONI: I think I knew all along that I wanted to be this resource and so, I had that vision from day one which I think is very important and I think even for people that are doing this for fun as a hobby or just as a creative outlet which is all great to be doing it that way, when you decide it's time to transition, it's time to really think about why am I doing what I'm doing? And, is this something I want to get up and do everyday?

Because the reality is, when you start to make that transition from hobby to business, you have to be willing to put in 10, 11, 12-hour days and be making a dollar an hour. In reality, you're not going to make any money in your first month of blogging. That's okay.



The beautiful thing about blogging is, it's a business that requires very little financial investment. If you want to open a Subway franchise, you're going to spend \$300,000 or whatever they charge the franchisee.

If you want to start a blog, you're going to spend \$9 at GoDaddy. The beautiful thing is it's not going to cost you anything except for your time. So, when you start, think about what do I really love and I'm passionate about and do I care about enough to work for free for until I can take it to the next point where I can make some money?

LESLIE: So, an important thing in there is passion for you then.

TONI: Yes. I think you've been in the business long enough to see people that start very excited... Buy the domain, pay for a big blog design, get on Facebook and they fizzle out in six to nine months because they can't keep up the pace about something they don't care passionately about.

LESLIE: Definitely and I have seen that over and over again because if you don't have that passion, why would you continue working for nothing? *[Laughs]*

TONI: Right.

LESLIE: What's keeping you going?

TONI: And, the other thing too to think about is that, and definitely when I first started, is I told everybody about my blog. If you got me in the grocery store, I would tell you because I was excited about it. I was excited about what I was doing. I didn't tell a lot of my family *[laughs]* but, I would talk to people because I felt what I was doing was so valuable and then, I felt like I wish that someone would have done this for me ten years earlier.

So, I think when you're passionate about something and I see this in you so much as well like, when you're passionate about your job, it flows into everything. It flows into your conversations and it makes you a better sales person for your own site because you're so excited about it that you can't help to talk about it to other people.

How to Not Be the Annoying Marketer

LESLIE: This is something that I was just having a conversation with a friend about yesterday. How do you do that? You're telling people in the story. You're telling people all over the place. How do you do that without being that annoying marketer person that when you come into a room, the friends are like, "Oh man, here she comes again. She's going to talk to us about this blog."

How do you do that in a way that you don't become that person.

TONI: Right, the uncle no one wants to --

LESLIE: Exactly.

TONI: I think... And of course, this is really topical. When I first started writing, I write all about home management and when I first started writing, the big focus for me was personal finance because that was sort of the phase of our lives that we were in at that time, as paying down debt, getting financially stable and it was easy to talk about because when people would... Everyone talks about money whether it's saving money with coupons or I need to re-finance my house, there's always sort of an opportunity to talk about that.

So, I would say, "Well, you know have you looked in to this or have you thought about doing this?"

When they would say, "Oh, I haven't thought about that. Where did you find out about that?" I could say, "Well, I wrote about it on my site." And so, it seems not so sale-sy because you're helping somebody.

And so, with any topic, you can really do that. Like [Serena from Thrift Diving...](#)

LESLIE: She is the one I was talking to about it yesterday, by the way.

TONI: So, she does all these awesome DIY projects. Well, it would be very natural for someone, for her to have a conversation with a friend, with a colleague and they say, "Oh, I found this dresser at Craigs List. I got it. I don't know what to do with it."

Well, it would be easy for her to transition right into, "Have you thought about using this paint or this project for this technique and, oh by the way, I wrote about it.." So, you're not really sale-sy. And then, people start coming to you because they view you as that resource and that's the thing is if you can position yourself as the expert, or the trusted resource then, you'll find that pretty quickly, people will say, "Hey, do you have an article on your site about what to do with coffee grounds?"



You're going to get to that point where you don't even have to necessarily insert yourself. People will be coming to you because they know that you write about whatever it is your topic is on your site.

LESLIE: I like that concept and that is something that I feel like I need to get better at because in the beginning actually, when I started my blog, it was not something that I wanted to tell people about because I was doing something that, to some people, it might seem a bit shady even though it wasn't.

But now that my vision has more to do with how can you create something of substance that's going to help you to impact the world, that's a positive message. If I'm holding that back from someone that has a message to share, it's almost as if I am doing them a disservice.

TONI: Exactly. And, I think, as long as you think about your site, and no matter what you write about, is that you're serving other people so whether you're serving them by sharing the best deals and coupons, or you're serving them by providing inexpensive recipes or you're serving them by providing them tips to make a living out of their blogs.

So, whatever you write about, if you think of it as a service then, it's easy to want to serve and help people and then, it makes it easier to talk about.

Branding Your Name

LESLIE: You've just changed my mind on that so, Serena, if you're listening to this right now, you are right. I'm not going to say that very often but, in this case you are right.

All right, so let's move on. You've decided okay, it's time for me to start looking at this more as a business. I want to build something more substantial. What do you do next?

TONI: I think the first thing that people should do and most people already have this step done, thank goodness, is that you need to own your name. So, get off the Blogspot. Get your Twitter handled, brand yourself on Google plus on Twitter, on Facebook, on your site, get your logo, create that brand around who you are.

So, I would say, that's the first thing that you need to do and you need to start thinking about yourself as the brand. So, whether your brand is helping people succeed in blogging, whether your brand is helping people get dinner on the table every night, you want to make sure you own all the social around that or as close to your name or your brand as you can get.

I know nowadays it's hard to get a lot of names on the Internet. But, if you have to be such and such online, or something like that, you can still do it that way.

So, I would say step one is start buying up all the media properties that you can get that relates to what you are writing about.

LESLIE: Okay, and buying up all the media properties you mean, not just buying but getting into Twitter, getting into Facebook, getting into You Tube and all these different things even if you're not using all those resources but, reserving them so that, if you do decide to use them, you have them at your disposal.

TONI: Exactly because I had a huge mistake initially when I started and I didn't sign up for things. My husband actually signed up for Twitter for me and was tweeting under my name before I even knew what Twitter was.

He mentioned it to me, I was like, "I don't have time for Twitter," and then, the next thing I know, I'm like, "Oh, I need to get on Twitter." He said, "Oh, you're already on Twitter," [laughs]. But, I didn't have a YouTube channel and he had set one up for me but, it wasn't under my brand. And so, my top YouTube video that has over a million views is under a different name than the one that I actually use for my own brand.

So, if you're not doing it right now... Even get your name on Skype. Whatever social property there is, you want to get and even if you can't get Learning with Leslie or Become a Blogger, if you can't get those, get Become a Blogger online. Or, get something similar and get it as similar as you can through every channel so that, it's recognized well because nowadays too, there's "The Happy Housewife" and "A Happy Housewife," and "A Happier Housewife."

So, you want to be able to get as close to your brand throughout the social properties as you can.

LESLIE: And, how do you mix that with your personal social media online presence because, for example, I'm Leslie Samuel on Twitter. I have a Become a Blogger Facebook page. I have a Google Plus profile.

How do you mix those two worlds so that, it's not, number one, awkward, so that you still have your personal identity online. What's your perspective on that?

TONI: I've given up. For a long time, I've tried to keep everything very separate. I'm Happy Housewife on Twitter. I do have a Facebook page, my Toni Anderson page was very much mainly people that I had... My rule was if I wouldn't hug you, I won't friend you.

LESLIE: Got you.

TONI: So, I had to be able to said, I touched this person in real life to friend them on Facebook. But, what I started to realize over time for my business that I'm in and I do speaking, I am my own brand so, for me I had to start accepting people I didn't know into my personal brand as well because mine sort of meshed together.

If I had to do it all over again, I would have probably set up two Facebook, I know you're not supposed to but, I would have said I have two Facebook accounts. I would have set up a public Toni Anderson that I could friend people on and I would have set up a Toni Anderson that would really have just been friends because there are some times where I don't want everybody to see what I'm doing on Facebook.

LESLIE: Yes, got you.

TONI: So yes, that's tricky.

LESLIE: Yes, so the first thing is you want to create your brand and own your brand everywhere, as many places as you can, whether you think you're going to use it or not, if there's a new service, if there's a new Twitter or something of that sort, it's good to just grab that name so that you have it reserved for whatever you're going to do in the future.

TONI: Yes.

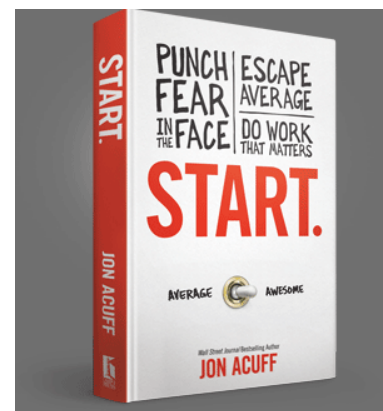
Start Writing and Put Your Content Out There

LESLIE: What next?

TONI: Then, I would say, start writing. I think so many people get hung up on, "My design isn't perfect. Everything is not exactly what I want it to be." I would say just get content out there. I think so many people, Jon Acuff has that great book Start, so many people can't start.

They have the great idea. They get the social media properties. They buy the domains. They pay for design and then, they write two posts and then, that's it.

Don't wait for everything to be perfect. Just start writing. Get your content out there because I really believe you have to have several months of content before you can make any real money.



So, don't wait until you have this grand plan to start writing. I do think you need a plan, and we can talk about that in a minute. But, get your content out there right away, especially when you start because you're excited. You probably have a lot of stuff you can write about when you start and you're not getting as many emails when you start so, you probably have more time to write content.

LESLIE: Exactly. You know, that's a very good point because with my [Biology blog](#) for example, if I were to go back to many of my old videos and old posts, there are mistakes in those videos. I didn't wait for them to be perfect. If I waited for them to be perfect, those videos would not have been out here and they wouldn't have the millions of views that they have on YouTube.

It's just about getting started, getting it out there. I meet so many people that have had this awesome idea for the last five years and they are waiting for that special moment to unleash it to the world and it's going to be this big success and they're just not getting started. So, I think, that's such an important point, just start writing, start creating that content.

TONI: And, the reality is, there's no one who's going to read you anyway when you start.

LESLIE: Exactly [*laughs*].

TONI: It's so funny that we're talking about the videos because my assistant and I were talking right before this call on the phone and she said, "You have all these cooking videos on YouTube. Are they any good?"

I said, "Honestly, I'm holding babies. I'm wearing my pajamas but, the content is really great." I said the video is not great but, I'm teaching people quality stuff in this videos. Let's push those out again because they are three years old.

Well, the reality was, if I would have waited until the day where I did my hair and got on my pajamas, I would never have made those videos.

So, I had a lot of little kids when those were made. That just wasn't the time of my life where I was doing those things everyday. So, you're right. Don't hold these ideas in your head. Get them out there. People aren't going to read it at first anyway. You'll have time to go back and correct stuff.

That's the reality of it. Don't get discouraged when you write for a month and nobody is reading you. It's okay. It just gives you time to work on your content anyway.

LESLIE: Awesome. So, I'm making a note to myself here to go back and check out some of Toni's old videos so that, I can see her with her kids, in her jammies, cooking.

TONI: Yes, and the best part about this, I did a two-day book cooking where I filmed everything I cooked for two days and I got haircut in the middle. Most of the comments are, "I love your new hair cut!"

LESLIE: [*Laughs*] Love it, love it.

What I love about this online space that we're in right now is that you can be so real. You don't have to be this perfect person to start a massive blog that turns into a massive online business. People love the real you and I just love that.

TONI: Exactly and I think being real and clearly, there's a line between sharing too much information and being real.

LESLIE: Oh definitely.

TONI: But, people want to... Because I think online, we always show our best self online. We don't want to show the ugliness in our life that we all have so, we all tend to be very good online.

And, what happens is is that when you start to develop that following, and you start to develop people that look up to you, and one that emulate things that you're doing, based on how they created this version of you that's really not accurate because obviously, we don't want to put all our dirty laundry online so, being real, doing videos in your pajamas, whatever... For you, showing something that, "Hey I tried this monetization technique and it didn't work..."

LESLIE: Exactly.

TONI: I think that encourages people as much as the post where things were successful.

LESLIE: Yes, awesome. Okay, so create your brand, own your brand, start writing, start putting that content out there. What next?

Have a Plan

TONI: Then, you have to have a plan.

LESLIE: Have a plan. Break that down for us.

TONI: I think the first thing in the plan is what really do you want to do? Who do you want to reach? What are your goals? I know a lot of people have a hard time thinking like where do I want to be in five years?

I think that's overwhelming. I don't know what I want to do in five years. What I want to do five years ago isn't what I'm doing today and probably, I wouldn't want to be in that place.

So, even if it's... Let me put a plan together for three months. What do I want to write about? What posts do I think are important. If you're writing about, let's just say, cooking. Am I entering the fall? Should I be looking at fall recipes? Should I think about how much can I write about pumpkin in three months or should we talk about Christmas meals?

So, think about the next three months in your timeline of your blogging and think about what do I want to talk about? Do I want to talk about strategies for cooking? Do I want to talk about saving money and sort of start to hone in on your voice, your message because when you first start, you'll probably be all over the map. One day you'll write about a frugal recipe and the next day, you'll do a how-to cook lobster tail.

That's okay because you're trying to figure out what you like to write about, what people are interested in but, you need eventually to start to tone that because I think it's much harder to be a successful blogger when your blog is all over the map.

LESLIE: Got you.

TONI: It's much easier to make money from a very, not necessarily super niche site, not like tea kettles that are pink sort of thing. I hate to bring up Serena again. This whole podcast is about her.

LESLIE: Don't worry. She is going to like it.

TONI: When the three of us talked in Chicago just about focusing on one thing, doing one thing and sort of honing in on that message or that aspect of what you're writing about. If



you're going to have a broader topic then, dividing those topics up so that, you can still keep them in categories.

I would say that would be the next thing to do is to get at least a three-month plan. I think if you could do six months or a year, that would be excellent but, just start writing down topics that you want to write about.

I hate to say, think about search but, I really think it's content that matter but, obviously, tomato recipes are not something you should be writing about in December if you're a food blogger. You don't talk about Black Friday in March.

I think there are things that you need to start planning and just thinking, getting into the practice of having a vision for the future because I think if you look at most of the bloggers that are long-term successful but, they didn't have some sort of either amazing break like they got featured on a major network, or didn't have a big tragedy which is another pass, people that just sort of thought it away, most of them had a plan.

LESLIE: Okay so, you're not just creating random content. It's more strategic now. You're planning out your, let's say, the next three months or the next six months, or even the next year. You're taking into consideration what are some of the important events that are happening.

If it's thanksgiving, and you're a food blogger, well, you might want to have some turkey or some thanksgiving meals in there around November and those types of things, right. So that, it's not just random content. You have a solid plan.

Okay, so I have created my brand. I have started writing. I have been working on my plan and I know what types of content I want to be creating over the next six months.

What next? That's like the main question here, "what's next?"

Monetizing Your Blog

TONI: What's next? This is where it gets hard because I feel like at this point, you probably need to start thinking about how you are going to make money. But, I feel like this is hard because you might be thinking about it but, most people aren't going to be making any money.

So, it's sort of this strange dance that you have to do between, what types of monetization will work on my blog versus I still need to keep writing this content and still creating and staying true to my vision because it's very easy to get sucked into the money funnel where it becomes all about making the money and I am all about making money in my site but, I also know that

my site doesn't exist with my readers and so, if I lose side of the vision for my readers, the money will never be there.

LESLIE: Definitely. And, in your opinion, when is the right time to start thinking about how you're going to make money. Is that something you should think about even before you start creating that content or going into that niche, have an idea of where you are trying to go? Or, as you kind of establish the content schedule and you're creating that content and you see how things are coming together, then you can start thinking about it.

When is the right time for you? Is there a right time?

TONI: I don't necessarily know there is a set right time. I think it's good to be thinking about before you even get started. I'm not really for starting a business without some sort of money plan at the end but, I also know the people, if you are completely fueled by how am I going to make money for this, in the blogging world, that doesn't always work.



If you're opening up a store, a physical store, clearly, there needs to be a monetization plan from day one or you can't pay your rent. With blogging, you have a little more flexibility and I feel like you have to feel the water for who is going to actually come and read you.

I think if you're writing good content and you start to build this engaged audience, it's going to be easier to see what the best way to make money is. I mean, say you start blogging and you're a hair and fashion blogger and all of a sudden, your post are viral on Pinterest and everyday, you're getting 20,000 hits from Pinterest.

Well, putting an ad network up on your site is probably a pretty smart idea because you're going to knock out of the park the CPM stuff but, you might not do well with affiliate links because maybe, they don't want to shop. They just want to look. But, you're going to do well because you're getting the CPM model revenue.

LESLIE: Okay, and just to define that CPM model of revenue, what exactly do you mean for someone that may not know what you are talking about?

TONI: With ad networks, you're getting paid per thousand impressions on your site. So, they are going to pay you a CPM and it can be anywhere from a dollar to \$8. It can be less than a dollar. And so, for every one thousand views on your site, that there is the ad on that page, you will get a \$1.

So, if you have a lot of views then, going with an ad network is a great way to monetize. If you're a smaller blog then, you're not going to make a ton of money with an ad network and you might not want to annoy your readers with a lot of ads.

That's why I think having a plan before you start feeling out what your site is doing is a good way to gauge, should I start applying to ad networks or maybe my readers love to buy. Maybe they just think how are they going to buy products? Maybe, they want to buy blogging products. They want to buy eBooks. They want to pay for a group membership or some sort of mentoring group.

Then, if you know that they are willing to spend money then, you might not want to take people off your site with an ad. You might want to be all internally making money with your own products.

So, really, it depends on what your audience wants.

LESLIE: Definitely. Now, I'm not sure how much you're into this or not but, what do you think is a good level of traffic to start thinking about ad networks, for example?

TONI: I would say you probably want to be over 50,000 page views a month.

LESLIE: Over how many? 50,000 you said?

TONI: Over 50. Most larger ad networks won't approve you until you're around that size so, it's not really worth your time to apply. Some of the applications, they take a decent amount of time and really, if you don't have that much traffic, it's probably not worth having them on your site because you're not going to make a lot of money since they do pay per page view. With 50,000 page views, you're going to make a couple hundred dollars a month which isn't bad but, that's probably not the best revenue model for you.

LESLIE: Got you. Okay, so ad networks is one option. Of course, if you're getting a ton of traffic, if your audience is very much into purchasing products then, selling products, doing affiliate income, any other monetization strategies you'd like to mention?

TONI: Well, I think the other thing to think about is something, like for you, for example, you're branding yourself as an expert in this field of blogging. So, I would say, if you're branding yourself as an expert in a field where that field pays, whether it pays to speak, whether it pays to write books, where you would be actually selling yourself.

That sounds bad but, I think you know what I mean.

LESLIE: Yes, we don't mind that here.

TONI: Yes. So, I think, selling yourself like, "Hey, this is who I am. This is what I talk about. I'd love to speak at your event, whether it's a corporate lunch in your area. I mean, people think about speaking and they think, "Oh, I don't want to travel around the country and do events."

You don't have to. I mean, corporate training, if you're an expert in, even in the social stuff, the social media, or even if you're an expert in something like coupons, you can go to a corporate like a big office and say, "Hey, I know that these companies have money in their budgets to employ training and employ improvement. Let me talk to your employees about saving money at the grocery store." And, you can sell yourself. Sell and teach classes and they pay pretty well. You're getting probably a couple of hundred dollars for an hour of work.

If you work on branding yourself as an expert, you can sell yourself as an expert to local events or you can go obviously bigger and speak around the country and do webcasts and things like that which can earn you income as well.

LESLIE: Definitely, all right so, create your brand... (I'm recapping on these things so many times because I think they are valuable), start writing, have a plan, start thinking about how you're going to make money. What's next?

Networking the Right Way

TONI: Network.

LESLIE: Let's talk about networking because I know you are very much into networking.

TONI: I am.

LESLIE: How do we do that right? How do we not be that, once again, that annoying person at the conference, "Oh man, here she comes. Here comes that Toni..." No, let's use Serena in a negative way now.

TONI: *[Laughs]*

LESLIE: So, here comes that Serena. She's going to talk to me about this. How do you do it right?

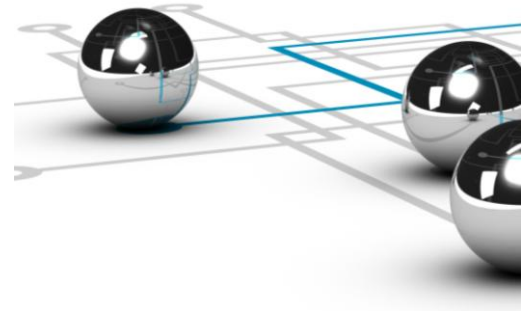
TONI: I think a lot of people don't do it right. So, this is my chance to get on my soapbox about this.

LESLIE: Yes, let's hear it.

TONI: First of all, you don't do it right by walking up to a group of people and handing them your business card. That's not networking. We've all seen that and we've probably all done it at some point. So, I would say networking is really about developing genuine relationships with people in your space.

So, whether it'd be in the blogging space in general or maybe you're developing relationships with people that are more in your niche, and I think the important thing about networking, and I like to call it "collaboration" but, what are you giving and approaching every relationship is what can I give rather than what can I get?

Because the people that I know in this industry that have been the most successful are the biggest givers that I know. I think that when you approach something, I think in life in general, if you approach things by how can I give more, you will receive back in some way that might not be immediate. It might be years down the road but, I think that that philosophy never will hurt you.



I think it will hurt you in certain circumstances but, I feel like in the end, you'll be very blessed if you give to people. So, when I think about networking, I always think, "How can I help this person? What do I have to offer them? And, eventually maybe they can help me and that's great."

But, I think building those relationships, because even if you never get anything back as far as, they didn't link to me, they didn't include me in this round up, or they didn't invite me to speak at their event, that's okay. You can learn so much just from relationships and just watching other people on how they operate and just from having conversations with people, so, I don't like to think of it as like, "Oh, I have to be friends with this person so, I can gain something else."

I think there's just value in being in a group of people that do similar things to what you do and then, there's also real value in being around people that don't have any idea of what you do.

So, networking in groups that maybe don't even know what a blog is but, they are really great business people and just learning... Because I think, a lot of us as bloggers, I was not a business owner before I started blogging so, there's a lot about owning a business that I have no idea how to do.

Meeting other people that own their own businesses and maybe, they own dry cleaners, they still overlap in owning your business and you still deal with things like taxes and things like that where you can learn from people that aren't even on the web.

LESLIE: Definitely. Awesome. Lots of important things there. I found that by going to conferences and whether you're speaking and you're just going there to connect with others, I found that the relationships that I've gotten in person have really helped to accelerate what I'm doing online and I think that's a very powerful thing that we tend to underestimate.

It's not even necessarily that we're networking just to talk about business. I came down to Chicago when you were at Blog Her. We went out to dinner. We were just hanging out. We had fun. We connected and now, we have a connection that we didn't have before.

That is very significant.

TONI: Exactly, I agree. And, I think too, especially when you're, I think in events, are obviously a great way to network with people and it's a great way to get your face in front of people and I think the important thing is, when you go to an event, leave that event and follow up with people. You meet a lot of people at these events. I don't think you can follow up with everybody but, if you feel like there's someone there that you really connected with, shoot them emails. Send them a message on Facebook.

"Hey, it was great to meet you." It doesn't have to be long and drawn out. If you ever want to work together, let me know. Just something real simple. I think that goes a long way to sort of developing the relationship even further because you got to realize, we go to these events, we meet a hundred people.

We can't maintain relationships with all hundred people. So, if you are the person that reaches out to that person afterwards, you've already set yourself apart for 90 other people at that event.

LESLIE: Definitely. Now, I know we can go on with this for days and days talking about how to build an online business but, are there any other things that we definitely need to be sure that we cover when it comes taking this thing that we are doing online and really building a business out of it?

TONI: I think you need to be constantly, once, let's just say we're six months into it or maybe we're nine months into it. I think that's the point where you need to start really evaluating what you are doing.

That's when I would start, I remember when I started, I was on Analytics everyday which is kind of funny. "Oh my gosh, I have 100 readers, yay!" And, you're so excited about, I remember jumping up and down when I got my first hundred page view day.

And so, I think that's not the time to be in Analytics because you'll get discouraged pretty quickly.

LESLIE: Yes.

TONI: But, you know, six months, nine months, get into Analytics. What are your most popular posts? Where are your readers coming from because at that point, you have some established content. You've been writing long enough to know that something wasn't a fluke, or something was the one hit wonder sort of post which we all have.

Those are great but, those are not how you should base your business necessarily. Get into Analytics and start looking at what are your most popular posts for the past six months? And then, okay, say your most popular post was a coupon for OshKosh. So, what does that tell you about your readership?

Well, probably you have people with children. They like to get coupons. They like to shop at stores similar to OshKosh so maybe, you should start promoting things like Baby Gap and The Children's Place and stores that sort of have a similar price point to OshKosh.

You can see from those Analytics from those popular posts, what your readers enjoy and what's driving readers to your site, and then, you can start a plan of how can I put out similar content to what's already very popular because I am a big fan of like, "Let's not reinvent ourselves here, " what's already working.

And then, looking at Analytics to say, "Where are these people coming from? Do I get great Facebook traffic? Do I get all my readers from Pinterest? Am I Google queen? Where are they coming from?" and then, I think some of the people sometimes overlook as they get very excited because they say, "Oh, all my traffic is from Pinterest. I'm so excited."

But, where is all your sticky traffic from? Are they coming to Pinterest and then, hopping right back off? Google is my number one traffic driver. It has always been my number one traffic driver.

LESLIE: Really? You mean, Google Search?

TONI: Yes, Google search.

LESLIE: Okay, I thought you meant Google Plus so, I was surprised.

TONI: No, no, not Google Plus. Google Plus and I don't get along. We will one day. I got my name so, I'm good.

LESLIE: Well, there you go. Stepping in the right direction.

TONI: That's right, that's right. Baby steps. But, I think, you know, where are the readers that are coming and staying coming from?

It's great to get people that come and find you from certain things but, if you realize that when people come from Pinterest, they click on... Their page views are five pages per visit. Well then, maybe you need to focus more on Pinterest. Maybe you need to create more posts that would be Pinterest friendly or maybe people that come from Google end up staying because of what you're writing.

The big thing about Google and this isn't a Google session but, if you get people coming from search, and you have popular posts and all of us in time, will have those two to three posts that are consistently your top traffic post per search.

Go on those posts and figure out either one, how to make money from that or get them on other page on your site. Don't just get excited about that that top page. So, look at those top pages and start optimizing those pages to either make money or keep people on your site longer.

LESLIE: Got you. I love it. So, you're looking into Analytics but, not just to see, "Hey, how much traffic have I actually gotten?" But, to figure out what is working and once you know what is working, you can focus even more on whatever it is that's working.

TONI: Yes. And, I think too like, you could spend years sitting in your Analytics and don't do that but, you know, the farther you go along in this, my assistant now is looking into not just where people are coming from but, what time of day they are coming, and should that change our postings?

So, there's so much you can learn. Analytics, Google Analytics is free. It's a free resource for us that we can go in and really learn a whole lot about people that are coming to our site and then, we can make changes or do more of the same based on everything we learn from Google Analytics.

LESLIE: Honestly, I feel as if we can go on for like six more of these sessions but, I'm going to have to cut it short and I feel bad because there is so much good stuff coming. But, anyhow,

Toni, what's going on with you now in terms of what you are going online? What are the next steps for you and your business?

TONI: Well, we just had our yearly planning meeting last week so, The Happy Housewife is going to have some really great stuff coming for 2014. I actually am writing everyday that my husband's deployed, sort of my daily summary of surviving deployment.



LESLIE: Oh wow!

TONI: That's actually been hard to do but, really, it's like therapy for me. So, that's something that we're going for this year and then, for next year. And then, on the business side of things, I'm working on an event in June next year called, "[Digital CoLab](#)" and it's basically a very small hundred person event for advanced business online.

Not that we don't like the newbies because we love the newbies but, we don't want people to be lost mostly throwing out the CPM terms as well. So, it's an event that I am running with [Erin Chase at 5 Dollar Dinners](#) and [Andrea Deckard of Savings Lifestyle](#) and it's basically small group sessions, very hands on and a lot of like practical takeaways.

So, our goal is that you actually go home with a to-do list but, also get that half of your list done while you are there. So, we want you sitting with people that can help you and you might be hearing from us soon, Leslie so keep your June free.

LESLIE: Well, I'm thinking it will be free for that special thing that's going on over there. Man, Toni, thank you so much for coming on here. I know that, well, I got value from it and if I got value from it, my audience got value from it so, thank you, thank you, thank you.

TONI: Thank you very much.

LESLIE: Not a problem. Hey guys, if you want to check out more of what Toni is doing, you can head on over to TheHappyHousewife.com. Of course, all of that stuff is going to be linked in the show notes so that, you can come back to the blog and get all that good juicy stuff.

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