Presents:

10 Ways to Become a Better Teacher/Blogger

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By: Leslie Samuel

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 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. And, as usual, I have another exciting episode for you today. In today's episode, I'm going to be giving ten ways to become a better teacher or blogger. I spent the last week in San Francisco going through a training camp for creating video content for Khan Academy. And for me, this was one of those things that I have never dreamed what I'd be doing and I consider myself blessed to have had the opportunity.

One of the biggest takeaways I got from being there is that I need to constantly push myself to become a better teacher. This is something that I would like to encourage you to do, some of the best bloggers out there are good at what they do because they are great teachers. So, I'm going to be giving you some practical tips that you can implement to become a better teacher. That's what we're going to be talking about today.

Let me give you some background into how these all came about. I was approached by Khan Academy. If you don't know anything about Khan Academy, I would invite you to check it out, KhanAcademy.org. It's a place that you can go to pretty much learn a lot of different things. Their goal is to provide free world class education for anyone anywhere. It's just a great resource.

I was approached by them to compete in a competition to create content to help nurses pass their board exam. We were going to do this by creating pathophysiology videos and questions.

If you don't know pathophysiology, it's the study of disease and the underlying causes of diseases like how does it actually work? What is actually going wrong and that kind of stuff.

This is something that I'm interested in. It's a class that I teach here at the University. I was excited that they contacted me. I submitted my content and I was selected as one of the winners. What happened was they flew us all down to San Francisco last week. We spent the week there in a hotel going through some intense training and making videos. We had to make these videos and we did them over and over and over to make them even better.

It was just an interesting experience and I learned a lot.

You may or may not know this but, a big part of my motivation behind starting my Biology blog was because I saw that they were doing over there at Khan Academy. They are doing some amazing things.

When I saw that, I thought to myself, "I could do this for Biology." That's exactly what I started to do.

Here's the deal. I can't tell you when last I was ever pushed and challenged as much as I was pushed and challenged during that week. But, it was a great experience. I learned a lot and just being surrounded by these great minds, great thinkers, it really gives you a whole different perspective on this whole concept of changing the world. It makes you see even more that it is possible and that's exactly what I saw when I was down there.

One of the biggest lessons I learned or one of the biggest lessons that I learned was about teaching. I learned that… I consider myself to be a pretty good teacher but, I can be so much better and they pushed me. By pushing me, it has made me want to step up my game even more. That's exactly what I'm going to be focusing on doing and I think this is something that can help us all as bloggers to become better bloggers by really teaching in better ways. I want to share with you ten tips that I pulled out from this experience and from some of the other things that I'm doing that I'm going to be implementing, that I have been implementing and will continue to implement to make my teaching and my blogging even better. That's what we're going to address.

Tip #1: Don't assume your audience knows more than they do.

This is one that I'm guilty of doing. You want to explain even the simple concepts because you don't want to assume that they know what you're talking about or, that they know more than they actually do.

This is an example that I gave, I think in the last episode, but, I'll give it again, one of the things that I did recently is I launched a membership site for my [Biology blog](). One of the main things I was going to be doing is webinars.

So, I sent out an email about the webinar, the first free webinar that I was doing and the biggest complaint that I got was that people were seeing that they live in a far country so, they are not able to come. But, if I do one in their location, let them know.

I didn't explain the fact that a webinar was something that you can watch online regardless of where you are in the world. That is something that we tend to do very often when we learn about our topic. We assume that, we know this, we know this like it's nothing. Everybody else knows it but, everyone else does not know it and that's why they are coming to your blog to learn.

While I was at Khan Academy, there was a guy there that's a cardiologist and he was creating videos also. And, we were having a conversation. He was explaining some of the concepts from his video. He was talking about heart attacks and some of the signals that they look for, and he said one or two sentences, and in those one of two sentences, he used terms that I had no idea what they meant. I was like, "Woah! Slow down. What does that mean?"

Then, he explained it. And I'd say, "Wait, what does that mean?" And then, he explained it. And then, he said, you know what man? This is great. I need to have more conversations that aren't in the same field that I am in so that, I can remember what regular people know and what they don't know. This is something that I find with on a regular basis. I assume that everyone knows what an autoresponder is, if I'm talking about blogging.

But, most people actually don't know what an autoresponder is. At least that's what I found. So, don't assume that your audience knows more than they do. Explain even the simple concepts or the concepts that seem simple to you because if it seems simple to you does not necessarily mean that it's going to be simple to everyone else. That's tip number one. Don't assume your audience knows more than they do.

Tip #2: Don't try to seem smart – Keep it simple.

When people get educated, they often want to show that they are educated. So, they use these huge words and all these types of complex things to show you, "Hey, I know what I'm talking about."

Sometimes, it works but, it really doesn't help to make your audience feel like you're approachable. What you do to make yourself seem smart can make them feel stupid and you know what? People just don't like to feel stupid. So, if they come to your blog and they are reading these things and they don't even understand what you're saying because it's so intelligent, it's so smart, you're not accomplishing your goals.

I was making a video and in the video, while I was going through the training at Khan Academy, in the video, I started to speak about congenital defects. One of the things that they had us do is get in groups of two's and review each other's videos.

There was this girl that was watching my video. She's a medical student. She understands exactly what it was but, she said, she ended up asking me saying, "You're using this word 'congenital' but, you never really explained what that was."

When I thought about that, I thought to myself, "Wait, yes. What if they don't know what 'congenital' mean?" So, I ended up saying something simple like it's something that you're born with. Now, everybody knows what that is. Everybody might not know what congenital is even though they might be nursing students that are preparing for the nursing board exam. Maybe, they just didn't get that one piece.

So, you want to use simple words. Don't try to seem smart. Just explain things in simple terms. So, I ended up using the word, 'congenital' but, I basically said, you know, it's a congenital heart defect. That just basically means it's something that you're born with. That's what it means. But, that helps to not make your audience feel like they're stupid. You don't want them to feel that.

You want them to feel encouraged. You want them to understand what you are presenting to them. So, don't try to seem smart. Keep it simple.

Tip #3: Put yourself in your audience's position.

What are the questions that they have? What struggles are they dealing with? You want to address those things. With these videos that we're creating, we're creating them for nursing students who will be taking their board exam.

They might be stressed out. They might be trying to understand complex and complicated things but, not really fully understand it. They have specific questions, and those are the questions that we need to answer.

I do this by thinking about the things that I'm struggling with or I have struggled with in trying to understand even the content that I'm comfortable with today. When I'm going over that content, it's okay for me to talk about those struggles because it's something that they might be dealing with.

By putting yourself in your audience's position, you are better able to identify with who they are and better able to create the kind of content that is going to help them.

So, always try to put yourself in your audience's position. In order to do that, of course, you need to know exactly who your audience is. Have a clear understanding of who they are and then, put yourself in their position. Answer the questions that they will have, address the struggles that they might be dealing with. These are very important concepts. That's point number three, put yourself in your audience's position.

Tip #4: Use simple stories to explain complex concepts.

Here's the thing, there are a lot of complex concepts in this world. There are a lot of complex concepts on the nursing board exam. There are a lot of complex concepts when I'm teaching someone Biology. There are a lot of complex concepts when I'm teaching someone to start a blog where they can create content, inspire others and even change the world. There are complex concepts.

One way to get those concepts over is to use simple stories. For Khan Academy, the videos that I've made that people seem to love the most are videos where I told stories so, when I was talking about concepts that are related to heart disease, I use the story about rooms that had multiple hallways and people coming into the food and to get food for a party and that was explaining some of the concepts of heart disease.

Now, when you think about rooms and hallways and parties and food and all that kind of stuff, you're not thinking heart disease. But, I use those stories to make it work. It just makes much

more sense. When you look at the heart and I draw a hole in heart and I talk about the way the blood flows and all that kind of stuff, that's one thing.

But, if I talk about, here's this room over here. Room #1 and then, we have room #2 with a hallway in between and people are coming in to room #1 and going to room #2 via that hallway. I draw this out and I show how there's food along the hallway that they are picking up and then, I start to take those stories and relate them to what's happening inside the heart.

You can do the same thing. One of the people that I admire the most is Jesus. Whether you are a Christian or not, don't turn this off because you heard Jesus. But, whether you're a Christian or not and even if you think that the Bible is just some elaborate story, if you read it, you will see that in order to get his points across, he didn't just preach. He didn't just talk about all these complex concepts. He told stories. He used a parable of a foolish man who built his house on sand and a wise man who built his house on the rocks.

When you think about that, you think, okay the rocks are going to have a stronger foundation. The sand can be washed away easily. It makes sense and he used that to get his point across.

So, you can do the same thing. People identify with stories. Use stories that your audience can identify with. It doesn't have to be directly related to the content like my rooms and the hallways, not directly related to heart disease but, the lessons can be related to the content.

The more stories you can use, the better it will be. That will help you to be an even better teacher.

Tip #5: Give lots of examples / case studies.

Theory is nice. Implementation really takes things to the next level. Instead of teaching people just how to blog, for example, show them how to blog. For me, my Biology blog, it's something that I'm actively building and I'm using that as an ongoing case study and I will continue to use it as an ongoing case study because it's a very practical way that you can see what I'm doing and then, you can take some of the same steps, you can modify them. You can apply it in your business however you want to apply it in your business and to your blog.

I can talk about my successes. I can talk about my failures not just in a theoretical way but, I can actually give you case studies of how I have done certain things so, you know how I get traffic to my blog, how I make money with my blog, how I engage my audience. I can show you exactly how I am doing it. By having examples or case studies, that really helps to take your audience's understanding to the next level.

Tip #6: Start with a plan.

We're halfway there. We got five more to go and even maybe a little bonus. We'll see if we have one at the end.

Number six, start with a plan. Most bloggers just blog. They don't have a definite plan. When I create my videos, I make a quick outline. I put together my slides. I just start recording. But, this experience at Khan Academy, oh my word! These guys pushed me to do so much more. This is how the process went.

They started with an outline. So, they created an outline about a specific topic. My topic is non-cyanotic heart disease. If you don't know what that is, it doesn't matter. That was what my topic was. So, they created an outline.

And then, my job was to go into that outline and start to expand that outline. Work on that outline. Start including my examples, the stories that I'm going to use and type it out in a way that makes it really clear what I'm going to be covering.

Then, that outline needed to go through stages of approval. The idea was to have a definite and specific plan and then, to work that plan out in the videos.

It was very carefully planned out. Every single video and then, we went in and started to create those videos. That's exactly what I ended up doing. By doing that, man, it really helped to take my video creation to the next level.

I would encourage you to start with a plan. Plan out the content that you are going to be creating. Don't just create content because "Hey, this is what you feel like creating now." Create a definite plan and work that plan. *If you fail to plan, you plan to fail*. You've heard that before.

That's number six.

Tip #7: Push yourself to learn more.

This is a very important one. They are all important. Why do I keep saying that? [*Laughs*] Number seven, push yourself to learn more. Oh my word! I have never studied non-cyanotic heart disease like I have over the last few weeks. But, I'll tell you what.

Now, I know that when I post these videos, people will really get them. They will really understand them. These guys really pushed me to learn like I don't think I have ever been pushed more and here's the thing. If you want to teach something, you need to have as full of an understanding as possible about that concept that you're teaching.

So, with your blog, learn! I mean, STUDY! I mean, do whatever you have to do to learn more about that concept. Attend conferences. Take courses. Do whatever it takes so that, you can take your understanding to the next level, and so that, you can be a more effective communicator when you are trying to teach the concepts that you are trying to teach.

That's number seven.

Tip #8: Have a clear end goal.

Nothing is more frustrating than working extremely hard to accomplish something but, you don't even know what that thing is. It can be very frustrating. When it comes to Khan Academy, I know that their end goal is to provide a free world class education to anyone anywhere and yes, that's a huge goal.

But, you know what? They are moving in that direction extremely rapidly and they are making it happen. I was amazed in talking with them to see what their vision is and what their end goal is and to see the things that they are doing to make that happen.

My goal for my Biology blog is to make Biology fun. My goal for Become a Blogger is to change the world one blog at a time. I am extremely clear that that is what I want to accomplish and as a result of that, I can do the things to get me to that end goal.
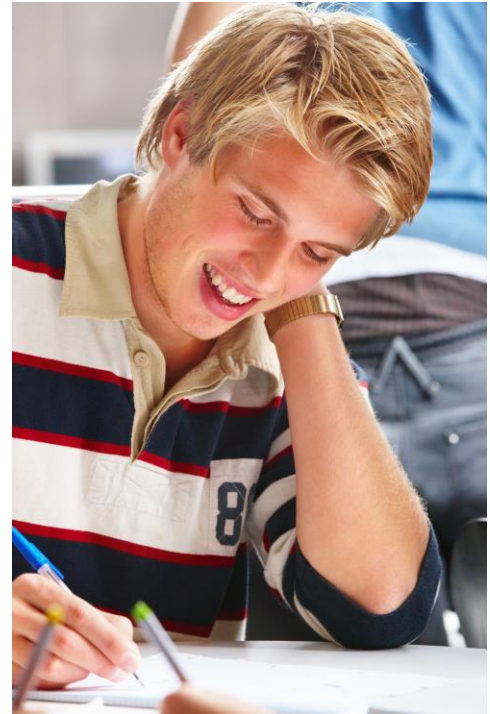
But, if you don't know what that end goal is, you probably will never reach there. Have a clear end goal.

Tip #9: Create smaller goals based on that end goal.

What are the smaller goals? The smaller goals for this example with the Khan Academy things that I'm doing would be to help people pass their nursing board exam. That's a very specific goal. Nursing students have just finished studying. They finished their degree and now, they want to pass the board so that, they can practice.

So, we are creating content to help them with that specific goal. They have many other smaller goals. For example, they have a goal to help people pass the MCAT. That's the exam that you take when you go into Med School or the SATs, the exam that you take when you're trying to get into college.

As a result of setting those smaller end goals, they are partnering with the right companies to make it happen. They are getting the content creators to make that happen. And, because they have that clear end goal of providing a free world class education to the world, they can now say, "Okay, we're going to attack this topic. We're going to attack this subject."

For me for example, my clear end goal is to make Biology fun. So, my smaller end goals, I might cover Physiology and then, I might cover Anatomy, and I do them in very simple and fun way so, I know that once I have gone through a Physiology sequence, I have accomplished that smaller goal and that helps me to accomplish my bigger goal of making Biology fun, making the learning of Biology fun for the people that are trying to learn it.

That's number nine. Oh man! We're at number ten now. Let's go.

Tip #10: Get feedback from other experts and use it.

While I was down there, of course, we had to create videos. I created a great video. I was excited about this video. I had a great story at the beginning. It was a nice analogy that was

going to help people to understand it. It came back to that whole rooms thing, the rooms with the hallways and all that fun stuff.

I created it. I submitted it for approval. This is what I got as feedback:

This is good! But, I think it can be great.

When they said that, I was like, "What? This thing is great!"

But then, we started to discuss and we started talking about the analogy and he started questioning the analogy and asking me specific things about it. I ended up realizing that the analogy eventually fell apart if you follow it through to the end. Then, at the end of our discussion, in my mind, I was like, "You know what? I want to create this over again. I want to make this better. It's not as if they were forcing me to make it better or forcing me to do it over again but, I wanted to, based on their feedback."

If you don't get feedback from other people and you just do what's in your mind, you are most likely going to miss out on a lot. You're most likely not going to be as effective as you possibly can be.

So, if there are other experts that you can get feedback from, get feedback from them and then, use that feedback to make your teaching even better. That's number ten.

I'm going to give you a bonus. Yes, I'm throwing in a bonus and that bonus is, and this to me, was one of the most rewarding part of this entire trip…

Bonus Tip: Surround yourself with people who are doing awesome things.

Man, I went down there and because of the things that these guys are doing, because of the goals that these guys have, I felt inspired. I left more inspired to change the world even more than I was before. The plans that they have and the actions that they are taking, just really blew me away. And, being in that environment with like-minded individuals but, people that are doing really awesome things, that takes you to the next level.

I experienced that there. I experienced that with my mastermind group. We meet once a week and we go over what each other are doing. Each week, one of us talks about what we are doing in our business and for me, it's not just about giving input but, it's about being inspired because these guys are doing awesome things.

So, surround yourself with people who are doing awesome things and you will be inspired to be even more awesome, to do even more awesome things. Listen to podcasts of people who are doing awesome things. Attend conferences with people that are doing awesome things.

Start mastermind groups with people that are doing awesome things and just surround yourself with that kind of people and that's going to help to lift you up.

Recap

To recap on these ten things:

1. **Don't assume** your audience knows more than they do.
2. Don't try to seem smart – Just **keep it Simple.**
3. Put yourself in your **audience's position.**
4. Use **simple stories** to explain complex concepts.
5. Give lots of **examples/case studies.**
6. Start with a **plan.**
7. Push yourself to **learn even more.**
8. Have a **clear end goal.**
9. Create **smaller goals** based on that end goal.
10. Get **feedback** from other experts and then, use it.
11. *BONUS TIP:* Surround yourself with **people who are doing awesome things.**

Outro

That's pretty much it. Let's become better teachers. And, by becoming better teachers, we're going to become better bloggers. I hope you got a lot of value from that. I really do. No, seriously, when I say that, I'm not taking that lightly. I really hope that you got a ton of value from that and that you will implement these steps to become a better teacher.

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This is Leslie Samuel from becomeablogger.com, changing the world one blog at a time. Until next time, take care and God bless!