

Welcome to the Boomer Business Owner. My guest today is Alyson Lex. Alyson is the founder of RockYourMarketing.com and is dedicated to helping entrepreneurs and small business owners make their marketing fun and effective. Hey Alyson, welcome to the show!

Charlie, thank you so much for having me. I am so excited to be here and to talk with you about all things business.

Excellent, excellent. So let's dive right in. Explain to me in Layman's terms what you do.

Okay. Well the short answer is I am a copywriter and basically what that means is I help entrepreneurs and small business owners create their marketing, whether it's their online sales pages or the pages where they can generate leads with free offers or even direct response mailers or emails that go out to their customer base, I write them for them.

So does that really make a difference? I mean, can't I just put on my website "Hey dude, buy my stuff"?

You know what, it really does make a difference. There is a lot of psychological stuff that goes into how we buy and why we buy and really the biggest takeaway you can ever get is that people don't buy what they need, they buy what they want and you have to give them what they need. so that's really what my job is figuring out what they want and how to sell them what you're offering make them want it, and all that good stuff.

So do you do stuff us that's web-based or I guess you call it maybe a direct mail or something, where you send out a physical letter?

Yeah, well I actually got started with direct mail, and I love direct mail; I think it's great, but obviously technology is allowing us to reach a lot more people online, so I definitely do a lot of online stuff. But I will do it all!

So what motivated you to get into copy write?

Well I actually kind of fell into it. I started working for a company called Gleyser-Kennedy Insider's Circle with Dan Kennedy and Boll Gleysrer who are two of the most sought after copywriters in the industry, and I was their marketing manager and I learned how to copy write with Bill Gleyser and Dan Kennedy and I fell in love with it. And then, fast forward a few years and I got laid off a week before I was to get married and go on a whirlwind honeymoon and in the worst job market in US history, or one of them, you know what I mean? And I was like "Okay, it's time to go ahead and become an entrepreneur myself." So scary, but worth it.

So you were, I don't want to say you were forced into it, but there was some kind of a normal path that kind of took you where you want to go. for our listeners who may not have an idea of what they want to do, maybe they're just working in a "normal" job and they want to expand themselves and start their own online business, are there any tips or thoughts or suggestions you can offer as to how someone could generate a new idea for a business?

Absolutely. Whatever your idea is, start part-time. And it's going to be tough a little bit because you're going to be spending your time after work doing it and you are going to be working two jobs, basically. But if you start part-time you still have the safety net of a current position, if you have one, and then you can build this alongside of it and then when you're ready, when you're making the kind of income that can replace your day job, then you can go ahead and make the transition to full time, you know what I mean?

Yeah, any thoughts though specifically like, just talk to me. So "Hey Alyson, it's nice to meet you," I meet you at a party or something like that and I know that your involved in online things. I'd like to do something; I don't know if I

have any talents. Any suggestions or tips you have for me?

Well I think there are a lot of opportunities out there. Look at what other people are doing to make money online. There are artists that make money online with Etsy. There are people, who are doing what's called an affiliate program where you don't have to have anything to sell, but you sell stuff for other people and they pay you. I think that's actually how a lot people get started in online marketing is to sell affiliate products like that. Think of what makes it fun. What's fun for you? That's my whole thing; if you are going to do something, you should enjoy it. And if you can have fun with it, the world is your oyster.

Got it. Well I have fun with my podcast so I kind of resonate with what you're saying right now. So what is your personal business mission statement, your vision; what's your reason, Alyson, for being in business?

My reason for being in business, you know has morphed over the years. At first it was that I needed money and I think a lot of entrepreneurs or small business owners want that freedom of Inco me. But it's also about being able to make my own rules, if you will. As you mentioned when you introduced me, my goal is to make marketing fun and effective and I think so many people take themselves so seriously; so many companies are so serious these days and we really lose that relationship with our customers and that's really a big part of what I want to do is help my clients and the people I teach how to have that relationship, make it personal, be transparent, have a good time and make money while we do it.

I guess like the old saying, people generally speak of all things being equal; people buy from people they like.

Absolutely.

So you are helping us establish a rapport or a relationship with our audience.

Absolutely. It leads to loyalty. It leads to referrals so you have repeat sales and you have increased customer base because of those referrals and it doesn't feel like such a drain. The worst hang about going to work is when it feels like going to work. You know what I mean? So if you feel like you are going to fun or going to a hobby where you feel a sense of purpose or fulfillment or enjoyment, that's kind of a currency other than money.

You kind of addressed a little bit of my next question which is, aside from money, what benefits do you get from running your own business?

And you are right, I did, so I apologize for sneaking that in there (laughter) but there's a lot of flexibility. I am at the phase of my life where I am going to be starting a family soon, one day, so I have the flexibility to stay at home with my family, still have an income, and not have to worry about the family medical leave or leave, because I am the one in charge. I think it's also that I get to choose who I am doing business with. I can build my business around my own set of values, and my dreams. I am building my dreams, not somebody else's, so there's a lilt of personal satisfaction there too.

Have you ever come across the situation where you have "fired" one of your clients because perhaps their values turned out to be not consistent with yours?

Absolutely. I have fired a couple clients but more so I can choose not to work in certain industries. As a copywriter I do work across multiple industries and I do have ones that I don't prefer to work in, mainly because it doesn't line up with my values. I am not going to go into details because I don't want to offend anyone or inadvertently pick on someone. It's nice to be able to choose what you are going to do if it makes you feel icky, you don't have to do it.

So you talked about flexibility. Is there such a thing as a typical day for you?

Well, I do try to schedule myself as much as possible. I have in the past fallen into the trap that a lot of entrepreneurs face, and that's the workaholic trap, whereof know my poor husband is trying to find dinner and I just need another hour at work. So I really do try to set myself a schedule from about 7:30 in the morning until about maybe 5:30 or 6 at night, and then I really do kind of force myself to go and have personal time. Other than that, it depends on the day. I have my administrative days, I have my writing days, and I have my content creating days, things like that. So it's typical but it's atypical at the same time.

Not to digress, but you referenced your husband. I was on your website and I saw a picture of you in wedding dress and looking at the picture to your left, there's a good looking guy in a suit, and looking to your right, there's a guy dressed like Elvis. Which guy did you wind up marrying?

(Laughter) Well I married the guy in the suit but that was before we met the Elvis, so he's lucky there right?

Exactly, exactly. So I want to delve in little more and talk specifically about online because a lot of our listeners are probably not listening necessarily to start a brick and mortar business, or maybe start one but definitely have an online presence. So your website, on what platform is that built? Is it built maybe on WordPress?

It is built on WordPress, very good.

Slice most websites these days are built on WordPress, it wasn't a big stretch on my part.

That's correct and I love WordPress... I think it's really the best platform for building a website, especially for the small business owner or entrepreneur who doesn't or don't have the resources for a full team.

So did you wind up building the website actually yourself or did you have somebody help you do that?

I did actually build it myself. I have a little bit of techy knowledge but I managed to find what's known as a theme, and that is what makes it look the way it does. The theme, in the control panel, has a drag and drop editor and that's also known as a WYSIWYG which stands for "What you see is what you get" and I was able to build it visually without any HTML knowledge, because ea. have very limited HTML knowledge (laughter). You upload the pictures, put them where you want, and it's great.

So if I am not technologically oriented but a gamer, and I don't mind getting in there and trying to figure things out, can I make my site look okay?

Absolutely. I mean there's some of the stuff I put up there; I did work with Photoshop a little bit which I taught myself that. So I did the graphics myself and things like that. It is entirely possible but it also a big time investment so it does depend on the value of your time versus how long it is going to take you.

So you reference resources a moment ago. What would you council me as someone who is looking to get a site set up, perhaps using WordPress, that I would budget for doing that. In one scenario I am doing it myself and in another scenario I am hiring someone to help me somewhat.

Well let's talk about doing it ourselves. I think my investment of doing it myself was probably in the \$250 range. It might have been a little lower; I bought a couple of other themes to try out as well before settling on this one. The theme itself which again is what makes it look the way it is, costs maybe \$40 or \$50 plus my hosting package and my domain name which I purchased through Go Daddy. They are super helpful; I call them all the time with dumb questions. If you were going to hire someone to do it,

that's a really tough thing to pin down just because the pricing does range wildly.

I do have a friend that can build websites based on WordPress, full sites, multi-page, scrolling graphics, but I mean it's in the multiple of thousands of dollars. So you know, could I hire someone off a website like Enlace for instance, which is where you can hire freelancers to do work for you, and pay a lot less? Yes. So it really depends on where you look and what you need.

Got it. You mentioned hosting. Does Go Daddy host your site?

Yes they do. I have multiple websites under one hosting account and it costs \$9, so that's not a big layout of cash there (laughter).

And you're good with that. Their service is good and things like that?

Yeah, I mean I have seen reviews where people don't like them, but I personally haven't experienced any problems. I like their customer service, I like their hosting service, I like the ease of use. I can call them, I can go online and do it and they're more than happy to help me either way. Everything from hosting to billing with them has been great.

And how about your email service provider for building your email list- who did you use?

To build my email list right now I am using Mail Chimp, and the nice thing about that is its free up to 2,000 contacts so if you are just getting started, it's a great resource. They also have that drag and drop WYSIWYG thing that I mentioned before, when you are building your campaigns and things like that. You can just insert images and put them where you want. There are a lot of other options that I have seen and used everywhere from free in the mail chimp to Webber and Constant Contact are also great options, but they do have a cost associated with them.

Got it. Social media- I have a Facebook page, I have a LinkedIn page, I am still trying to figure out what Twitter is all about...so again to someone who is just starting out, do you think day one that we need to have a social presence and if so, is there one outlet you would focus on?

Do we need a social presence from day one? You know, part of me wants to say no but part of me wants to say yes the world is going social. I mean social media is really at the hub of our daily lives, and whether you are selling to businesses or to consumers, they are all in social media. Because people buy from people, and people are on social media. So I really do think you need some kind of presence, and what to start with is really going to depend on two things. One, what your business is and two, what you're already using personally. I will just chat about that for one minute.

If your business lends itself to something like Pinterest which is very visually based, and the market there is very artsy crafts, wedding, baby, then you want to be on Pinterest before anything else. If it doesn't lend itself to Pinterest, I would personally go with Facebook because I am personally most comfortable with it. I say go with what you are on already because it's going to have less of a learning curve. You mentioned that you are trying to figure out Twitter, so to try to hop on Twitter right away, you have to learn Twitter, you have to figure it out, you have to trial and error whereas you already understand how Facebook works. You know the difference?

Yep. So you are very clearly articulating your points. It must be that copywriting background of yours.

(Laughter) Thank you. Yeah it's probably also the English major and I wrote a lot of papers in college.

We talked about a couple of online resources. Is there any resource that is just invaluable to you that you would recommend to a beginner?

Well, if we are going to go with the social media part, I would definitely look at places like the Social Media Examiner, CopyBlogger.com, those are education resources where you can read about marketing and copywriting and going social. They have free courses, free eBooks, also hubspot.com is an actual company that provides the emails that we talked about earlier, but they have a lot of free resources to learn a lot about marketing and especially online marketing.

When you were first starting your online business, where did you go to learn what to do? These resources you just mentioned or are there any courses you took or anything like that?

Well I kind of had a little bit of a leg up working at Gleyser Kennedy because I had all the access to the resources in their library as an employee, but yeah I followed CopyBlogger.com for years and Social Media Examiner was started by a partner of a person who runs Copy Blogger so they are very similar. And Hubspot I have also been following their stuff for years. So starting my own business, they helped me figure out how to market myself. They helped me start to figure out how to do the marketing side of it, definitely.

So you are here today, you are where you are and know what you know. If you had to start your business over again, what if anything would you do differently?

Honestly, I would probably work a little harder while I still had a job, while I still had a safety net. like I mentioned, I was laid off and that was scupper scary for me, and if I had worked on building my client base little more, you know, hustled a little more as they say, it might not have been as scary but honestly I think that everybody has to make their own path and mine has brought me here, and if I changed too much, I might not be where I am. I think the only thing I would do differently is like I said, hustle a little bit more while I had a safety net.

Got it. Are there any authors, any book authors that you maybe recommend, whose books or words have changed your life in some way?

You know, I hate to keep saying Dan Kennedy but I read his books over and over and over again. Of course there are the copywriter gurus; the experts that we have all learned from, you know Carlton and Robert Ringer. Honestly Charlie, I read so many books it is hard to keep them all straight (laughter). Really the business section of the library, I have actually been working through all the shelves. I just check them out and read them. There is so much information out there that to pinpoint...I know Seth Godin has written a lot of great stuff and there are a lot of info products out there that can teach a lot of stuff too, not just published books.

Got it, got it. So wrapping things up, what is the best piece of advice you have for a baby boomer that is looking to start an online business or perhaps a business with an online presence?

The best piece of advice, I am going to go away from the practical and go into what I like to call the "woo" the mindset part of it and really say that it doesn't matter your age. if you don't get out there and do it, you're going to be wondering "what if?" so it's scary and it's overwhelming and it's frustrating and sometimes you lost sleep, but it's worth it to never have to say, "what if I had done this? What if I had taken that leap?" and really try something that could make my life amazing. And you never know. Nobody can guarantee that it's going to work; nobody can guarantee that it's going to be awesome, but if you have fun with every day and really do what you love, then I think it's going to be worth it for you.

Well that's something that resonates with me and I am sure it will resonate with a lot of our listeners, so great advice. So what's the best way for our listeners to connect with you if they want to learn more about you?

Well, actually I would like to offer to your listeners a free brainstorming session, so basically if they want to head over to RockYourMarketing.com/Brainstorm, and fill out the little form there, then they can hop on the phone with me for about 30 minutes and we will talk about their business, their marketing. If they don't have a business we can figure out what they might want to do, if they have business but need help with the marketing, I am totally game, whatever they want. So that page is up for your listeners when this is released and it is also up for people who are catching it later. That's probably the best way to get in touch with me.

That is a totally kind offer, and I don't even want to ask what your hourly rate is so I know the current valuable perk there. Thanks! So all the fantastic resources that Alyson mentioned in today's podcast will be available on the Shownotes page on the BoomerBusinessOwner.com. Alyson thanks so much on behalf of all of our listeners, we really really appreciate your help.

Charlie thank you so much for having me, and I look forward to talking with you more soon.