

Episode 18

Authentic and Organic Marketing with Amy Hager

00:28

Hello and welcome to another episode of My Weekly Marketing. And today's show, we're joined by a remarkable guest who's on a mission to bring joy and success to small businesses everywhere. Amy Hager is a self-described partner in joy at a joyful business revolution. Amy is not your typical marketing mentor but a genuine passion for small businesses and community. She goes beyond traditional marketing to build authentic connections.

0:54

And as co-founder of the Content Personality Club, she helps service-based businesses cultivate a profession they truly love. In this episode, we'll delve into Amy's unique approach to organic marketing, where she blends her marketing skills with her understanding of community building. She'll share insights on how to infuse joy into your business, engage your audience authentically and create meaningful relationships that lead to sales. Whether you're an seasoned entrepreneur or just starting your journey as business owner, Amy's expertise and fictitious energy will leave you motivated to take your business to new heights.

01:31

Well hey Amy, how are you today?

01:31

Good, how about you?

01:35

I'm doing well, thanks! So, tell me about what you do. Tell me about your business and how you got into this world, this part of the marketing world and all the good story behind it.

01:48

Yeah, so I do organic marketing. So I'm an organic marketing mentor and I really like to work with individuals and businesses who really believe that they have a mission or a movement that's larger than them and really helping them figure out how to market and talk about that. And I think a big component of organic marketing and of the work that I do is it really is building that community around something like someone that we have similar visions and similar views.

And you know, this actually really really started for me way back when I was nine. I used to race go-karts and so I'd have to go around town asking people to give me money for, you know, tires and gas and I'd get the hearties to sponsor me and you know whatever local chiropractor he was one of my biggest sponsors and I learned really, really young that you could be the best race car driver out there and get all of the wins and win all the points and the money and everything. But it didn't matter unless you had a big following and a big community, and so that's where I put my efforts in way back in the day of making sure that I had people at my pit afterwards and I was always networking and connecting, and so I think that community building aspect has played such a huge role throughout my entire life and my career, and now blending it with marketing and messaging is really that sweet spot building those businesses that you really love with a community around you that loves you and the ideas and what you're going through as well.

03:24

I love that. I love how you started out and I'm really kind of curious about go kart racing. I didn't realize that that was like a thing where people would get involved and you could do that. How was it?

03:38

Oh yeah, so I grew up my dad grew up, you know, a motor, had a car guy, and so I grew up that way too. I could drive a little snowmobile better than I could walk when I was younger, and, you know, it just was something natural that I just did. When I started again, we had a really good community around us, so it wasn't on my awareness that girls didn't really do this, and so I was one of the only girls at our track, and I'm one of the only girls to ever win a national championship too, and so it is kind of cool to be able to be, I guess, spearheading something that I didn't realize I was getting myself into, when all I wanted to do was drive fast and run into people.

04:24

I love that. You know I think girls can do anything personally, but I also love that, you know you just jumped right in and didn't even think twice about it and that is really cool. It sounds like a lot of fun. So when you say organic marketing, what do you mean by that term?

04:44

And so when I'm talking about organic marketing, it's not paying for ads or buying Facebook ads or doing any paid advertising. And so when you look at the opportunities to do organic marketing, we're talking about things like your website, we're talking about things like articles or being published or being on podcasts or being interviewed on TV, talking about social media, and you know we can go down that rabbit hole. What social media channel you choose to be on what you really love and what you enjoy, and even your email, when you're sending emails to your email list, that's part of organic marketing. So, really, again, focusing on the opportunities that you have in front of you, that you're not paying advertising dollars.

5:31

So do you feel like, do you do any paid advertising at all and, if so, you know, have you had success or not success with that? Or what are your thoughts about that? Because it's oftentimes Dabble, dabble, dabble, okay. Okay, because I think, certainly for sure, people can get ahead by just promoting themselves organically, for sure. Usually it's about the time and there are certain instances where I feel like people just really do need to run some ads and, you know, get themselves out there in certain segments, in certain industries, and that sort of thing.

06:10

Well, I think the one thing about paid advertising that I would say is if your organic marketing isn't working and you're not attracting an ideal audience and having thoughtful conversations because we really need to think of our marketing as a conversation starter, not making the sale itself. If your organic marketing isn't doing that, it isn't creating conversations and opportunities for people to be in your community and for you to get to know and build those deep relationships, that's where I feel like we go wrong with going down the paid route. Like. If it's not working organically, your messaging is probably often. Therefore, bad messaging is just bad messaging, whether you're using it organically or paying for it, right? So making sure your messaging, I think, is the first place to start, but we dabble every once in a while in paid just one. We're curious, I feel like marketing is just a big experiment, right, and so we always try it out and I just feel like one. It's not the energy that I enjoy being in. So there's that making sure that our business decisions are aligned with our joy and our lifestyle value, and I think there's so many. There's the algorithm game, there are so many nuances that go into buying paid ads, especially in the online space. It is hard to stay up on that, and so, if you go back to the roots, good messaging is good messaging, and every time I really turn back into that and really focus on that piece, that's where business really starts picking up. So we get distracted every once in a while and like to play with it, though.

07:53

Yeah, oh, that is such smart advice. So you're absolutely right. If you are trying to run an ad and think that putting money behind it is going to create something you know, create good things out of, like you said, like a weaker message, then it makes perfect sense. Anyway, even if you're running paid ads, I tell my clients to sell. Time starts really small in terms of budget, make sure that your message is resonating, because something resonates with us just fine, but we're not the target customer and so we don't always know.

08:28

Think about starting your budget small, even think about starting your audience small, like if you think about the one ideal person that you work with. They just light you up. Think about the quality and the characteristics of that person and really think about the conversations that you're having with that person. That's really going to help you influence your messaging. And so if you're like I really enjoy working with women this woman entrepreneur who's been in business about six years and you know focuses on whatever such health and wellness right, if you can really think that tiny in your advertising and then the messaging around your advertising, especially when you're thinking paid, then yeah, I would say that is going to probably give you

the best success. But a lot of times we think too broad and too open with our messaging and instead of saying you know the real, true demographics of the ideal person, we don't want to feel like we're excluding somebody. So we may say all women entrepreneurs or we may just say all entrepreneurs and then when we say that the person who's listening to us can actually visually see themselves or a friend or somebody that they know, to then say, oh, you need, you need to talk to this person, you need this thing. So I do think thinking small in your marketing, your messaging, and especially if you're doing paid advertising, is really really smart advice.

9:52

Oh yeah, yeah, I love what you said. That's absolutely true. When you've got one person that you're talking to, the whole creation process becomes so much easier. What steps do you have for small businesses who are just saying, okay, I know I struggle with writing things for my target customer. I mean, how do you suggest that people start with that process?

10:17

So it may not even be that writing is the right thing. So what I really think you should start out with is finding out where you energetically create the best, and so we have a content personality quiz. You can Google it and it's a free quiz. Figure out what your content personality type is. There's five types. There's written, video, visual, audio and live in person. And when you find out what content personality type you are, I encourage you to only create in that type and let the rest go. So if you're a video person, don't be right in a blog. You're really, really good at explaining things and explaining things in a room on your own. You don't need to feed off in an audience. Usually. If you're a live in person, don't go do phone calls, because you need that physical energy of the other person, either on the other side of Zoom or the other side of the coffee table from you. And if you're a written person, you are OK not going to another networking event if you never want to go to another, but it is your content personality type.

11:22

So I think we really end up getting wrapped up into the jack of all trades and we can master none of them right, and we think we need to show up in all of these mediums and all of these vehicles or places because we need to reach a wider audience, and that ends up burning us out, right. And so when we really tap into where we energetically show up the best and focus on that, there's a million people on all the different platforms, right. So go with what works for you and know that your people are out there and they need to hear you. And then they need to hear you in the most energetic way that they can hear you in and let the rest go and see how that feels to you. And again, if it feels good but the messaging is off and you're not attracting, then all right, it's a messaging problem. But even before you can decide if you have a messaging problem, you have to check in energetically if you're doing things that are aligned with you or not. So that content personality is, I think, where everybody needs to start, whether they're an entrepreneur just starting their business or whether they're someone who's had a business for years and they're starting to feel the burnout. And especially for anybody who's building a team, have everybody on your team. Take that content personality quiz to make sure that you have a

well rounded team and that there's not all live in person people on your team. You want to try to balance it out a little bit.

12:46

Oh yeah, that is so insightful. You're absolutely right. I mean, I just actually had a different podcast interview recently where she just checked out social media altogether. She's like, yeah, this was just draining me, you know completely, and I can't do this, it's not effective for me, it's hard to outsource it, you know, and it wasn't, it just wasn't her thing. And she found a way. She still utilizes social media, but she found another way to do that, by connecting one on one with people. And I think that's what you're saying too is that you need to find your own area of giftedness and what you can do to really communicate effectively is the way in which you can understand this weirdly, that's, you have your own natural style and your own natural abilities to communicate, and that you should seek those out first and then figure out what to say after that. And I would imagine yeah, I would imagine that once you figure that out you, what you say is going to come out a lot easier, anyway.

13:51

Oh, yeah, totally. It is easier and especially when you're having to force yourself to do something. And I went to journalism school. When I was a journalist, I was the one that was always missing my deadlines or like getting it right in a deadline and you know like a paper has a deadline right. And it was so funny because I love the interview process. I loved gathering the facts and gathering the story. It was sitting down and literally typing that story out. That I just hated and it took me until I took the personality quiz, the content personality quiz, to really realize, wow, that makes sense. Now I understand why I was quote unquote, procrastinating on doing the writing, because energetically it doesn't. That's not where I shine. So figuring out as a live in person how to quote unquote, I guess, hack things so that way I can function and do get pieces that are written out there has been really, really fun and much more enjoyable than sitting down and making myself write something.

14:52

Oh, that's interesting, Huh, so, and also open a link to that and show notes to so, yeah, totally, yeah, yeah, so we can. So anybody that can take the quiz and figure out where they should be. So I was grouping on your LinkedIn, as I mentioned earlier, and I noticed that you're passionate about storytelling for business as well. So tell me, first of all, tell me how you got into that, and then what are some stories that you think small businesses should be telling or that they could benefit from. How is that? How does that work with small businesses in their marketing and in their websites and so on?

15:31

Especially with small businesses, solo entrepreneurs like your stories are really how people connect to you. It's so hard to compete with the big corporations right, they got millions of dollars

and design and fun graphics teams and everything like that. So when you really think about your business story and your personal story and how this thing I came about, that's where someone's really going to connect and feel emotionally connected to you, and people tend to buy more emotionally, and so when they're feeling like they can trust and like you, when they're feeling that you're safe, when they're feeling that you've heard them or that you're speaking with them or to them, that's really, really key.

16:14

And so the easiest way for us to do this is telling our own stories. We don't need to go learn some marketing framework or funnel or any of those things by really tapping into what we know about what we do and who we are and why we do that. I think it's really, really important. And a great example is I was talking to a small school in New Jersey and they are coming up on open enrollment period and so they enroll this class to start September and they were talking about you know it's so hard to get people to enroll and especially to enroll early. Everybody's waiting until the last minute, and then we're getting all these phone calls with all these questions and when I really asked, why, why didn't you have this school? Why didn't you even have this school, like what is different and important about this school? And they really went down then that path of, well, it's not a tutoring situation, it's a teaching situation and this adds on to things that you're actually learning in your classrooms and it's to really enhance and not necessarily tutor. None of that was in their marketing and I was like that's what makes you different. You're not a tutor, you're enhancing what children are already learning in the math classroom and making that tiny pivot instead of enroll for the math class and talking more about the why and what's behind this course and curriculum and why this school is different than going to public school or a charter school or something like that. It's really, really important to tap into your mission, your brand and your why and your storytelling again, so people can really see what you have to offer and better understand and have that emotional connection.

18:04

Hmm, that is so true. I mean, I see that quite a bit where people will put you know, I think, especially as small business owners and we're just starting out, we want to look like everybody else. We want to look professional and polished, and what gets lost in that is this sort of mimicking that we do, and I've done it. I know for sure, I've done it. When I did my first website, I was like we can get all the other websites. I wanted to look professional, right, and but what gets lost in that is your own story number one, and also what makes you unique. And sometimes what makes us unique is our own story. And because nobody else can be exactly like you and even our personalities when we, when you're dealing as a solopreneur, your personality is your business. Basically, yeah, I mean, you are your product. So what makes you so passionate about content marketing in general?

18:59

I would say I think, again, it ties back to the story and the creation of it, and I think the other great thing that I've learned through all of the years of helping business owners and, you know, even helping myself is we can't create content in a bubble, and so creating content through conversation and collaboration really helps you bring clarity. And a lot of times I feel like we put

this pressure on ourselves as solopreneurs, where we're like, oh, I need to figure this out, I need to do this, and if we took that out and works more collaboratively with others, one we can't always see the label on our own jar, right? We're sitting inside that jar, we can't see it. And two, I really think, by being surrounded by a supportive community who's asking really really good questions and not necessarily challenging your train of thought or providing their feedback, providing their insights. Again, keep it to you. What's important to you, by asking really good questions to help you get clearer, is so key, and so I think that whole process really really just lights me up when we do it in a community collaboration, a community collaborative situation.

20:14

Hmm, that is. That's really smart, because I know that personally, when I started my first business, I felt like, okay, I have to come across as the expert now and this is my I have a slightly perfectionist personality here that I just need to have it all polished so that people will think that I've got all together and want to buy from me. But in reality, that's not what makes us connect with people. And in fact, somebody was saying to me you know, when was the last time that you were talking about a friend and said about them oh, I like them because they're so perfect? Never, you know. It's like that's not why you connect with people. You connect with people because you see yourself in them, and the same is true with businesses. We connect with them because something about them either the founder or the owner, or something about their product or something makes you say, oh yeah, they get me. And that's what you were saying earlier and that's why it's so important for them to have really focused on that one target customer.

21:22

Yeah, and I think that when you can be in conversation and I think that's the other thing that we just assume is we're going to present, present, present, talk at, talk at, talk at. But when you are in conversation, whether you're creating your content through conversation, in collaboration, or you're in conversation with a potential client or a cheerleader or a collaborator or a connector, everything that funnels through all of this is being in community and in conversation. It's never actually just a straight up presentation and someone's going to buy.

22:01

Yeah, yeah, that's absolutely true, I agree. So this was so fascinating to me. In your bio you say you have race cars and a radio DJ built, sales and marketing teams, and work as a group home to support adults with mental illness. Let it be in the association started the youth group and it has been a military style spouse, just to name a few. How have these experiences tied into your business? And I mean, obviously they've all shaped you as an individual, but how have they made you? How are they? How they tied into your business and made you a better, you know, business owner.

22:38

So I think that by having the wide variety of experiences, it makes me very relatable and so I feel like there is never usually someone sitting across from me that I can't find a common thread with. Like you and I were sharing earlier, we have a lot of common threads in Minnesota and in

cold weather and hot weather, right? And I think by having that connection again and being able to connect on that deeper level, that's what's building trust. And so when I am talking to someone in the healthcare industry, yeah, the work that I did in the group home is not working at the ER during the pandemic. But kind of have a glimpse and understand of their life yes, and it just so happened that, like I was, because I've been a military spouse, we've had the pleasure of moving around a little bit and I've had to quote unquote Virginia met myself so many different times and I think it's just being curious and open to opportunity. And when I was at the bed and breakfast Association of Virginia, I didn't even eat breakfast when I started there and had never stayed at a bed and breakfast. But what they saw is they knew that I could connect really deep and I could really teach a lot of their business owners how to run more joyful businesses and how to enjoy being in business more and how to start their businesses, because that was part of the mission of the organization was to start the business, and so I think, by being open and curious and exploring, it's really, really helped me be able to connect better with people on such a deeper level.

24:15

Yeah, and I think that part of your bio really says just what you were saying is that because you have had all these experiences, it becomes your story and that in itself is a perfect example of how you know. I can look at that and I don't have a lot of crossover with the items that you listed there, but I did notice where you went to college and was in my home state of Minnesota, so so I think you're right and that's a perfect example of how sharing your story can connect with other people and make you kind of a part of their world too. So is there anything that you feel like was a game changer when you started your business? Like that you wish that you could share with other people right now, like I wish I would have known blank when I started my business. What would that be?

25:09

I would say that it's not necessarily when I started my business, but again, we kind of touched on this already when I see people start businesses and where I see them struggle the most is they put their head down and they do the work. And by putting your head down and staying you do need to stay focused, but putting your head down and just doing the work, you're really not allowing yourself that chance to build community and to work in collaboration. Just because you decided to start this business does not mean you need to do it alone. And so finding other business owners, whether it's in a paid type program or even your business friends in your already known network and I think when people start their own businesses, they forget to leverage their current network and who they already know and there's a lot of gold in who you already know, and so don't be scared to reach out and say hey, I just need to have a conversation, I need to get out of my own head and I need to talk through things and find those people that you can actually do that with and do that comfortably with, but knowing that you don't have to take every single piece of advice and feedback that someone gives to you. Trust your gut, you know, you know what's right, what's going to work for you, and if it doesn't work but you tried it, know that again. Marketing is a big, joyful experiment, and sometimes you're like that way for us too. So don't be nervous to ask for help, to have conversations and to experiment and try.

26:45

So you're saying that even if they're not necessarily business people, maybe they are, maybe they're not. If maybe it's just a friend just talking to them and kind of verbalizing the stuff that's in your head they can give you some feedback from just an outside perspective is going to be helpful for them.

27:02

Exactly, and I think when you're, when you're verbalizing, listen to the words that you're actually saying and then hear the words that they are saying back to you and see is there a gap that that's missing there, Is there something that isn't clear? When you're talking about what you're talking about, Are you adding more confusion? And you know I always go back to when more business owners there's all the things, but remember, you can't be in business if you don't have sales. And so tying your, your activities and your actions back to sales and showing up in service so that way you can be in business, is really, really key. And so if you're listening, when you're having conversations, to the words you're saying and the words that they're saying back, that's really going to influence then you having actual sales conversations and your actual message. So really really have those big Mickey Mouse listening ears on.

27:58

That's powerful stuff too, and especially using if they are your target customer, potentially could be your target customer using the listening to the words that they're saying and using those in your messaging too is powerful, because sometimes we, like you said, we get into our own heads and we try and communicate something from our perspective that we've been seeped in the marketing world for a long time. You know I do this all the time with clients and I don't mean to, but I'll say, you know, let's check your SEO, and they'll say my what you know and shoot, yeah, because it's search engine optimization. So, especially marketing, we use a ton of acronyms. I don't know why, but you know, from CPC to you know, whatever it is just everywhere, probably in business in general. But anyway, well, thank you so much, Amy. I really appreciate you having time, taking time to be on the podcast today. Where can people find out more about you?

28:58

Yeah, If you look up the joyful business revolution that's our website, you'll see me and my business partner, Shannon, and again, just Google content personality quiz. When you take the quiz, you'll get an email with your result. I also get the email with your results. I'll probably reach out and ask you, does this result surprise you? Because I think it's so intriguing when some people learn this about themselves. Sometimes it is surprising. Sometimes people are like, nah, I already knew it. And sometimes people are completely resistant and they're like, oh, I think I'm one of the other ones, and then we have to have a conversation about that. But those are your best places. I'm also on Facebook, Amy A-M-Y Hager, H-A-G-E-R. Love to connect with you.

29:37

Perfect, thank you. I'll have those links in the show notes too. So thanks, amy. I appreciate you. Take care, bye.

Janice Hostager: 29:50

So what do you think? Doesn't finding a communication to style that's authentically yours sound like such a weight off your shoulders? I got to tell you I learn a lot from my podcast guests.

30:01

To find out more about Amy, including the links we talked about in today's show, visit my show notes page at myweeklymarketing.com forward slash 18.

30:10

And, as always, if you found this episode helpful, please consider leaving a five-star review on your podcast app of choice. So until next time, I hope you can find joy in your business. Bye for now.