

Episode 19

Rethinking Social Media with Leslie Stevens

Janice Hostager: 0:04

I'm Janice Hostager. After three decades in the marketing business and many years of being an entrepreneur, I've learned a thing or two about marketing. Join me as we talk about marketing, small business and life in between. Welcome to my weekly marketing.

Janice Hostager: 0:28

Well, hey, hey. If you're like a lot of entrepreneurs, social media is on your to-do list almost every day. But not for my guest today, Leslie Stevens. After realizing that social media was taking way too much time and wasn't really her jam anyway, she parted ways with it and never looked back. Leslie is a seasoned branding and marketing strategist who challenges the conventional belief that small business owners need to be active on social media to achieve success. She believes that there are other more powerful ways to meet potential clients without the constant pressure of posting. Through her unique approach called the client connection method, she combines design and sales psychology to empower her clients, to create connections with strangers and convert them into paying clients. She believes that you don't have to be an influencer to make an impact. Whether you're looking for an innovative marketing idea or simply intrigued by the idea of challenging the status quo, Leslie's perspectives will leave you inspired. So let's dive into my conversation with Leslie. Well, hey, Leslie, how are you today?

Leslie Stevens: 1:32

I'm fantastic. How are you?

Janice Hostager: 1:34

I'm doing well. So you have kind of a unique business, in which you tell us a little bit about what you do and what your story is and how you arrived at where you are right now.

Leslie Stevens: 1:48

Absolutely. It was quite an adventure. So I am a branding and marketing strategist and I specialize in teaching coaches and service based entrepreneurs. I had a book *More Clients Without Having to Post on Social Media* and I know that goes against most of the advice that we especially scroll by, and I learned a bit the hard way and I'm so glad that I did, because now I get the opportunity to teach it to other people. But I started out in the online entrepreneurial

world as a registered dietitian and I thought, okay, with my credentials I was also a certified personal trainer and my medical license, like all of these things and everybody told me to just post on social media and I would get clients. So I wanted to help people and I was like, if this is the way, then this is exactly what I'm going to do. So I put in so much time and I tried to learn everything I could about social media how to post, how to make it a connecting post or sales post and keep up with the algorithm, figure out how to fill my reels, all of those things and I'm very introverted, so putting out all of that energy every single day and putting myself out there in that way, it felt like such an uphill battle and I actually ended up completely burning myself out of that business, because not only did it feel like an uphill battle all the time, I was also working really, really long hours, because content creation takes a long time and when you feel that pressure to post every single day, you're like, okay, what do I have to post every day? And it's going to take me an hour or two to make the post, and then I've got to work with my clients and then run my business in the background. So you have all of these moving parts when you're in business by yourself and you're just starting out and you're trying to get clients, and I ended up not posting on social media at all and starting my branding business, because it was a natural flow into that for me, because people had watched me build my nutrition business and they loved the branding and I had friends who were like, can you just do my branding? And I was like, yeah, that's perfect. But I ended up being completely sold out in that business for months and I had to take a step back and I was like, why is this so easy? I felt like I was doing something wrong and I was like, okay, well, I better post on social media so that I can keep clients rolling in and interested. And then I was like, wait, wait, wait, wait. I have been getting clients consistently, and more clients than I ever got in my first business in a different way, and it's because I was making connections, I was participating in collaborations, I was doing interviews, things like that, and I never even thought of those things as marketing, but they were totally so caught up in the social media marketing and this is the way everybody told me. I hired business coaches, social media coaches, all of these things, and I realize I didn't even need it to have a successful business, because we scroll by things all the time and we're like, okay, you have to show up on social media or else people won't know about you, blah, blah, blah and like but I'm showing up in other places and I'm making these connections and building these relationships and people know that I do this job and I do it well, because I'm focused on the business and my client experience and all of these things that then bring in referral and then you can bring in social media on the back end of that. But everybody's doing business backwards and they're trying to build the social media audience first and then have people to sell to, and we're losing focus of the business and the client experience and creating those results, and that's where you really build a successful and sustainable business. So I knew that I had to tell everybody about it and that's how I came up with the marketing side of my business, which I teach it as not an influence or more sales without social media, so that I can share this knowledge with everybody.

Janice Hostager: 6:07

I love that. I love that I mean so many of the clients that I have gotten over the years, they'll start out, they'll get a website and they get a Facebook page and Instagram page or whatever, and they kind of get stuck and they think, okay, I should run some ads or whatever. But what I think a lot of people don't realize is that on that, on the awareness phase of your business, of your

marketing, it can be a million different things. Social media does not need to be part of that. It can be, you know, a magnetized sign on your car door. It can be. It can be a gosh, you know, like you said, interviews of people, pr. It can be ads or awareness ads, depending on what your business is. It could be Google ads, it could be a lot of things. And I think you're right. A lot of small business owners and I've been there too you know you burn yourself out just like, oh, I gotta create a reel, I gotta do a post, I gotta, you know, make sure I'm on this platform and that platform, and it takes a big chunk your day and if you're just starting out, you are your business, so you don't have a lot of extra time for that.

Janice Hostager: 07:16

Do you feel like, down the road, your business would benefit from being on social media, like you said? You could add it later. Do you feel like that's something that businesses should consider?

Leslie Stevens: 07:28

Absolutely. I think social media marketing is a fantastic tool. I think it's just a tool that uses so much time and energy that if you only have so much energy in the day, you can focus it on other areas that are going to give you a greater. I am going to use social media because my ideal client is hanging out on social media, but that's when I can grow and scale, it seems, because I know that's not my straight. I know other people feel like social media marketing is so natural for them and that that's fantastic. If that is you, I am amazed by those people. So that's when I grew, I felt it's just like any other marketing strategies, like adding an email list or adding ads, things like that. There are different stages of your business where you build different layers onto it. What I focus on is really building that foundation of what is your brand, what are your offering, how are you communicating this? Because everything is going to work backwards from that, whatever your email marketing is, whatever your ads are saying, whatever your social media thing is built off of that foundation.

Janice Hostager: 08:44

Right, right, yeah, and you know, I think you're right. I think sometimes I mean you can't. Typically, you don't typically start with an email list. You or you may have existing customers that you put on your list, but you need to get something in that awareness phase out there. I put email and that more in the consideration phase and you know, and you can do nurturing emails from there. But I think that the thing that people really like about social media and when I started my business it was the dark ages, the social media I mean I've posted something and people would see it and it was like cool, this is free marketing. You know why wouldn't I do this? And of course, that's not the case anymore. You know, if you're in a business and you're posting something, you may get one or two likes. One of them is probably, you know, your mother or your sister or whatever, and it's not as easy as it used to be, but people still, I think, go to it because it is free.

Janice Hostager: 09:40

Do you have any recommendations for alternatives to social media that are inexpensive or free, that people can work in that awareness phase and get their name out there and get their business out there?

Leslie Stevens: 9:55

Yeah, definitely. I would say the best and most effective one, I would say, is marketing or not marketing. Obviously, marketing networking so get yourself out there and have conversations, whether it's in a small group or even one-to-one, having more conversations about what you do. And it doesn't even have to be in a formal setting. But there are so many opportunities for networking, even in the virtual space. So it's not about not using social media at all. You can use it in different ways than having to create content all the time. I start a lot of conversations out of Facebook groups, go to networking events in virtual spaces, and it's really easy because I feel like a lot of people post and then hide behind their posts because they're hoping oh, I won't really have to put myself out there because my content will speak for itself. But that's not how it works, especially now, and you have to put yourself out there when you have a business and we want to keep ourselves kind of protected. But the more you do it, the more you put yourself out there, the more you have those conversations. You learn what people are looking for, what things they're resonating with in your message, and now you can really help them. So it gives you so much information when you go out there and just go to a networking event and don't think about yourself, don't think about am I going to get a client with this? Just talk about what you do and then from there you can evolve your message the more you get in front of different people.

Janice Hostager: 11:25

So do you have social media accounts?

Leslie Stevens: 11:28

Yes. I have social media accounts on every platform because I always have myself available to have a conversation. Different types of clients are going to be on different platforms. So some of them might be on Facebook and they might feel more comfortable messaging me on Facebook. Some of them might be on Instagram and want to message me on Instagram. I'll post, especially if I'm doing collaboration. I think of my social media pages right now as kind of a portfolio of my work, so it'll be more of like a website so they can get information of what my services are, what programs I have and then events that I'm a part of or where I'm speaking, so they get a good overview of who I am. But I don't pressure myself into posting and thinking I'm going to get a client out of it. I don't want people who have the conversation to be like, yes, I'd love to talk to you about your marketing or your branding and see how I can support you, but it's all about positioning yourself for the right conversation and making the right connection.

Janice Hostager: 12:35

Gotcha. Yeah, it's a way to connect with the people that are already there. One thing you brought up which I think is really interesting is that when I am working, I do this for my own business too. When I really want to get to know my target customer, then I jump into those Facebook groups or even on Reddit or other social media platforms and just listen to what other

people are saying, because I think it can be a fabulous tool for that. For sure, and you're right, it's a great way to reach out. And just because you don't spend a lot of time posting on social media doesn't mean that you can't connect with other people who are on social media and respond to those posts that they put on their business pages or their pages or whatever their regular pages. But I think also there is power in that connection, and so many people that I know that do social media, so many businesses do this the whole post and ghost thing. You schedule your posts, they go out and unless somebody responds and asks a question, you're not on there, you're not interacting with other people. So what I hear you saying is that it's really about developing those relationships on social media more than putting on the show the dog and pony show kind of thing.

Leslie Stevens: 13:59

Absolutely. I call it posting and praying yeah, and praying for a client to come to them when they haven't established a real connection yet.

Janice Hostager: 14:11

Right, yeah, yeah, and you know, and the thing is that we all do want to do business with people we know, like and trust. So if you are just doing that, it does make you feel a little more like a billboard or something like that, where you can't really connect with them. They're not real people necessarily. No-transcript, you know, is on your computer screen. I don't know, but yeah, that's really interesting. More think about this, that, the more I really like your approach, especially for so many people that don't love the social media marketing and there are a lot of out there I would say that I'm I'm on the fence like I will do some things, but putting myself on social media was really hard initially when I was doing, you know, reels, where I was just talking to the camera definitely takes another level of Like. Okay, I got this, I can do this kind of thing. You know you can kind of hide yourself up for that.

Janice Hostager: 15:10

So do you have a few tips for people who don't want to, or they have social media accounts. They're doing it right now. What are some tips that you have to make that transition to the relationship part of it, more than just the posting and Just spending time every day on social media?

Leslie Stevens: 15:31

Yeah, so you can just start reaching out to people. You don't have to make it super complicated. You can reach out to people who have maybe engaged with your post before or who have reached out to you. What I did was I did a little bit of a drastic move, so I stopped posting on social media completely and I just started nurturing the relationships that I already had. Those naturally transitioned into either referrals or paying clients for me. But some people enjoy creating the content. So just design it in a way that barks a conversation. Because you said people, people need that connection in that relationship. And if you're just posting to post and there's no connection there, like that's great, I'm gonna scroll right by because you're competing with so many other people. But if you're prompting them, making them think about something

and encouraging them to reach out, then you'll be able to start that conversation. And a great way to do that is actually focusing on stories. So, instead of like a feed post, just post something in your story, ask a question, just be very direct. People want to know exactly what they're expected to do. So ask a question and say what is your input on this or what do you think of this and you'll get responses and you'll start those conversations.

Janice Hostager: 16:54

Love that. That's a great idea. Do you feel like it's better to? You mentioned stories, but what about? Do you feel like it's better to write on someone's post, or do you feel like you go to the DMs for those conversations?

Leslie Stevens: 17:10

I personally DM people directly. I wouldn't just comment on people's posts to comment on people's posts, because some people do that as a strategy for engagement and they don't put down a quality comment. If you're putting down quality con comments, people will probably respond to you, but the way to build like a deep, genuine connection is go directly through them and that way it's more one-on-one, because the closer of proximity you are to that person, kind of like a magnet, the closer they'll be attracted to you or the quicker They'll be repelled both things you want the answer right in business yes for sure. I would just go directly to DMing them.

Janice Hostager: 17:57

Do you feel like you get responses? I mean, I get so many DMs from people who are trying to, you know, sell me followers or you know, so do you feel like that people will read through what they have there and respond to you, your genuine posts?

Leslie Stevens: 18:12

Yeah, it depends how you reach out and it depends how you position yourself. If you position yourself as though I'm trying to sell you something, you probably will not get a response, but what do I do? So the strategy that I use is, if somebody is talking about something that I have an opinion on or agree with their position, or something like that, I will directly respond to that post or that story. So we're already, we have something we're connecting over at the very beginning, and then we just have a natural, flowing conversation after that and you ask them a little bit about them, what they do, and then you tell them a little bit about you. But if you go into their comments or their DMs and you're just talking about yourself and how you can help them and things like that, that's very off-putting.

Janice Hostager: 19:02

It is. Yeah, I've done the same thing where I have gone into people's DMs and just told them what I really like about what they posted, or maybe ask them a question about what they're selling, and people definitely respond really positively to things like that for sure.

Leslie Stevens: 19:19

I think it's thinking about how you would want to be reached out to, how would you want to be connected with if you're on the other side of the conversation? Just think about Okay, how would

I want this to go, how would I feel like this is natural and not like I, like I'm trying to get something out of it.

Janice Hostager: 19:36

Right, right, which is how you should approach your relationships anyway, you know you bring your own energy to a conversation that you would in real life in a DM, then for sure people are going to respond to it. So one of the things I like to do is to talk about Things, because we see people with successful businesses like yours and we wonder how they get there? So, and you told us a little bit about your story and how you were a nutritionist and you switched things up and went into marketing and that sort of thing. But what ways have you personally grown from this bit of self-employment and venture that we're all on?

Leslie Stevens: 20:16

Yeah, oh, there's been so many moments of growth. I feel like it's a constant growth journey because you're constantly having to go to new levels and do things you've never done before and try new things and kind of trust yourself. And one of the biggest things in my journey of Building a successful business was learning how to trust myself, because at the beginning, I was always looking to other people. Okay, can you give me the strategy, can you give me the past? Can you tell me exactly what to do to create the success that I want? And you can learn a lot from other people and you can learn a lot of ways that worked for them. But it doesn't necessarily always mean it's going to work for you in your business and that's something that I even teach throughout my program is how to individualize it. So, looking at the numbers and figuring out what's actually working for you and that's because that's what I had to do I had to look at the proof, like, okay, I can create a successful business because I have done X, Y and Z. I have Learned how to show up on video and have conversations. I have learned how to do sales. I have learned how to do marketing. I've learned all these things and I've gotten clients in the past and I've gotten people a fantastic rule. But it's looking back and allowing yourself to build up that proof that like, hey, I can do this. So the next move I can trust is that this is the right one for me and I don't need to be constantly looking for other things because we always have these shiny objects all around us, these different strategies. People are like you need this. This is essential for a business. If you want to succeed, you have to do this and it's great marketing. But you can spread yourself so thin and none of it can be effective if you're not focused on the right thing and if you're not connecting with clients in the right way, so it's putting your blinders on trusting yourself that you can do this and then taking it and running with it. Because when I started to trust myself, that's the only time I really created success and where it felt natural and it didn't feel like an uphill battle every single day because I knew from the proof that I had created that I got plenty of clients without having to post on social media. That's actually where I got all of my clients. So, even in those moments of self-doubt and things like, oh, maybe I should post because everybody's telling me I should like, no big fear of guns, you know you've made it work. It's the process and you're allowed to grow and evolve and change the way you do things and allowing yourself that growth is the biggest part of the journey.

Janice Hostager: 23:11

I just absolutely love what you just said. That is so, totally true. Yeah, and I think you know I, when we start out in business, we don't have a lot of confidence. And you know, where do you get that? Well, it comes from doing all the things, getting out there, falling down, skinning your knees, making some big mistakes and I've made a lot of myself and find out what works and find out what doesn't work. And you know at that point, the more you do it, like you just said, the more you do it, the more confident you gain and you realize that you have that ability within you. We were given gifts that you can totally use for the people and help them out.

Janice Hostager: 23:58

What kind of struggles have you felt like you've had in your business that it has taken you a while to work through, besides social media?

Leslie Stevens: 24:09

Well, definitely the self-doubt. So, okay, getting in my own way about my messaging, doubting, doubting things that I knew were very obvious. From the fear of failure, fear of success, all of those fears that come up for so many people. That has definitely earlier, in the earlier stages, has held me back from creating success earlier, but I think that's a natural phase to go through to prepare you for all the things that are to come, because now I do things that little Leslie would have never in her wildest dreams thought she would do. I've been speaking on stages and I was always terrified to be a public speaker. All of these things, all of these fears that come up that kind of stop you from like even putting yourself out there on social media or putting yourself out there in networking events or speaking about your message, even though you know how important it is, all those fears are the biggest thing that has had ever held me back, and now I make sure that I do one thing every day that scares me, because I know it's gonna put me in the right position.

Janice Hostager: 25:23

Yeah, that is so true. Yeah, and I feel that I, like I've had a friend say to me you think you're really brave for you know, putting yourself on video or whatever. And I'm thinking, yeah, but we have to be, you know, it's like you just push those fears up, you know, to the bottom of your shoes because that you know you've got to keep going, you've got to do the things that make you scared. And that's how we grow as individuals and that's how we grow our business, because there's always gonna be the next step that's scary. There's always gonna be a step that we have not done before and that we just have to learn and own it and make our mistakes, if we need to, but just move forward and grow as a person that grows business. Leslie, I just love our conversation today. Thank you so much for being with us. Where can people find out more about you?

Leslie Stevens: 26:09

So they can find out the most about me on my website. It is a calm and cultivated vision. So you can also find me on Instagram as I am Leslie Stevens. You can find me on Facebook and LinkedIn and on YouTube. I have a podcast as well, called not an influencer and impact maker.

Janice Hostager: 26:28

Love that. Thank you so much for being with me today. Leslie, take care. Thank you and there you have it. I love how Leslie challenged the status quo and how she went with what worked best for her. That's what makes her brand so unique. The links to everything we talked about today are in my show notes at my weekly marketing calm board, slash 19. If you have questions for Leslie or me, send us a DM. We'd love to chat with you and answer your questions, as always. Thanks so much for joining me today. You're a rock star and I'm cheering you on. Bye for now.