myweeklymarketing.

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. So I'm going to make some assumptions here. I'm going to assume that you're a lot like me in terms of how much you have on your plate every day to run your business. If so, that means that you are constantly seeing your time slip away in ways that you're not in control of. When I ran a design agency in the early days, when it was just me alone, I dropped the ball with a couple of clients. You see, I have a terrible brain for remembering details, and there were a couple of embarrassing situations when I completely forgot to do something that I told a client I'd take care of. My clients were super understanding, but honestly, I was really embarrassed because I knew I could do better. If I didn't take copious notes and add them to the correct file, I'd forget details or mix up colour numbers. That's when I found out how important systems are, even when you're working alone in your business. This is actually true for all of us. If you want your business to grow, you'll eventually have to bring on other people to help you with your work, and at that point, it'll be much easier when you have systems already in place and you've taken the time to think things through. Today's podcast guest is Samantha Whisnant. Samantha is a certified digital business manager and a systems expert. She sets up systems for small business owners who are too overwhelmed to know what to do next, as Samantha helps businesses handle chaos, and on the podcast today, she's going to tell us what systems we should set up for more peace and control in our businesses. Here's Samantha. Well, hey, Sam, welcome to my weekly marketing. Hi, Janice, thank you so much for having me. How are you today? I'm good. How are you Good? Good, I'm doing great. Now my listeners will have heard your bio already, but tell me your story in your own words. How did you get to this point in your career and in your life?

Samantha Whisnant: 2:28
Yeah, so I originally started working online over four years ago and I started as a virtual assistant. I was actually living abroad at the time and I was just Googling how to make money online, basically as most people do, I think, when they start trying to explore other opportunities to get a bit more freedom in their life, make a bit of extra money on the side. And, yeah, I found the course on how to become a virtual assistant and then from there, I just started doing any type of project that I could. I was in content for a while, I did some copywriting for a while, I helped a lot with course creation and then eventually I moved into online business management and, most recently, I now run Systems with Sam, which is an operations agency that does done for you, systems for coaches and service providers so that they can grow and scale their business with

ease. So it's been quite a journey over the past four years and I never really thought I would end up here, but it's been a really fun one, as well, that's really interesting.

Janice Hostager: 3:33
So you were wanting to live abroad. Now you're still abroad, right, you're still abroad, yes.

Samantha Whisnant: 3:38
Yeah, originally I was living abroad just for about six months, like right before the pandemic. And when I was living abroad, that was when I was teaching English online and I really wanted to make some extra money because you know, I had some dead student loans. And that was when I just started that Google rabbit hole of how do I make extra money just completely online. And then I ended up moving back to the States and then last year I moved to Amsterdam.

Janice Hostager: 4:08
Okay, so you kind of travel the world and kind of work as you go. I love that. I mean, that's like my dream job.

Samantha Whisnant: 4:17
Yeah, it's been really fun. That's one of my favorite things about you know, having an online business is you really can work from wherever. I've spent, you know, the past few years just kind of going back and forth and travelling for a month or two months at a time, and you know that really is the dream, I think, whenever you start your own online business.

Janice Hostager: 4:37
It is. It is. I know that, and we lived in Europe for a little bit too, and it was always challenging, though. Like Did you find like finding an internet connection kind of challenging sometimes or things like that? Or is it been pretty easy now that was a few years ago, but Is it that heavy? What kind of things have you run into that have been sort of not issues but challenges that you've faced?

Samantha Whisnant: 5:02
Yeah, I don't think I think internet connections have been pretty, pretty decent for me. I've always lived in like pretty like stable, like just you know, like apartments and stuff like that. So we've always just bought our own internet, which is helpful, but I know like sometimes with Airbnb's and more of those like long stay places, I can be very, very spotty. But I think the biggest challenge for me is definitely just, you know, having that in-person connection with people. Like I love working online, I love getting to meet people from all over the world, but it does get lonely sometimes, and especially

whenever you are living in a different country and maybe you don't speak the native language and you know, just really pushing myself to go out there and meet other entrepreneurs and you know, join co-working spaces and go to events and you know, just be social again because you do miss that when you kind of just already have had that and you know your work life Without even thinking about it.

Janice Hostager: 5:57
That is true, yeah, even after the pandemic, when so many of us, you know, moved out of offices. Now, I'd always worked from home, but you know just that day-to-day interaction, that you meet somebody in the hallway and ask how they're doing or whatever you know, you don't realize how much of an impact that has in your well-being, I think, and until it's not there anymore and then you start realizing, oh yeah, we really do need that, that sense of community, and I think especially, you know, entrepreneurs and a lot of us work from our home offices. We don't get that as much as we should and it does kind of creep up on you after a while. But so is your business. I Love it because I looked at your website and you talk a lot about the three systems of genius. So why don't you tell us more about that? What is that and how does it work?

Samantha Whisnant: 6:50
Yeah, so whenever I'm working with clients, we really focus on three main areas, because I feel like those are the three main areas that Whenever you have systems around them, you can really fully step into your zone of genius. And the first area is around content. So your marketing processes because the content is such a main part of our business, especially if you are really first growing your business or you're first starting to get some traction in your business, you're probably spending a lot of your time creating content, getting yourself out there, selling. You know your services and I think people, when you first start, you have the time right, like you maybe know, have as much client work or you just don't have as many other things going on, so you have the time to create content. But really, once you start growing and you start, you know how adding all these other things to your plate Content can feel you can get really, really stuck in it. So we focus on content first and how we are, you know, optimizing those processes as much as possible In the creation process and then as well as the repurposing process. You know, if you're recording a podcast, what are we doing with the podcast? We want to make sure we're really getting the most out of every piece of content we are creating. And then the second piece of that is going to be like your client experience and your lead generation. So if you're working with clients, how are we making it as easy as possible for you to actually start working with them, especially when you have a lot of clients kind of coming in and out of your world if you don't have those automated processes in place to make it easy for a client to sign in with you, and just that helps a client feel fully supported when they start working with you. You know you don't want those questions of, oh, I paid my invoice, like, is there anything I need to

do next? Or you know when they kind of feel like, oh baby, was this a good choice or was this not? Like, just check, you get. You want a client to pay and you want to Immediately continue on with their excitement. And even if you're selling a digital product or a course, how are you really tapping into that and keeping that you know, motivation and momentum up Throughout their whole experience? And then the third area is the team processes, because once you have your content and your client, you really want to focus on hiring your team and making it as easy as possible for your team to work with you, because that will be another huge just energy drainer if you're spending all day in your Slack channel and reviewing things and giving feedback and you know, trying to explain things because Most of the time when before my clients work with me, their business Really lives in their head and that's fine when you're by yourself. But the minute you try to bring other people into your business and you want that support becomes very, very difficult to get your business out Of your head and you know explain it to someone else in a way that they fully understand and can do a task to meet your expectations if you don't have these systems and processes in place.

Janice Hostager: 9:43
Well, I really love what you're saying. I mean, I know this is a marketing podcast, but I really wanted to have you on because these systems are so vital to marketing and Because anybody that's done any kind of marketing and you mentioned content, for sure You've got a thousand blades spinning at all times. You've got, probably, social media going. You've got content You're putting together. You've got a website that's going on. You've got email marketing. You've got, you know Other things ads may be running. You're thinking about SEO that there are so many Little pieces to marketing and, for sure, to running a business too, that if you don't have systems set up, you are going to drop the ball or the plate or whatever the analogy is.

Samantha Whisnant: 10:30
Your plate is going to break. There you go.

Janice Hostager: 10:34
So you know, I find it really interesting because I think all of us, as we grow I mean, I started out as, like everybody else does, by themselves, by myself, and then I brought on one VA and now I have second VA that I'm working with and I thought that I was pretty organized. But you're absolutely right, when you start working with other people, especially if maybe English is not their first language or they don't really understand your business per se, then you really have to be crystal clear about your expectations and you have to get it right, get it first thought out in your own mind, and most of us are running around all day long doing a thousand different things for clients or whatever, and just taking time to really think that through. Okay, first I have to do this and then I should get on something like Asana or you know some task software you know and you

know should I use Google Drive? So should I use some other file you know. So you've got all these micro-decisions to make. So what have you learned personally? Like, when you work with a client, do you make a list? Do you have a list of recommendations for them and how to communicate and how does it work from your end?

Samantha Whisnant: 11:54
Yeah. So I have like frameworks that I kind of follow for each thing. That being said, you know it's because I do done for your systems. I really try to personalize it as much as possible to the client. So I work with a lot of different types of clients. I work with a lot of coaches, you know. Right now I'm working with a lawyer. I'm working with a fitness kind of coach who also does, who has a lot of in-person businesses, so she has kind of an online presence, but a big majority of her, you know, business is in person. So, when it comes to the systems and stuff that we're using, it does vary from client to client, but the framework we're kind of following is the same. You know, it's like when we're diving into these content processes, we're first mapping out okay, what does your creation process look like? You know, and that's something most people have never even thought- of you know like I don't know. I just go on Instagram and I create a reel and I write a captioned thing, bang, boom, it's out there. Or I just record the podcast and edit, you know, do the graphics, but they've never even taken the time to write out. Okay, this is the step-by-step, you know, process that I'm actually going to to create that content. And that's where a lot of those expectations can get very, very murky, because everyone does something differently and so, especially when you're hiring out, if you want to have that really consistent production in your business, then you have to give us a consistent process for someone to follow. So that's really where all of the systems start is, you know, mapping out what are. What is the process that you're already doing in your head, because that's the best place to start If you're working with clients, what is the process, that process that you're already doing, even if you're not doing it the same every single time. What ideally would it look like if you had three hours to onboard a client? Or you know, in your picture-perfect world, when you're working with a client, you know what, what do you want to happen, and then we can reverse engineer that and make that, you know, part of the system and process so that it happens every single time.

Janice Hostager: 13:56
And communication is so important too, just making sure that you, that they understand it. And I find social media particularly hard because you know you may have I mean, you've got again, you've got so many layers that you're working with. You've got, you know, different platforms that you're probably using. You've got different types of posts, you've got reels, you've got you know photos, you've got whatever and trying to orchestrate all of that with somebody else so they can post it for you and get it out there.

I find that particularly challenging. Do you work with social media? Do you do social media for your clients as well?

Samantha Whisnant: 14:35
No, I do not do social media for my clients, but I do set up the systems so that, ideally, they can hire a content virtual assistant or someone to help them with the social media, and then it's pretty like cut and paste for there. So we set up that content system of. This is how we're creating the content, this is how we're repurposing the content. We have that all outlined in a project management tool, so it's very easy to see and that process is set up. So when they do bring someone in to help with that, it's just a lot easier. And especially with content, I find that there is a really big kind of mental roadblock with it because you are having to give up a lot of control with it and it is you. I feel like your content is very personal to you. You want a specific voice, you talk a specific way, and that's why it becomes so hard to let go of that and let someone else kind of have that responsibility. But when you have the process really mapped out, then you don't have to let go of the whole thing, right? You don't have to hire a social media management agency who's like, okay, we're going to do everything from A to Z and you won't have to touch anything except for reviewing some things, because that is scary to a lot of people. They're like no, I've put a lot of time into my content and I've grown it this far, and so when you look at your process, maybe it's you who is writing the captions or you who is like coming up with those ideas and those scripts and those type of posts you want to post, but maybe you're just getting help with graphic creation, because that's something you can give someone and say, oh, here's a template or here's the style that I like, can you replicate that? Or, yeah, helping with the posting I think is a huge one to just have someone else go and post on you. It seems like such a small thing in the moment like it takes you less than five minutes, but it's more about that mental energy of okay, I have to post today, I have to remember to post today. Engagement, like all of the things around. That is really what we're trying to eliminate when it comes to setting up those systems.

Janice Hostager: 16:39
Yeah, yeah, that's really important because you're right. You go to social media and you think I'm just going to quickly post something, I know what I'm going to say, and so on. And then you open up your app and you're like, oh, so-and-so, just had a baby.

Samantha Whisnant: 16:55
You're all over the place.

Janice Hostager: 16:56
You're like oh my gosh.

Samantha Whisnant: 16:58
I do that all the time.

Janice Hostager: 16:59
30 minutes later you're like what was I here for?

Samantha Whisnant: 17:02
Yeah, no post goes out. Yeah, later badger thinking oh, I forgot to post.

Janice Hostager: 17:08
Yeah, I mean, that is part of it for sure, and there's just so many. Like I said earlier, there are so many layers to social media for sure. So, yeah, I think I love that you have a system set up ahead of time, so that I love the template idea too. I always say this is what I want my quotes to look like, or this is what I want my reels to look like, and just getting that sorted out ahead of time, at least in your mind. I think what makes it so hard for entrepreneurs is that their business is their baby and anytime I think it's always it always can be challenging in any job situation to delegate tasks, but especially when it's your baby, you know it's like, it is literally like you know when you hand your baby off to a babysitter, you know. When you have, when you have children, it's like okay, here's my baby, take good care of it, you know. But I think that sense of control is lost and we have to as business owners. We can't do it all, we just can't. So we have to find a trusted individual that we can say okay, and it may involve working with them for a while to get to the point where you're comfortable with them, but it definitely is a process that's really interesting.

Samantha Whisnant: 18:28
Yeah, and I think I think definitely, when it comes to trusting someone, like there's a lot we can do ourselves to prepare ourselves for that process as well, you know, and make sure that we have the processes, like, like you said, the expectations ready from ourselves of what we expect from that person so that we can tell that person and say, hey, this is what I expect from you, this is what I want things to look like. That just that piece alone, I think, helps so much with the trust of you know, trusting someone else because you're giving the good expectations and they still aren't really meeting those. Well then you kind of know, okay, maybe this is going to take some time, maybe this isn't the right person, but if they are starting to meet those, then you, that trust builds so much quicker.

Janice Hostager: 19:11
Yeah, yeah, good point. Why are you so passionate about this?

Samantha Whisnant: 19:18

I just really love problem-solving. I think my whole life I've just been very into optimizing things and getting down to the root cause of why something's not working and just wanting things to work as easily as possible. I think, for things to be as efficient as possible. I am a projector for human design like efficiency is in my human design nature. When it comes to systems, it's like I really want to help business owners enjoy their business again, because I feel like when my clients come to me a lot of times they're at the point where they've really lost a passion for their business because they're just overwhelmed, they're living in this chaos. They're at the point where they're like I don't even really like my business anymore. I don't even remember why I started this. I feel kind of scared. They promised me this freedom and now I'm working 12 hours a day and I can't see a way out. I have all these goals, I have this vision board, but I can't see how I'm ever going to get there from the place that I'm at now. I just love to be able to help them find that and to just start to see other opportunities where we can make their business easier. We can make their business, their dream business. They do have to change a few things. They do have to get used to a new way of doing things because they've been just winging it and doing it. However, they want this whole time, which is great. I think that's a very important part of the process, so you can figure out what works for you. But to really step into being that CEO, you have to change the way your business operates. I love helping my clients just find that balance of what is going to work for them so that they can continue to pour their offers into their energy, into their clients and continue to keep making changes in their own way.

Janice Hostager: 21:05
Right when I used to have a design agency and I found that, even before I had brought anybody else on, it was really helpful to set up those systems for myself. Or I found that I would put things in the wrong file, I found that I would forget details, so I had to make sure I wrote everything down or typed everything up and that sort of thing. Is that something you recommend for your clients that they start? Is that where they start, or do you think it's just kind of to develop those systems first and then reach out to someone like you, or to work with a VA and set them up together?

Samantha Whisnant: 21:43
Yeah, 100%. I think the biggest mistake I see entrepreneurs make when they hire is that they don't have systems in place. I think when you don't have systems, it just is going to make hiring so much harder and so much more time-consuming and energy-consuming than when you do have those systems in place. I always recommend starting with the systems. The other reason I say that is because you might be hiring for the wrong thing. A lot of times I have clients come to me who say oh yeah, I'm so overwhelmed, I'm just going to hire someone to help and they don't even know what they're hiring for. They're like oh, I just need help, help and that's it. It's like when you are hiring for help, you can have all types of help and some of them will be helpful and some of them won't. At the

end of the day, if you're hiring without a very, very clear taskless in mind, a very clear expectation for the role that you're hiring for, it's going to feel like it was just more work than it's worth. You're going to feel like I hired someone and I'm still extremely busy, and now I feel even more busy because I have to manage and delegate to this other person. Because when you implement those systems, it really changes the way your business is operating and, in turn, changes what you need help with. Because maybe you think, oh, I'm so tired of sending contracts and invoices and onboarding clients and sending emails and forms and making sure everyone has what they need. Okay, well, if we built an automated system for that that completely eliminates that problem as a whole and you don't need to pay someone else to come in and do that for you. And then, when it comes to things like content and stuff, there are, of course, always things in the business that you do need actual human interaction to help with. But if we can automate and systemize as much as possible, those specific things become so much more clear to you and then you can be a lot more intentional about your hiring process.

Janice Hostager: 23:37
Yeah, that's really interesting because I think there are so many times in which you just feel overwhelmed and you really don't even have time to sit and think clearly about where the help you need is going to come from. Is it going to be in accounting? Is it going to be social media? And I love you know. I think there are a lot of different exercises out there about figuring out your zone of greatness and you know, just like, what do you really enjoy doing and what do you, what do you good at and enjoy doing, versus the things that you hate doing or the things that you're just terrible at. You know, and that's the place to start with the delegation. Maybe yeah, I totally agree.

Samantha Whisnant: 24:18
I think, and a lot of times I say you know, just because you can do something doesn't mean you should. I have a lot of clients who come to me and they're like you know, I'm still doing this thing, like I can edit my podcast episode. I'm like sure, yeah, you can do that, you could do a lot of things with your business, but is that the best use of your time? If you were paying yourself to do that, how much money would you be spending? You know, and it's really about identifying those tasks as well because it's a lot. It's easy to pass off tasks that you hate doing and you're like I. For example, I hate graphic design. I'm not a graphic designer, don't enjoy it. Very easy for me to hire someone. Pass that off, but I enjoy content writing. You know, I don't mind editing things. It's not something I love, not something I hate, but it's not the best use of my time. So, yeah, identifying those things as well.

Janice Hostager: 25:06
Yeah, yeah, I, there is. This exercise I've done in the past two and I think I talked about this on one of my previous episodes too is making a list of everything you do every day,

like just for like a week, and just being really disciplined about writing down every task that you do and then categorizing them by $10 tasks, $100 task, $1,000 tasks Super eye-opening for me, because there are so many things in the $10 task column that I was spending time on that and I wasn't getting to those $1,000 task things. So it was just really became very obvious to me that I needed to hire those things out and keep the higher priced items on the list, but the things that only I could do, and I think it's easy to lose sight of that when we're trying to do all the things. It just is. So what's one of the biggest surprises that you've encountered, or what that you've found about being an entrepreneur? Like, did you have anything that you were expecting it to be one way and found out that it's not like that?

Samantha Whisnant: 26:18
I think for me, I always kind of had an entrepreneur gene as a kid. Even as a kid, I you know, was hosting lemonade stands at the garage sale, like I would turn my room into a cinema and, you know, force my sisters to go ask my parents for money to get in. So I was always trying to make extra money here and there and I was never afraid of hard work, like I've always had one or two jobs. I think entrepreneurship was never really something in my family. I'm from Oklahoma in the States, which is, and it just wasn't something that I saw around me growing up. Like it was always one of those things where I was like, oh, it would be cool to own a business, but I have no idea how I would ever do that. I've never seen anyone in my life do that and I didn't think it was an option for me until I found, like this whole online world and be being a virtual assistant and you know, diving into that A major degree in biochemistry, so it was like very much completely different and I think the biggest thing that's really surprised me is just the confidence that I've grown for trusting myself and just knowing that now, if I can do this with like absolutely no experience business online completely my own way, with a biochemistry degree and never having seen or talked to an entrepreneur before graduating college then I can do anything Any idea I have. If I want to go open a bakery tomorrow, I could figure it out. I feel like they say nothing's really as hard as starting your first business. If I started a new business tomorrow, it would still be hard, there would still be challenges, but I feel so equipped to deal with those problems and deal with those challenges that it's just like that inner confidence that I really love and it's something I never expected myself to have.

Janice Hostager: 28:10
That is really cool. Yeah, they say that if you want to become confident at something, you just start doing the thing and you become confident at it. You learn by doing, and I love that you're doing it from anywhere on earth that you can just. I mean, this is truly the gift of the internet age that you can work from absolutely anywhere and do a good

job with it. Well, I have loved our conversation this morning. Where can people find out more about you?

Samantha Whisnant: 28:37
Yeah, you can find me on Instagram at systemswithsam, and I also have a free guide. It's called Behind the Systems of 100K Months. If you want to dive more into the three systems we talked about, you can find that in the link in my bio or at systemswithsam.com/100k.

Janice Hostager: 28:55
And in the show notes for today. And in the show notes Thanks so much, Sam. I really appreciate you taking the time to do that, to visit with us today, so yeah, thank you so much for having me.

Samantha Whisnant: 29:06
It was a blast.

Janice Hostager: 29:08
So are you as motivated as I am to start getting a little more organized with your systems? I found that the systems change as your business grows. So even if you've organized them before, it's likely that you'll have to jump back in with it at some point and rework these systems in that phase of your business. You can find out more about Samantha, including her free download, by visiting myweeklymarketing.com, forward slash 31. I hope you found today's podcast helpful. If you did, would you please let me know by leaving a review in Apple Podcasts or your podcast app of choice? I'd appreciate it so much. As always, I'm cheering you on. Bye for now.