

Episode 6 - How Much Time and Money Does It Take to Start a New Blog?

Lauren 0:01

Welcome to the Launch Your Blog Biz podcast. I'm your host, Lauren McManus, I used to be a full time tax accountant and CPA with a whole lot of limiting beliefs and "I can't"s whenever I thought about starting my own business. Fast forward a few months, and I quit my job after starting and growing my first blog to six figures in just a year. This is my space to share and yours to listen and grow, about how to build and scale your own blogging business and design a life on your terms. Let's get started.

Lauren 0:35

Hey, y'all, welcome back to another episode of the podcast. I am coming at you today from Antigua, Guatemala, I just got here a few days ago. And I think I spent the last five months or so in Mexico. And I can't tell you how excited I am for this awesome weather that I have in Guatemala right now, the low is 55. So it gets pretty chilly in the evenings. But it gets to be about 75 to 77 during the day. It's absolutely beautiful. And I have a view of the volcano right now as I'm recording. So it is absolutely spectacular. If you haven't been to Guatemala, I highly recommend it.

Lauren 1:13

I have a great episode for you today. It's all about managing the expectations that you can have about how much time and money you can expect to invest in a new blog. And I'm covering this topic because we get asked this question so much from our new bloggers, they're wondering, what can they expect before they start diving into a brand new business?

Lauren 1:36

And it's a fair point. Definitely a smart question to ask so you know what to expect. But it's also a pretty difficult question to answer via email, which is where we receive that question pretty often. Because the answer is that it really depends. It depends on how much you want to spend, how quickly you want to succeed, and what kind of mindset that you choose to have as you start this endeavor.

Lauren 2:00

In this episode, we're going to talk about the importance of treating your blog like a business, considering the option of starting a blog for free and using free software. We're going to talk about all kinds of mindset stuff. And we're also going to talk about the amount of money that you could expect to invest in your new blog during the first few months.

Lauren 2:21

We'll first talk about the first one to three months or so of business, and then we'll talk about the next few months after that. And y'all in terms of costs, time, money mindset, this is all going to be entirely up to you. I can tell you what works for us. And what I know works best for most of our successful students. But it's ultimately going to be up to you to decide how much time and money that you want to invest in your new blog.

Lauren 2:46

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And just know that your success does depend on it. This is one of those things that it's not just gonna happen, and it's just gonna snowball into success if you don't build the right foundation. So let's first talk about what that foundation looks like.

Lauren 3:02

The very first thing that you need to do is you need to get your mind right about this. The number one thing that I can recommend when you're getting started, is to treat your blog, like a business, like the business that it is or that you intend it to be. I think that the ease of getting started with this type of business can often low people into a false belief that it's easy to make money, because you can start your business for as low as \$3 a month or even for free. And I think that that automatically puts us into this mindset that this should be easy or quick or inexpensive. And y'all it's really not.

Lauren 3:40

You've heard me say before, it's not the last time I'm gonna say it, it's not a get rich quick scheme. You need to treat your blog, like a business if you truly want it to be that from day one. But this also doesn't mean that you have to spend a ton of money or invest a bunch of capital into your new business, because it's really about taking the right steps at the right time and making the right investments at the right time.

Lauren 4:04

Alright, y'all one of the biggest mistakes that people make at this stage is having this mindset of "I'll spend money when I make money." It honestly boils my blood to hear this, like my immediate thought is "well, good luck with that." It makes me angry because it's the very thing that I teach against and because I know that that person is going to get stuck. I know that it will take them 10 times longer to find success if they ever do. And I know this because we've tried to cut corners along the way in the beginning and mostly because I've seen so many of my students try to do it.

Lauren 4:38

Now I understand that you might be on a budget and you just can't afford certain software certain courses. But I also know that people spend money and \$5 lattes and shoes they don't need. So when someone says they can't afford a \$27 a month software, I'm like, Are you sure? Are you actually sure that you can't afford it? Or is it just that you're prioritizing other things?

Lauren 5:00

I've already told y'all that we changed our diet around and ate a lot of eggs and rice to save a lot of time and money. We stopped going to weekly brunch with our friends, which was our absolute favorite thing in the world to do. But starting this business mattered so much to us. And that freedom that I talked about in Episode Two, that is what was most important to us. And we believe that prioritizing this and making this sacrifice would allow us all the \$5 lattes, the shoes, although I'm not actually a big shoe buyer, myself, but all the boozy brunches our hearts desired. And I wasn't wrong, right. I'm in Guatemala right now looking at a volcano.

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Lauren 5:38

So anyway, y'all make sure that you do have the right perspective when you are evaluating what you can afford and where your priorities lie. And on that note, I do want to start off by talking about the free options. Because you can start a blog for free, you can get free hosting, free themes, you can send emails to your subscribers for free. But free is going to mean that you're going to come up short in a lot of areas. So why not just start for free? People say, you know, I'm going to start for free now, and I'm gonna see how I like it, or I'll start paying for it when I start making some money.

Lauren 6:12

And if you do want to start for free just to see if you like it, it's fine. But I can tell you that you won't get very far. And you're going to have to change your hosting, your software and everything else, when you do decide that you do like it somewhere down the road. You know, it's like you can start to write a few articles. But if you start trying to connect your domain name, a domain that you don't actually own, by the way, if you have a free blog, if you could try to connect that to social media software, and whatnot, to start getting visitors and start building a presence start to earn some money, you're going to end up redoing all of that sort of stuff, when you do purchase your domain name. And you do actually get hosting and get serious about it.

Lauren 6:49

Because you can't make any serious money with the free blog, you just can't. It really boils down to this. If you start cheap, you're going to get cheap results. Like that, that's just it. And the reason for this is because free and cheap software comes with a bunch of asterisks. I can't say that word asterisks and limitations. You'll all know this to some degree, because when you try to get free plans of any kind of software, you get all kinds of rules on what you can do and tons of ads, experience to just never as good, right.

Lauren 7:21

But of course there are times when free makes sense. And we will talk about that in a few minutes. But just know that when it comes to building an online business, free hosting and software limits you on how you can monetize, how you can customize the design of your website, the overall control of your site, how many visitors you can have, etc, etc, etc. You can start out with free hosting, a free theme and free email marketing. But the biggest mistake that you can make is going free all the way and spending months trying to muddle your way through with what you've got.

Lauren 7:55

Because y'all, what did that time cost you? Those few months that you spent trying to make these limitations work? What did that end up costing you in the end? But like I said, it doesn't mean that you can't start with free software first, there are going to be times when it makes sense. And there are some investments that do matter a lot more than others. So let's dive into talking about the first one to three months, which is what I call the setup and design phase of starting an online blogging business.

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Lauren 8:24

It's really what you call, I guess the newbie phase. This process generally takes you about a month or two. Now some of our students blow through this phase and actually start making their first few dollars by the end of a month or two, which is pretty impressive. In our courses, we do try to minimize your time spent here so that you can start focusing on getting visitors and earning money, which is what is the most important.

Lauren 8:47

We encourage you to go ahead and get started, get a simple and professional look to your website, and then move on to more important things. But some people are in the stage for longer than others. And the investments that you make at this stage can definitely have a huge impact on that a huge impact on how long you're stuck in this phase.

Lauren 9:08

The biggest cost that you can expect at this stage are: one, hosting for your website; and two, a theme to design your website. So blog hosting is going to be the very first investment that you can make and one of the most important investments that you can make into your blog. Your hosting provider is really just the company that takes your blog online, so it's visible to the rest of the world. This is the one that's the most important to not start out free, because you will end up not actually owning your domain name and your website. And you're going to start out from the get go with a lot of those limitations.

Lauren 9:44

And ya'll, blog hosting is going to generally cost you about \$110 upfront. And this is generally for about two to three years worth of hosting. Most of the major hosting providers do charge you annual rates anywhere from 12 months to 36 months. And when you sign up for a longer plan, you actually get the plan for cheaper. Now, you will find some hosting companies out there that do charge you on a monthly basis. But it ends up actually working out to being about \$12 a month rather than the ones are paid annually or about \$3 a month, or even as low as about \$2.60 or so a month. So we definitely do recommend getting it up front because you'll save 10 times the amount of money. And it's just a better commitment to actually make this thing work.

Lauren 10:30

So blog hosting is super, super important. We will have links in the show notes to all the software that we do recommend. So make sure to check that out at the end of the episode, if you're interested.

Lauren 10:41

After blog hosting, the next thing that you're going to come across is your blog theme. And that's really just the software that allows you to customize the design of your blog, including changing colors, fonts, and just the overall structure of the content on your blog. So it's basically a package of software that has a bunch of coding that makes things look great without you having to actually know any coding yourself. So it's awesome.

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Lauren 11:07

But the problem here is that most free themes don't even allow you to make simple customizations like changing the color of your menu. It's kind of funny, because I feel like that menu bar is something that people obsess over a lot. They want to have this certain color, you know the color of their brand, or blog, whatever they've selected, and not being able to change, the color of that menu seems to really bug a lot of people. So you're just run into random roadblocks like this when you use free themes, because the coding that you're getting is obviously a lot more limited than when you pay for a theme.

Lauren 11:40

And the other thing here is that you need to consider what your time is worth in this space. This is the area where we see a lot of people spend the absolute most time is trying to design their blog. So if you spend four days trying out various different themes, trying to find the perfect one that allows you to design your blog just the way you want it. When you could have spent just one day with a very customizable and paid theme, you spend a lot more than the \$60 it costs you for the theme, because it's been four days, and you've been fighting with free software trying to make them work.

Lauren 12:13

So this is why investing in the right places can really speed you up towards success. Because if you spend too much time getting stuck trying to make things work, it will cost you an immense amount of time. Now a paid blog theme's generally going to cost you anywhere from \$60 to \$90, you can definitely find them cheaper or find them more expensive. That's just like an average cost. So between your blog hosting and your blog theme, in the first month or two, you can generally expect an upfront cost of about \$150 to \$200. These are by far the most important costs when you're getting started.

Lauren 12:46

The very next cost that most bloggers do incur or should incur if they're setting up their blog, the right way, is for their email marketing service. Now this is generally going to be incurred around month two or three. If you're working pretty quickly on your blog, it could even be in month one. But email is how you begin to build a relationship with your readers and learn very valuable information, including what they're most interested in, so that you can eventually monetize your audience. So you can learn more about who your visitors are, what they're interested in. And this is how you can begin to learn what kind of products and services that you can offer them.

Lauren 13:28

Ya'll, email is one of the single most important tools that you can use to make money with your blog. There are free email services out there, but they're also pretty limited, especially with how you can monetize and know that they're only free up to a certain amount of subscribers anyway.

Lauren 13:44

But I will say here that if you want to start out with anything for free, the email marketing service is probably one of the best places to start. Because there are some pretty great options that are

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still free. But you will just want to upgrade to a paid plan as you get more subscribers. And as you start getting ready to making money with your blog. If you are going to get a paid plan for email marketing, they start out at around \$29 a month.

Lauren 14:08

And from here you might incur various costs for things like social media tools and other small software to help you promote your content, especially when you're trying to drive traffic and actually get visitors to your blog. And these costs can be anywhere from \$12 a year even to \$12 a month just depends on what you're doing what it's for. But there are also a lot of free options when it comes to things like social media tools, and stuff like that. So that one's definitely not quite as important.

Lauren 14:40

Now the last cost that you could expect to evaluate in your first one to three months or so is related to education, training and paid information, really online courses and that sort of stuff. This is something that Alex and I spent a lot of money on in our first few months. And, ya'll, we spent money on all kinds of courses and software. I know we've said it before. But we bought courses on creating courses and attended webinars on building webinars and launches about launching--all really good stuff for the most part, but all wrong for us at the time. But the point is that we were still learning the entire time, we never stopped moving, and we never stopped trying things. So eventually, we did find something that worked.

Lauren 15:26

Now, I don't recommend that you do it this way, I do recommend spending some time to find someone, one person or company that you can learn from, that has information intended for you a complete beginner, or whatever stage you're at. We weren't able to find that in the beginning, because we just had no idea what we were doing and hadn't yet identified ourselves as bloggers. So we didn't really know to even look for blogging courses. And that's why we created our courses, because they contain everything that we wish that we would have had access to in the beginning, everything that we learned to take our first blog and our second one to six figures in a year.

Lauren 16:04

But y'all, I don't care if you buy our courses or not, obviously, I'd prefer it and I know they're awesome. But just make sure that you find what's right for you. And no one understand that teachers and coaches do reserve all their best information for the people that pay for it. It's how they and we make a living. Sorting through the piecewise scraps of free information here and there is likely going to end up taking you months or more longer to piece all those things together. Find someone that has a blueprint, a game plan, and a complete strategy laid out for you. And at this stage, you can expect this to cost anywhere from \$300 or so to upwards of \$1000. You can definitely find courses for closer to the neck \$97 to \$100 range. And you can find courses for over \$1,000.

Lauren 16:55

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I can tell you that I have taken \$1,000 courses and they have been worth every bit of that information. It's about finding someone that's really great and making sure that you do something with that information. But no matter what find what you feel is the best for you. But definitely consider taking a course at this stage because you are going to likely take a bit longer if you aren't having someone help you along the way.

Lauren 17:21

Just to put it into perspective, like I can tell you that some people who have bought our six figure blogger course, you know who are already to stage of course of having their blog, and even earning a little bit of money because it is one of our more advanced courses, they bought the course which is generally about building your own courses. And they said, I've already made my money back triple fold, just from your email marketing sequence. So if you can put something from these courses into practice and actually earn money back on them, it's definitely going to be worth it. So just make sure that you are considering that is that your this is an investment that you're making into your business. And you absolutely have to invest something in it time, money, all of it in order to get a return.

Lauren 18:06

All right, ya'll, that pretty much sums up what you should expect in the first one to three months your business, just depending on how quickly everything is set up. And once you have that foundation built, you will incur additional costs along the way, when it comes time to start thinking about traffic and monetization. And you could be in this phase for you know, as soon as one month after starting because some people are, but it really just depends on how quickly you start growing your blog and monetizing it.

Lauren 18:35

Now, at this stage, most software companies in the online business world do charge you based on how many views your page gets, how many subscribers you have, this sort of stuff so that the costs will continue to grow as your blog grows. As you get more readers, as you get more buyers, you tend to pay a little bit more and a little bit more in software.

Lauren 18:56

For example, your monthly costs for email marketing are always going to increase generally as your number of subscribers increases. It's just how the pricing plans work these days. So sometimes you can start for free, but you will have to upgrade as your blog grows. And one of the biggest mistakes that people make at this stage is really not investing in the next best software that you need to grow.

Lauren 19:20

So here's an example I like to use to illustrate when this can really mess you up because it's something I've seen a few of my students do. So a landing page is a dedicated page that you can create and design and get people to sign up for an offer with their email address. So think about hitting a page and it says, you know, do you want this free course, just put in your email address and you'll get access to it, right. So a software like LeadPages will cost you about \$27 a

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month to do this. But it allows you to design incredibly beautiful and more professional landing pages than some other free software. And this means that you'll end up having more email signups because if you can design the content, a certain way that everything looks very good on, let's say mobile or even desktop and people see the right information at the right time, that's going to translate into more email signups for you. And that can mean that more people are reading your emails, more people are visiting your sales pages, and there can be more money earned if you have everything set up the right way.

Lauren 20:20

So would you spend an additional \$27 a month, if it means you can earn another \$75? Or \$150? Well, yeah, that's a \$48 plus profit. Or y'all, here's another simplified version of this example. I see a lot of people put their products and our services are up for sale, on a random page on their website, rather than using a landing page software, like lead pages, or even better a sales platform like teachable, that will allow you to design and custom sales pages, checkout pages, etc.

Lauren 20:53

So the design of your sales pages matters so much. Would you spend an additional \$99 a month for software, if it means that you make an additional three sales, which will mean an extra \$200 a month? Yes, of course you would, right. So pay attention to the data in the analytics, monitor how many people are viewing your pages, how many people are signing up for things or buying your products, and do not wait to make important upgrades until you make more money. Because sometimes you need to make those upgrades in order to make more money. So if you're gonna sit here and wait and wait, and wait, you're never going to reach that next step, because you didn't invest in something that your business needed at the right time.

Lauren 21:38

So really, really, really important stuff. And you know, sometimes along the way, you're gonna be wasting a little bit of money on this or that, it happens, right? But you learn from it. And it's about the stuff that does end up working, that's the most important. So y'all at that note, I'm going to kind of summarize the estimated cost that you can expect, really, after your first, you know, one to three months or so, it's really just going to range anywhere from probably \$50 to \$150 a month, and perhaps another \$300 plus, so if you're also investing in more courses, to learn additional strategies on traffic, making money, etc, right. Because you keep needing to learn more and more as your business grows.

Lauren 22:17

But the key here is to invest in the right things at the right time, and hopefully start earning money pretty quickly, to begin to cover these costs as well. And this is just really the process that you continue along for months and years to come as you continue to upgrade, and new software and new things as your business grows, just making sure that you're making those investments, the right investments at the right time.

Lauren 22:43

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On that note, I'm not going to tell you what you can expect after that or beyond that, I'm not going to tell you exactly how much our costs are, or what you can expect for the first few years. We do prefer to keep that part of our business very private. But I will tell you that we spend a lot. We spent over \$10,000 a month just on our team, just in people to help us. But that's because our team helps us to manage our business. And they enable us to have the time to continue to grow it, to allow me the time to put this podcast out for y'all. And to continue updating our courses and doing everything that we can to best serve y'all and make sure that you're getting new content, getting it when you need it.

Lauren 23:23

And on that note of my team helping me get my time back. One thing that we haven't covered yet is the time investment, which is different than the financial investment, but only sort of, because time is money, right? I know that's super cliché, y'all. But it's so true. If spending X amount will enable you to make x times higher amount in three months, wouldn't you rather make that investment than spending an additional six months trying to make your free options work? Your time is the most precious thing that you have. You don't quite own it. And the clock is always ticking.

Lauren 23:59

Alex and I worked in our business every hour that we weren't working on our full time jobs in the beginning. I mean, Alex worked some crazy hours like 4am to 7am before his personal training clients in the morning, I worked on my lunch breaks at my accounting firm. We both work the 7pm to 10pm. Every single evening. We worked all weekend long.

Lauren 24:20

But y'all now I get to work from Guatemala. And again, watch these volcanoes and I'm taking Wednesday through Friday of this week off to go to Lake Atitlan. And I'm gonna go volcano like on Monday. And you know, I'd say that's worth it right because I've now gotten my time back. I had to invest a lot of it in the beginning so much. And not just the first few months. Alex, I invested so much time into the first couple of years of building building building. But we've built something so incredible. And now our time is so much more our own than we ever thought possible, and it's been worth absolutely everything that we invested in the beginning.

Lauren 24:59

So, please make sure that you are respectful of your own time and expect to devote a lot of it to your business, because it does pay off a return just like any good monetary investment will. A lot of time, some money and a great mindset, this is really what you need, y'all. And I want to end this episode on the mindset thing again, because your mindset is so incredibly important.

Lauren 25:24

I understand now why there are so many money and mindset coaches these days. Your mind is an incredibly powerful thing. And you do need to remember that you are building a business, it's not just some blog, it's not just some hobby thing, you're not just going to write a few articles and throw something up there and people are going to flock to it. It doesn't work that way. You are

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building a business. And it's an incredible thing. You should be so proud of yourself at every stage of this, for just having the courage to put yourself out there and do it and to continue to learn and continue to invest in it.

Lauren 25:58

Give your business the time and the investment that it needs to grow. This is what I've been doing lately with launching this podcast. I've taken courses I've practiced and practiced and listened to myself so much trying to bring this thing to life for y'all and to really grow my business. So it's so important to never stop learning, and never stop investing.

Lauren 26:19

And that is it for this episode, y'all. If you do want to check out our blogging courses, because you think that they might be the right thing for you, you can visit createandgocourses.com. And feel free to ask us any questions about it, send us an email, we'd be happy to help you figure out if it's right for you. I'm also going to list all the various software's and things that I have mentioned in this episode in the show notes, so make sure to check out that as well. And y'all, enjoy your day or your evening. Whatever time of day it is for you. And we'll talk soon.

Lauren 26:53

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