

Episode 7 - Blogging With a Full Time Job

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 the podcast. I hope that you're all doing awesome today. It is another sunny day in Guatemala, you may hear the birds throughout this podcast because they're super loud today. I hope that you're all doing awesome. I have another really great episode for you today. It's all about blogging with a full time job. So today, I'm going to tell you a little bit more about my experience when I was a full time tax accountant and CPA and kind of how I discovered blogging and the transition that I took from beginning to work on my blog and working on it while also juggling that full time job to really transitioning into a full time blogger.

Lauren 1:19

We're going to talk about before we get started some awesome mindset stuff, really some mindset stuff throughout this whole experience, as well as that transition and actually quitting my job. Making that decision, how I knew when it was the right time.

Lauren 1:34

I'm also going to talk about what the learning and growth process looks for us, as well as at the end some work life balance stuff. And I'm going to talk a lot in this episode about my mindset. If you listened to the last episode, I ended with a lot of talk on mindset. And I think it's so so so important throughout everything that you're doing every stage of your journey. And especially looking back on times like these, I can really begin to recognize when my mindset was one of the things that was really slowing me down at times. And I can also recognize those times when I finally got over those humps and those fears and anxieties and actually allowed my mindset to help me propel forward.

Lauren 2:19

So we're going to talk a lot about mindset throughout this because my hope is that you never let yours slow you down too much. And it's just so so important for growth. So let's talk a little bit about the before when you're just getting started. For me, I was a full time tax accountant. As I just said, I had just finished studying for my CPA exams. And I was dating Alex at the time. And he of course already knew that he wanted to do something incredible with his life. He just was that way he wrote his first ebook, in college, when I was still playing beer pong, and didn't give a thought in the world about that.

Lauren 2:56

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I definitely wasn't that person that even bothered to do an internship while I was in college, because I just wanted to enjoy life. And I knew that I was going to climb the corporate ladder, and I was going to find success in that. I knew that there was always time, you know, to work later. So that's what I did. I started climbing the corporate ladder. And when Alex started talking about starting his own business, and you know, he tried many different things, those first few months that we were dating. I remember at one point he was knocking door to door trying to gather information on this one particular business that he was doing, he was definitely headset on making that work.

Lauren 3:32

And for me, I was just the opposite. He would talk to me about starting my own accounting firm. And I just thought, Nope, I'm not ready for that. I need years more experience, I just got licensed with my CPA, I need to learn from the people in my firm before I even think about doing that. And looking back now I actually remember a couple of accounting friends that I knew that actually did start their own thing right out of college, so props to them, because I definitely didn't have that mindset. And I didn't have that belief in myself that I could do that.

Lauren 3:32

And it's just so important because without Alex and his mindset to help me get there, I just never would have got there on my own, it would have completely blocked me from realizing this true potential that I had to become a blogger, become a podcaster, to do all the things that I have done since I started my blog. And, you know, there's also all the other veins of I didn't think I was creative, I didn't think I could write, I didn't think I could draw, you know, my brothers can draw so well and just didn't think that I quite had that bone in my body, like I get it and get that gene you know. Like that's this skill that some people just have and some people don't.

Lauren 4:43

So I just want to give you an idea of some of the different things that I felt during that time. Because these were all major major roadblocks for me to get started. And again, without Alex and him pushing his beliefs and and really what he was believed that I was also capable of without that energy coming from him, I just don't think I would have gotten started. And on this vein of having this kind of mindset, it really carried over with me even when we got started, because it was originally kind of Alex's thing. And I was just helping him a little bit. But I always stuck to my lane and what I was comfortable with. And I can recognize now that that's actually just a huge part of my character. It's something that I really try to overcome a lot, because I'm somebody that really loves their comfort zone. And it can be hard for me to get out of. And so for a long time, after we got started, I did sticks that comfort zone.

Lauren 5:41

I started out just doing things that were really easy for me along with my you know, type A personality. So things like making sure the images on the website looked good. Fixing Alex's grammar, proofreading. I did some Pinterest stuff, because I was already on Pinterest anyway,

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for personal reasons. It was something I was comfortable with. But I really stuck to that lane for a long time. And I was so reluctant to take on more. I remember Alex having to really push me, push me to get into email marketing, push me to get into some other areas of the business. And I really only stepped out and stepped into those other roles when I really had to. And it's something that I guess I wish I had been better at. Although it's something I can also recognize that I still do now.

Lauren 6:28

I've said many times before, it's why didn't start the podcast sooner, is because I was afraid, reason XYZ there's so many different reasons. But the ultimately it was just because I wasn't quite ready. And I didn't want to push myself because I was comfortable with what I was already doing.

Lauren 6:45

So make sure that you're recognizing these feelings, and you're not masking them. A lot of times we tell ourselves that "Oh, it's not actually that I'm afraid it's, you know, this other reason." And it's because we don't want to admit that we're afraid. So make sure that you are aware of these feelings that you're having.

Lauren 7:02

And I next want to transition into talking about how you can actually use your type of personality or what you're good at to your advantage. So for me with that type A personality, that meant that Alex and I were super organized, maybe I wasn't as good at the creative stuff at first. But it meant that we were super organized. And over the past few years, I've been the one managing the operation side of our business because I'm really good at it. And you know, that person that really loves Excel spreadsheets and all that. It's something I'm really good at. So we've excelled in those areas because of that.

Lauren 7:38

And whatever your personality type is, whether you are also type A, or whether you're actually just super creative, I encourage you to lean into that in the beginning, when you're starting this business. Don't ever feel like what you're good at might be different than what other people are good at. And you might not succeed because of it or you're just not going to be good at this one thing because of it. Maybe just start out in an area that you are good at.

Lauren 8:03

So if you're really creative, start out by just writing a lot. Start out thinking about how you want to communicate, what you want your business goals to be, and how you're going to communicate with the people that you want to talk to. And use that as an outlet to just start writing to start putting some content out there. Whether it be blog posts, whether it be YouTube videos, or podcast episodes, whatever content it is, start off on that creative side, or start off with the your design of your blog and use that as an outlet. Whatever it may be, just lean into that.

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Lauren 8:36

And if you're type A like me, just make sure you get uber organized, create a whole schedule of what you need to do and when you think you need to do it and just follow the plan. So even when you diverged into these other paths that maybe you aren't as comfortable in, you still feel that feeling of control, like you've got it all organized. So lean into your strengths here and make sure that you are doing this in your own way.

Lauren 9:01

Some other strengths that I have are motivation, discipline, I'm that kind of person that always gets my work done on time and usually early. And that is something that has served me really really well both as an accountant, but also as a full time blogger, which are two completely different jobs. But it's just something that is a personality trait of mine and I've made it really work for every type of business I've ever worked in. Even when I used to work at a coffee shop job. People always told me that I had this incredible work ethic. They were like, "It's just a coffee shop," right? But I've always been one that's been pretty proud of my work and I worked really hard, even at that job while I was in college.

Lauren 9:41

So think about your strengths and lean into them. And don't let things that you might not be as good at become weaknesses. Try to recognize that reluctance when you feel to taking on new tasks. Because over time, y'all I did have to start transitioning into other roles as our business grew and Alex had to learn other areas, and he got more comfortable with other things. I had to start writing and doing some other things I wasn't always as comfortable with, because my job needed me to. My blog needed me to, to grow.

Lauren 10:15

And everything that I'm telling you now is really the feelings that I was feeling during those first few months, when I was still working my full time job as an accountant. And still many times questioning what the heck I was doing as a blogger and trying to make this whole website thing work, trying to make money online. I was working nine to five, although around tax deadlines that was working more like 7am to 7pm just depends, and I worked on this blog, in every spare hour that I had, I would actually drive to my accounting firm at six something am some mornings and get there before traffic hit to save myself some time. And I would immediately get on my laptop and work on my blog before it was time to clock in for the day.

Lauren 11:01

I would do the same thing during my lunch hour, I'd work for that one hour doing research or editing something on WordPress. And then again in the evenings, sometimes I would stay late at the office to avoid traffic and just work on my blog before I headed home. And then when I did head home, I would immediately start working on the blog again, from you know, 7pm to 10pm at night.

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Lauren 11:25

And y'all, this is just how it was for the first few months. It was just eat, sleep, work, repeat. Work on taxes, work on the blog. For the first three, four months, this is just what life looked like. Alex and I were working all weekend long, we would go to Arlington where his dad lived and his dad wasn't there on the weekend. So we would just work at his house, away from all of our friends, all the distractions. Literally sunup to sundown. Sometimes we'd watch a Netflix movie every now and then in the evening. That was like our reward for working a long day. But we really put in 120% for those first few months.

Lauren 12:04

And I remember when things began to shift, because in the beginning, there was a lot of uncertainty. What are we really doing? It was kind of fun to learn new stuff. But we didn't have anything to show for it yet, right. But the more we got into it, we did begin to drive some traffic, we got some responses back. And I really started enjoying it, I found that I actually started working more and more during my work hours as an accountant. And that was something that actually began to eat away at my conscience a little bit because as I said, I did pride myself on my really good work ethic.

Lauren 12:41

And my desire to work on the blog all hours of the day began to really conflict with my ability to do my full time job. And that was difficult for me. Because there were times when I should have been doing my tax work. And I was working on my blog instead, especially when I'd get really wrapped up in this one thing, and I just couldn't finish it. And these feelings are really what I think propelled me to get on the path to actually quitting my job.

Lauren 13:10

At the time, we had been working on the blog for maybe three or four months, and didn't have much to show for it yet. We did have some traffic but hadn't yet made a dime. And I remember at the time I was reading this book called "The Millionaire Fastlane." And I can tell you that I'm not a huge fan of that book. But there were some snippets from it that actually hit home in one way or another. And I remember one day I was reading something and something hit home, it was something along the lines of you know, why not? What's the worst that can happen if you do take this leap, you know, something cliché like that.

Lauren 13:45

But however it was worded, or maybe it was my mood that day. It just really resonated with me. And I thought you know what, I want to make this work. I don't know if it's going to work. But I know that I really, really enjoy it. And the more that I do it, the less I really see myself still as an accountant and being able to take that path. I could suddenly see this other path. And it was very unclear. And I had no idea where it would lead. But if there was a way to work on something

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that I really enjoyed this much, I wanted to pursue that, and to see if I could make something come of that.

Lauren 13:45

So all of these thoughts led to deciding that one day I remember just texting Alex and saying, "I'm done. Let's do it. I'm all in." And it also timed out with the end of the year and I had the decision to then start a new tax season or not. So it was about the right timing with my job as well. And that's it. I quit my job.

Lauren 14:45

I called my dad and explained it to him, explained it to friends. We had a lot of confused puzzled faces and you could tell people were kind of thinking, "Are you really sure you know what you're doing? Are you really sure you want to do that?" But we were, as much as we knew at the time. And even if people didn't understand us, we knew that we had something and we wanted to see where it went.

Lauren 15:09

So that was it, we quit our jobs. And we knew we had enough savings as well to live off for a year, we packed up all of our things, and we moved to Seattle. And from here, this is when it was my time to transition from full time tax accountant with a part time job as a blogger, to then transitioning into a full time blogger.

Lauren 15:34

And I want to say that I think one of the most important things to note here is that this transition from my full time job to the full time blogger, our lives really didn't change much. Our schedule was really the same as it was, except that it was now 100% devoted to the blog. Alex and I still woke up at the same exact time every day, we saw the same coffee, we ate the same things. We're now living in Seattle, but we didn't see anyone despite the fact that we had all these incredible hikes, we were living on Bainbridge Island with a view of the Puget Sound. And there were so many amazing things that we could do from Seattle. But instead, we worked sunup to sundown on the blog. So same as before, we just now didn't have our full time job taking those hours away from us.

Lauren 16:24

And it was a lot, it was a lot of hours, we were so strict that we even rarely watch Netflix, maybe once or twice a week. We generally worked till about 10pm and went to bed. And yeah, while it was a lot, we still really enjoyed what we were doing. And we found that now investing so many of these hours into our business, we were able to see results much more quickly. And we actually ended up making money within that first month, and doubled our revenues within the first five months of business.

Lauren 16:54

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You've heard me talk about that in other episodes. I'm not going to get that deep into it. But what I attribute to this quick success at this time was, yes, quitting our jobs and actually devoting so much time to it. But it was also the time that we spent in Seattle, and really finding our workflow and that deep workspace. So the space without any distractions to just be able to be head down focused and truly paying attention to what we're learning and implementing that into our business.

Lauren 17:27

And it's something that I still tell people, especially a lot of the people that I meet while traveling, in my Wi Fi tribe group, I meet many people that travel a lot. And they want to turn the travel aspect of their life into a blog. And they say, you know, "I'd love to make some money from this. Do you have any recommendations, I'm not really quite sure to how to get started." And one of the first things I tell my friends is I say, go home, stop traveling. You want to be a travel blogger, stop traveling. You need to go home, and you need to build a business, because that's what you're doing. And there are so many distractions that you face while traveling and distractions at this point are the enemy to building a business and building it quickly.

Lauren 18:12

You need so much time, and you need really focused time, as much as possible. Time to learn, time to implement, time to monitor, and time to revise your strategies. So if you are at a stage in your blog, where you're just starting, or you're trying to really knock out a really important project, I recommend that you really get head-down focused. Eliminate as many distractions from your life as possible, and keep focused on that thing until you knock it out. This is something that has served Alex and I so well, especially while we were working our full time jobs and we didn't have as much time to invest in our blog.

Lauren 18:53

And I next want to transition into the learning and growth process for us, because it's really all about focusing on this one thing. You may have heard us say before that you should have one thing on your to do list. And that one thing is the most important thing that you can identify that will help you grow your business. The one most important task that you can do today that will propel your business forward. Of course, there's always 10 different things that you could be doing to make things better across all kinds of different areas in your business. But what is the number one most important thing that you need to do next? And then you should go ham on that one thing, learn it so completely and master it that you can really deliver on it so so well.

Lauren 19:42

And what this has looked like for us? I'm going to go through a few different areas of the business that you can kind of apply this to. But this means for us when we are creating content that we tend to create content in batches. So whether it be writing articles or recording YouTube videos, or recording podcast episodes, we tend to spend two or three weeks at a time just creating that content and pumping it out and really focusing on making it really awesome. And

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you know, creating schedules and knowing what content we're going to release when and really just going really ham on that content.

Lauren 20:18

And then that way, once we have the next few episodes, or articles, or whatever to publish, it's all waiting in the wings ready to be scheduled. And then we can focus next few weeks on so many other areas of our business that need our attention. And this also translates into whatever platform you're planning on sharing that content. So in the very beginning, most of what I was doing, when I was still working my full time job, was learning everything that I could about Pinterest. Just absolutely everything, learning it from the inside out, so that we could drive tons and tons of traffic from Pinterest. I learned as much as I could, and I just literally looked at all the analytics, all the things all day long, to really track our progress and to continue growing.

Lauren 21:05

And that's really what we've done with YouTube. And what I've spent the last two months doing with podcasting is learning so much about these platforms and learning how we can best serve our audience, and how we can succeed on these platforms. So take a month or two or whatever you need to do to really learn whatever platform you want to share that content.

Lauren 21:28

And then you can also apply that to email marketing. Back in the day, when Alex and I first discovered email marketing, we were so obsessive over it, we wrote tons of emails, we built out tons of funnels, we checked our stats every day, we played with our headlines, we split tested different headlines to see which ones got more open rates. And we don't do any of that stuff really much anymore, because we've just gotten good at it. And we know what works now.

Lauren 21:56

But in the beginning, we spent so much time here. At one point in time, we had five different email funnels built out with five different opt ins. And we split tested all of them on Pinterest, and we even put some ad money to different pins in order to figure out even more quickly which ones were working and which ones weren't. And everything from the pins that people were clicking to the landing pages that they would land on, to then subscribing to the email, to then the email open rates, to then the clicks to the sales pages for the products that we were pitching.

Lauren 22:31

I mean, we tracked everything so diligently. And getting really good at this email funnel space, it took, it took several weeks to a couple of months. But we paid so much attention to it. And during that time, when we were learning about email, we would stop generally writing articles, we wouldn't pay as much attention to Pinterest because we were so focused on this one thing. And we've translated that then into affiliate marketing.

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Lauren 22:56

You know, when we originally thought that we were going to be millionaires by linking Amazon links across our website, because we heard of other websites doing it. We checked all the link clicks, check the stats back in Amazon, checked emails, all kinds of stuff to see where our affiliate marketing money was coming from. And then again, when we created courses and products, we called this Course Creation Mode. Because literally while Alex and I were building a new course, we would spend anywhere from two to six weeks or so on the process. Of course, there are two of us.

Lauren 23:28

But we would eat, live and breathe these courses. And we would have everything completely organized, everything that needed to be done, we would write the outline, we'd write the lessons, start recording everything, build the sales pages, we would often get takeout food or eat super quick, easy food for our meals. Because literally morning to evening, we all we did was build these courses. We stopped emailing people during these times, we stopped writing new articles. We just were so hyper focused on getting this done.

Lauren 24:00

And it's something that has served us really, really well throughout growing our business. Because yeah, while there might be a few weeks where we send out a little bit less content, if it means that we accomplish our course so much faster, or we learned so much more about Pinterest and drive so much more traffic, it's so worth it. And we've really been able to hyper focus on learning these new skills and new platforms, new softwares, everything that we have had at our fingertips to be able to grow our business.

Lauren 24:31

So I'm not sure if this is something that is going to work for you. But it's something that really, really has served us well. And I've watched many people try to juggle so many different areas of growth in their business, and even myself trying to do it. It's just not the way that I operate, and I end up letting everything fall off my plate when I try to keep everything on my plate at once. And I've watched people just get slightly better at many different things, rather than getting so much better at one thing, rather than driving so much more traffic or getting so many more sales.

Lauren 24:32

And after we had all these different processes set up, and we learned all these different things, then the real fun began. Because that enabled us to start scaling our business. So this obsessive one thing, then became learning more about our conversion rates and optimization. And this is when we really began to track even more so where all the link clicks were coming from, and the conversion rates on our email landing pages, our sales pages, all this sort of stuff. Once everything was built, we were able to spend a lot of time analyzing every single part of this process that we had built, and making each part better, writing better, selling better. And this is

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how we began to really scale and get more consistent income, and then even higher, consistent income.

Lauren 25:32

And again, this might not resonate with you at all. But I do think generally, that across many different areas of life, really concentrating on different projects, learning new skills, and really giving them the attention and time that they deserve, it's going to help you succeed much, much faster.

Lauren 26:18

Just another personal example of this is I've been trying to get the splits in yoga for the last two and a half years or so. And I end up just spending a solid month or two really hard on and practicing every day. And then I let life get in the way. And I stop doing it for a while. And then I go back ham on it for a couple more months, and I stop. But I haven't ever finished that project through to completion. And ultimately, I guess I just don't care enough about it.

Lauren 26:46

And to be honest, learning Spanish is another great example. Because I've lived in Spanish speaking countries, for the most part, most of the months of the year for the last three or four years, and I still can't speak a whole lot of Spanish. I can definitely communicate all of my needs, I can solidly order my latte with soy milk. And, you know, I can ask for directions and stuff. But I still have never taken it to the next level because I just have not given it the time that it really deserves.

Lauren 27:15

So if something is really important to you, and you want to be really, really good at it, you need to go 100%. And it's okay to allow other things to fall by the wayside in order to let that be a priority.

Lauren 27:31

And on this note, I want to transition into work life balance stuff. Because a lot of people do talk about balance, work life balance, the best diet is a balanced diet, which, you know, you can still eat whatever you want from time to time, well balanced, rounded diet, all that stuff. And in the long term, I absolutely agree with this, I think you absolutely should remain balanced in your life, because you're going to drive yourself crazy, you're going to drive other people crazy, you're not going to be happy.

Lauren 28:02

But in the short term, I don't really agree with this. When you're trying to achieve fast results in something, like trying to make money from a brand new business as quickly as possible, or trying to lose 50 pounds as quickly as possible, I absolutely do not think that you should remain that balanced. As I was just saying, I think that you should make it a priority and do it 120%. It's why we advocate for a more militant diet in our weight loss programs. And it's why I'm telling

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you to drop everything and learn one thing really hard at a time. This is why we found success so quickly.

Lauren 28:38

And y'all there's time for a balance later. I now feel that after goodness, almost five years or so that I do have a balance. And you know, for the first honestly two or three years, I really didn't have much of a balance. But that was awesome, in part because I chose not to have a balance. For the first few months, it was for sure out of necessity because we hadn't made any money yet. But even then, when we started making money, and we began to scale it, and we made more money and more money, I found that aspect of my business so fascinating. And I really loved the growth process.

Lauren 29:12

So then it switched from really needing to work on the business all the time and not having a balance, to actually wanting to work on the business all the time, and not having much of a balance. There were times when I went to Nicaragua, and I didn't actually see much of the country because I stayed inside and worked. And perhaps that wasn't the best way to enjoy it. But now I do practice much more of a work life balance.

Lauren 29:39

And what's funny is that I actually end up now working about a nine to five, which is funny because I would have thought I would have hated that. But I'm not a night owl. I'm very much a morning person and I really enjoy working on my business. So for me one of my favorite things in the morning is to just get up with a cup of coffee and just start working on stuff, because I still really enjoy it.

Lauren 30:01

So I still work a nine to five, I generally take off most weekends now. And I do enjoy the structure in my life. And I found that many of the other people in my life still have this structure of the nine to five with their other jobs. So it just kind of works out. But the difference is that I get to travel, and I get to take off whenever I want to. I don't have to work if I have a sick day, or if I want to do a volcano hike, I can do these things. And I have nobody to ask for permission for.

Lauren 30:29

So y'all, I work for myself now, and I can structure my days however I want. And I want to wrap this episode up with that. And just again, remind you to always be thinking about your mindset throughout this process. Think about where you're getting hung up on, try to identify that reluctance and that fear when you feel it. And most importantly, try to think about when you might be making excuses for yourself. And if you are in a stage of maybe being closer to quitting your full time job, or wanting to, it's one of those things that I don't really want to advise anyone because, for financial reasons, it might not be a good idea for everyone.

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Lauren 31:16

I didn't have responsibilities to children or anyone else in my life, it was just really me to consider and my own savings account. And I was young, I knew that I could go back to my old job or any other job whenever I wanted to. So for me, there wasn't much at risk there. And it was really honestly, y'all, just a feeling that I had. A feeling that I had that I really wanted to make this thing work and that it was really important to me, and I knew that it was something that I needed to take a chance on.

Lauren 31:49

So think about all of these things as you are transitioning from part time blogger to potentially quitting your job, to maybe full time blogging. And the number one most important thing that you can do is give your business the focused time that it needs, pay really close attention to things, and make sure that you keep moving and you keep growing no matter what you do. Alright y'all, I'll see you in the next one.

Lauren 32:20

Thanks for listening to the Launch Your Blog Biz podcast. Don't forget to subscribe so you don't miss future episodes. And please share the love by leaving us a review if you love this episode. And if you want to learn more about how you can launch and grow your own blogging business, make sure to check out our website at createandgo.com