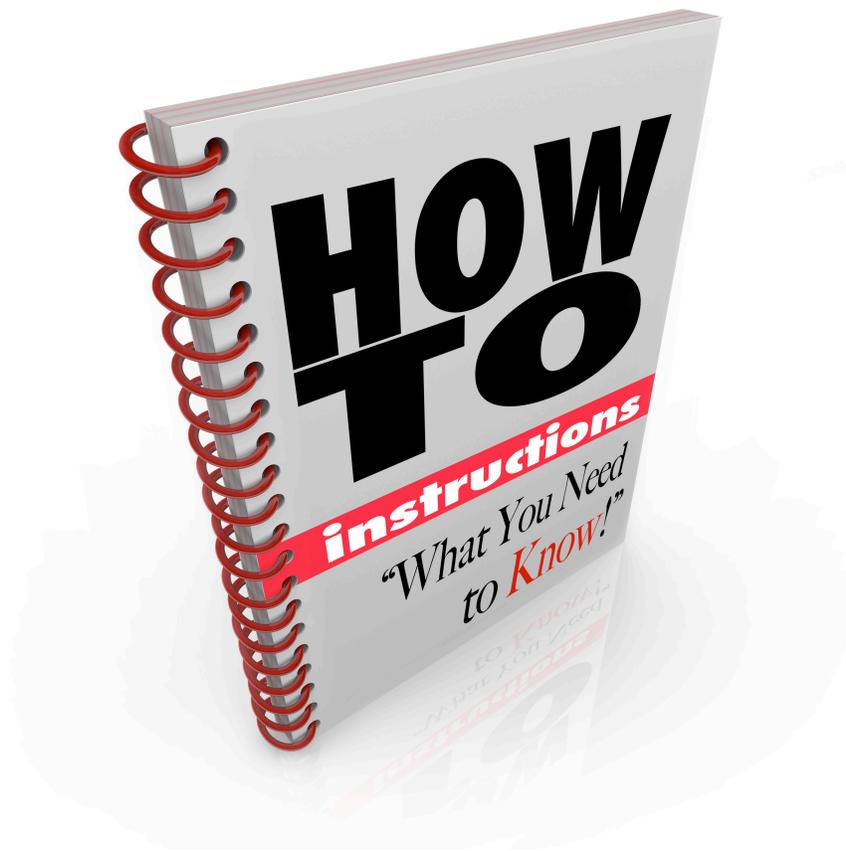




Presents:

Podcast Episode 086: How to Build a Community Around Your Blog



By: Leslie Samuel



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Introductions

[Intro by Guy Kawasaki, Gideon Shalwick, and Farnoosh Brock]

Hello, hello, hello and welcome to another episode of Learning with Leslie, the podcast where you learn, I learn, we all learn about how to build an online business with a blog. No, I'm not talking about one of those blogs that will fall by the wayside when Google has a mood swing. I am talking about one that will thrive no matter what gets thrown at it. I'm your host, Leslie Samuel, from becomeablogger.com and as usual, another exciting episode for you today.

In today's episode, I'm going to be talking about how to build a community around your blog. Your blog really, a blog is a platform, a platform around which you can share ideas, influence people and even build a business.

If you want to take your blogging to the next level, you want to get your audience to engage with you and to engage with each other. That's where community building aspect comes into play. This is something that I am actively working on right now. And, I love it! So, that's what we're going to talk about today.

What's Inside this Episode

Alright, some exciting stuff to talk about today inside this episode, specifically, this is I think that we're going to cover. Number one, why you should be building a community around your blog, very important thing, and I'm going to talk about why you want to be doing that.

Number two, I'm going to talk about some practical ways that you can go about building your community, some practical stuff, some actionable things that you can do so that you can build your community around your blog.

And then, lastly, what I'm going to do is I'm going to be answering some questions that came in via Facebook. We have a number of questions via Facebook and the hotline actually.

Before I get into all that good stuff because it's going to be good stuff, I just have a feeling it's going to be good stuff and you're going to get a lot of value from it. But, before I go into that, I want to let you know that I'm really enjoying interacting with you, with you guys in the comments on Facebook, on Twitter, and all that kind of stuff.

This is all about building community just like what I'm talking about in this episode. This is a conscious decision that I've made, that I want to start building, not start, but continue and expand on what I've been doing to build a community here at Become a Blogger, and you guys, you guys just rock. I just want to let you know that you rock.

As a part of this whole community building process, one of the things that I'm doing, it has to do with **building community** and it also has to do with just providing more value. I want to involve you more in [these episodes](#).

What I'm doing, I tried this last week, and it went so well that I'm just so excited about it. But, basically, what I'm going to be doing, on [Facebook](#), I'm going to be letting you know in advance, the week before, what I'm going to be talking about in the next week's episode.

And then, if you have a question, you have a comment, or something that you want to address on the show, then, you can just call the hotline, and the number of the hotline is **888-835-2414**.

You can call the hotline. You can leave your question. It will be directly related to what I'm talking about so it will flow very well. We have a few examples of that today. You don't even have to call in to the hotline. You can do it right there on Facebook. You can just leave your comment and we had three people leave questions on the Facebook page.

If you're not following me on Facebook, go to [LeslieonFacebook.com](#). Head on over there and interact, interact with the community, interact with each other, interact with me, all that good stuff.

Five Reasons Why You Should Build a Community

Let's get into the content for this episode. The first thing... I want to talk about why you want to be building a community around your blog.

Why should you do that? What is the big deal with this community thing? Why can't you just throw up a website on the Internet, and just put great content there and just make a lot of money? Why can't we just end there? What is the significance of building this community?

I want to give you five reasons.

Reason #1: It adds a sense of belonging.

Reason number one, it adds a **sense of belonging**. When someone feels like they belong, when they feel like they're involved with something, they are more invested in that. Okay, maybe they might not be financially invested or maybe they might be. But, they are invested into it because they feel as if they are a part of it, they feel like they belong. That is a very powerful thing.

If you can get your audience to feel as if they belong, if you can get them to feel involved and like they're **emotionally invested** in your brand, in your business, beautiful things can happen. That's point number one. It adds a sense of belonging.

Reason #2: Getting feedback becomes easier.

Point number two, it is **easy to get feedback** from your community, if you have a community. Let's say you're thinking about developing a product and you want to make sure this is something that's going to swing. You can get feedback from your community, from your audience, from the people that are interacting with your brand, the people that are interacting with you on your blog and interacting with each other around your blog. It is much easier to get feedback. You can send out a survey if for example, and just get a ton of responses instantly if you already have that community. That can help you as you're building products, as you're adding resources, as you're doing all these different things that you're doing with your blog.

That's number two.

Reason #3: Allows you to have a greater impact on the world.

Number one, it adds a sense of belonging. Number two, it makes it easier to get feedback. Number three, it allows you to have a **greater impact on the world**.

If you know me and you've been following what I've been doing, you know I'm all about impact. I'm all about influencing people and helping people. When you build a blog and you have a blog that a lot of people are coming to and you're sharing great content, great content that's helping them, it can influence their lives. It can cause you to accomplish some really great things in the lives of so many people, and you know for me, my entire motto with Become a Blogger is "*Changing the world one blog at a time.*" I think that a blog is an excellent platform to do that.

If you can build community around your blog, you can build a strong community around your blog, that will allow you to have a greater impact on the world.

Reason #4: The people in your community become your biggest advocates.

Point number four, your community, if you have a community around your blog, a strong community that's heavily invested emotionally, they feel a sense of belonging, then they become your **biggest advocates**. They are the ones that are going out there and spreading the word, "Hey, you need to check out this guy's blog because of the great content that you're going to get out there."

It's almost as if they become evangelists for your brand. It's not just you doing the promotion anymore, but they are also doing promotion. If you have a tribe like [Seth Godin](#) puts it, you have a tribe of 1000 people that are advocating for you, that are going out there and telling people, "Man, you need to check out this person's blog because it has some awesome stuff. You need to check out Holly's blog. You need to check out Rochelle's blog. You need to check out Carey's blog because these blogs have great information that will help you."

If you have a thousand people out there doing that, can you imagine how powerful that can be? Well, it definitely is powerful, and that is one of the things that community does.

Reason #5: It becomes easier to sell your product/s.

Number one, adds a sense of belonging. Number two, you can get feedback easily. Number three, it allows you to have a greater impact on the world. Number four, they become your biggest advocates, and number five, when you have a product, when you do have a product, it's much easier to sell if you already have a **loyal community**.

If you have people that have been following you, if you have people that are engaged with your brand or engaged with you, engaged in your community, they are much more likely to buy from you, someone that they know, like and trust than some random website out there that's trying to teach them the same thing that you're trying to teach them.

If you are in this as a business, and you are looking to make money with your blog, then having a community gives you that jump start. I've seen a number of people who've worked on really building up their community. And, when they finally ended up launching a product, there's no, "How do I get this sold?" You just mention it to your community and it gets sold.

There are a lot of benefits to having a community and these are the five that I wanted to bring in to your attention.

So, just to recap one more time, and I'm recapping a lot because I want this to be drilled into your brain so that, you can see the value in having this community. I know you already see it. But, just to really emphasize it.

Number one, it adds a sense of belonging. Number two, you can get feedback easily. Number three, it allows you to have a greater impact on the world. Number four, your community becomes your biggest advocates, and number five, when you have a product, when you have something to promote, when you eventually create that, or if you already have that, whatever, you already have a loyal community and they are much more likely to purchase that product or whatever it is you have to offer.

Five Practical Tips in Building a Community

Alright, so, that's why. I think you're sold on that concept. Now, let's talk about some of the practical ways that you can go about building your community. I want to give you some tips, and I'm going to give you five tips here, again.

Tip #1: Be Unique.

Number one, **be unique** and **let your personality shine through** in everything you do at your blog. You need to **have a voice** and you need to know where you stand, and by sharing your personality, sharing your opinion, sharing the things that you are passionate about, what's going to end up happening is you're going to start attracting people who are passionate about the same thing.

Alright, so it's not that you're just out there putting a bunch of theories. You are adding your personality in it. You are being unique because your personality is you, and you are sharing that, and as a result of that, as a result of being genuine and sharing that with your audience, you're going to attract the type of people that will naturally be good members of your community.

So, number one, be unique and let your personality shine through. That really sets the foundation. You want to be unique. You want to have something that you stand for, your personality is shining through in everything that you do and when the right people see that, they're going to be attracted to that because you're an attractive person. Makes sense, right? Alright, let's move on to tip number two.

Tip #2: Get to Know Your Site Visitors

Tip number two is a very powerful tip. That is this...

Really **get to know the people who visit your site**. Really get to know the people who visit your blog. Now, this is easier when you're just starting out and you don't have a huge following. A lot of people complain, "I am trying to get my blog going and I only have fifty visitors, I only have 100 visitors." Realize that these are not just 50 visitors. These are 50 people with personalities, 50 people with problems, with affairs, with passions, and all that kind of stuff. These are individuals. These are real people.

Now, if you have 50 people in a house listening to you, you feel as if you're hot stuff, right? But, when it comes to online, we hear these huge numbers, and we think to ourselves, "Man, my 50 people, that's not really that much."

No, fifty is a lot. Even if you have ten people coming to your website, start by getting to know those ten. If it's only ten, that makes it much easier. Alright, so get to know them. Visit their blogs. Somebody might come to your blog and leave a comment. If they leave a comment, that has a link back to their blog, visit their blogs and get to know who they are.

That's one way you can do it. I'll give you some examples.

[Become a Blogger](#). Become a Blogger is my baby. I love what I do at Become a Blogger, and there are a lot of people all over the world that really love what I'm doing here at Become a Blogger, what we have going on.

You'd be tempted to look at the numbers and just say, "Ah! That's just numbers." But, it's not. People are interacting in the community. For example, there's Holly from [Happy Food Healthy Life](#). She called in a question, and I'm going to be playing the question a little bit. She has a blog where she shares a passion for food and helps people to eat and live healthily. How do I know that?

Because I went to her blog. I visited her blog. I saw that she does some really cool videos with her son where they're in the kitchen and they're cooking up a storm, and they're just sharing who they are and they're sharing what they're doing, what she's passionate about with the world. How do I know that? Because I visited her blog.

Then, there's Carey Green, someone else that called in a question from [ChristianHomeandFamily.com](#), and I know that Carey used to get a lot of people, no he still

gets a lot of people coming up to him and asking him, "How do you treat your family? Why is it that your family operates the way that they do in such a positive way and setting such a Christian example? What are some of the things that you're doing?" Then, he started sharing that with people from his blog.

Then, there's Ayesha from OneBreatheCloser.com who build her blog basically sharing awareness of respiratory therapies. She's now studying to be a respiratory therapist and she's sharing a lot of her experiences there. I know these things because the individuals that comment, that interact with the community, they're not just numbers. These are people.

So, what I want you to do, or what the second tip is telling you to do is get to know these people, if you want to build a community, you want to **get to know the people in the community**.

My buddy [Pat Flynn from SmartPassiveIncome.com](http://PatFlynnfromSmartPassiveIncome.com), there's something that he talks about that I think is a really great thing to do, a great lesson. He calls it "random acts of kindness." I've heard that in a number of different places, but he talks about doing random acts of kindness for your visitors. That is something very significant because you're interacting with them, and you're getting to know them, and you're getting them to see you as a real person. It's powerful stuff. So, that's tip number two.

Tip #3: Connect and Meet With Your Audience Where They Are

Tip number three, you want to be **meeting people where they are**. If your audience is on Twitter, why are you not on Twitter. If your audience is on Facebook, which everybody is, why are you not on Facebook and interacting with them? Connecting with them not because you're trying to get them to buy something, that's not the main motivation behind connecting with them, it's not to sell them something. It's to connect with them as real people, connecting with them as real people.

You might send them a random message just to see how they're doing, see what's going on with them whatever your topic is. If the topic of your blog is losing weight and you know that they are struggling with that, you can ask them how their journey is going and share some tips with them. It's all about connecting with real people. So, go out there and meet them where they are. If they are on Facebook, meet them there. If they're on Twitter, connect with them there.

So, that's tip number three.

Tip #4: Ask Questions

Tip number four, **ask questions**. Very simple tip. I'm not going to go into a ton of details about this right now because I have some questions that came in about this very same thing, so I'm going to answer those questions a little later.

But, it's a good idea to end your post, end your video, end what you're doing with a question, a simple question that they can answer, that gets them engaged in what you're doing.

Tip #5: Use Your Auto-Responder to Provide Value

Tip number five, and this is a very interesting tip. It's one that I firmly believe in. That is use your auto-responder to constantly add value. The fact is people are going to really start seeing value in what you provide if you are providing value. I mean, it's very simple, right? Sounds like it makes sense. Definitely, makes sense. You can use your auto-responder to automate that process a little bit, and to share really good messages with them that can help them on their journey, and get them constantly coming back to your website, and interacting with your brand, interacting with you, interacting with your blog and the other visitors at your blog.

Using your auto-responder sequence, very important, take some time. If you're like most people with auto-responders like [Aweber](#) and so on, most likely, you have two or three emails in that followup sequence.

I've been the same way. What I want to encourage you to do is **take some time**, a significant amount of time, and work on that follow up sequence. Make it add value, **add value** to the people that are subscribing to your list, and make it personal. Share some **personal** details but, in this way, you're doing it in somewhat an automated way.

Bonus Tip #6: Building Communities Takes Time

Tip number... Wait, how many tips was that? One, two, three, four... That was five tips! Okay, I'll give you a bonus tip.

Bonus tip is, **expect it to take time**. Communities aren't established overnight and neither will the communities around your blog, the community of your blog. It's not going to happen overnight.

Don't expect that to be the case. It will take time. It will take effort. It will take energy, but it is so worth it. There's a video clip that I've watched from [Will Smith](#) where he says, "You don't set

out to build a wall. You set out to lay each brick as perfectly as you can." So, you work on one brick at a time, and you make sure to put the next brick where it needs to be, and then the next brick and then, the next brick, and then, pretty soon, you have a wall.

That's the same thing when it comes to building a community. It's not going to happen overnight. But, you lay one brick at a time, and then, eventually, you're going to look back and you're going to be like, "Wait a minute. I have this thriving community that's going on. This is awesome stuff!"

That's exactly how it works when it comes to building your online community.

Now, Some Questions from You

What I'm going to do now is turn over to some questions. I have some questions that came in on Facebook, and then, I have two questions that are fairly similar that came in via the hotline, and I'll go through those right now.

Question #1: *What do you believe is the best platform for allowing community engagement with your blog: Comments, Forum or an alternative platform?*

The first question came in from Michael Griffith. He is asking, "What do you believe is the best platform for allowing community engagement with your blog: Comments, Forum or an alternative platform?"

Great question. I'm so glad you asked that Michael. The first thing I believe that if you're building a blog, the best place to start, notice I said "*start*," is in your comments. It starts with engaging people. It starts with people engaging with you via the comments, and then, from there, you can expand to having them engaged with each other because that engaging with each other thing, that is very powerful.

Now, I personally think that **Facebook** is extremely great. It's great for building communities. Twitter is great for its reasons, and Google+ is great for a number of other reasons, but I personally am biased to Facebook because I like the interaction that's there. Everybody and their mamas, everyone is on Facebook, even their grandmothers. Man, a lot of people are on there. I think that it's a great place to build a platform. Having a Facebook page and interacting with people, and getting people to interact with each other. A lot of interaction can happen there.

Forums, you mentioned forums, that can be a good thing. But, here's the thing with forums. I bought a forum in 19-, nineteen, wow, it's not that long ago, about 2009, I bought a forum when I had 10,000 members and I grew it to about 40,000 members within a relatively short period of time. I want to let you know this: forums are extremely hard to get going. And, unless you have a ton of traffic and a loyal audience, it is going to be an extreme challenge.

So yes, a forum can be great for community building. I'm even considering adding a forum to Become a Blogger. I'm toying with the idea. I've been back and forth, but we'll see how that goes.

I believe, the place to start, to recap, number one, **start with the comments**, and from there, you can expand. You can grow. You can add Facebook. You can add different social media sites. Find what works for you, and then use that. Don't try to be everywhere at one time when you're just getting started. Start with one. Perfect that. Move on to the next.

So, that's the first question.

Question #2: *How do you get people to comment?*

The second group of questions has to do with, "How do you get people to comment?"

Vanessa Jeny asked, "How do you get people to leave comments and get the ball rolling on a regular basis so all posts get at least one comment?"

Then, I'm going to play some feedback, the questions that came in via the hotline because they are all along the same lines. This is Carey from ChristianHomeandFamily.com.

"Hi Leslie, this is Carey from ChristianHomeandFamily.com. I appreciate the tweets that you send back to me and the re-tweet you gave me. Anyway, I do have a question for you regarding comments on the blog.

My site is pretty new, and I am cranking out good quality content four or five times a week. I have my podcast up and running, all those sorts of things, but I am lagging on interaction. I'm not getting much response from people in terms of comments on the posts or people calling on my comment line, or anything like that.

I'm curious if that just initially takes time, if there are certain things that I could do to optimize my site a little better, all kinds of things along that line, anything you can give me would be helpful.

I also wanted to tell you, as I was dialing the number here to call you, I can hear your wife's beautiful voice singing the song in my head as I dialed it. So, that's very effective. Good job.

Okay, thank you, Leslie, God bless! "

Hey, thank you so much Carey for calling that in. I'm so glad to hear that you remember the number because of my wife's beautiful voice. I think it's beautiful also. That's awesome.

I'm going to play the next call that came in. This is from [Holly from happyfoodhealthylife.com](http://Hollyfromhappyfoodhealthylife.com), very similar question. Well, really it's identical. But, I just want to hear Holly's voice. So, I'm going to play her question here also.

"Hey, Leslie! This is Holly from happyfoodhealthylife.com, and I do have a question about building my community. Every time I post a blog post or video, or any sort of content, I always make sure to ask a question related to the post, sometimes I ask the question on Facebook, or Twitter or other social media, and I never get a response. I feel like I've got an engaging question, but never get the response.

Every once in a while, I get maybe one response, but it's rare. But, I'm just wondering what your thoughts are. Maybe I should ask a question differently. Is there a better format to ask a question? Would be glad to hear your feedback. Thanks, Leslie! Bye!"

Alright, thank you Holly for calling in that question. So, it all basically has to do with how do you get people to actually comment and interact and get engaged in the comments on your blog?

First off, I want to let you know this, and I mentioned this already. But, it takes time, and your audience has to be large enough or engaged enough to leave regular comments. Now, here's the fact. Most people that read your blog will not leave a comment.

I'm going to say that again. Most people that read your blog will absolutely not leave a comment. So, don't feel bad if you're in a situation where you see people are reading your content, you check your analytics and people are spending time, but they're not leaving comments. Most people won't.

On the post on Become a Blogger, we get comments. We get sometimes five, sometimes ten, sometimes twenty, sometimes a little more. But, we get thousands of people checking out the blog every month, and sometimes tens of thousands of people checking out the blog every month. And, we're getting comments, a decent amount of comments, but it took a while to get

everything going. So, it can take time. It does take time. Not it can take time. So, that's the first thing I want to point out.

So, what are some practical ways that you can encourage people to leave comments?

Well, the first one is what Holly was just talking about, **ask a question**. But, here's a trick when it comes to asking a question. You want to **be specific** with your question, and you want to make sure especially when you're getting started, ask questions that are **easy to answer**, something that they don't have to think about too much. That's one thing that you might want to try.

Now, it depends on the topic of your blog. Sometimes, you might find that when you ask something that people really have to think about, you get more engagement. That's fine. But, try to start simple and expand from there, and see what happens.

Now, some other tips that you can apply to try to get people really engaged in your content and leaving comments is taking a stand for **something**, something that people are passionate about.

If you can find that topic within your niche, or a few of those topics, and you really come out there, and let people know what you feel, what you feel is contrary to what most people feel, it will be more likely that people are going to actually engage because they're like, wait, either they're very strong in opposing you or they feel the exact same way, something that **people are passionate about**, and if you can address that, that should increase engagement.

Another thing, write about your fears. Write about a failure. For some reason, people love to hear when others mess up. You know why that is? Because they get to see that you are just like them. When they see you struggle with the same issues that they struggle with, they get more emotionally involved and they are more likely to leave a comment.

Another thing that you can do is **reach out** to other bloggers and comment on their blogs, other bloggers in your niche, other people that are talking about similar things. They are bloggers, so they know the value of comments, and when they see you come to their blogs and leave valuable content there, they are more likely to come to yours, and leave valuable content there.

Lastly, keep working on it. Build your audience and the comments will come. If you're continuing to provide lots of value, your audience is most likely going to grow. People are going to start sharing it. Google is going to start seeing you as more of an authority. Your traffic is

going to increase, and the more your traffic increases, the more people are there and the more likely you are to have comments.

So, I hope that answers your questions Vanessa, Carey and Holly.

Question #3: *How do you automate and systemize as much of the actual interaction... so you can focus on content creation instead?*

And now, I'm going to get to the last question from Chris Ducker from ChrisDucker.com, at least the blog we know, and it's coming soon. His question is, "How do you automate and systemize as much of the actual interaction as possible, so that you don't spend too much time interacting, so you can **focus on content creation** instead?"

I love that question. I love that question because I am a University professor that works full time, and I don't have as much time as someone that's blogging full time, or running a business full time. I don't have the luxury of time like many others do.

And, because of that, I've had to come up with systems so that I'm not spending my entire day interacting and not having enough time to build content, to add content, produce great content, make videos, make products, write blog posts, record episodes. That's really what drives my blog and drives my online business. I need to make sure that I'm not spending too much time.

How do I do it? I'm going to share with you the strategies that I use.

Number one, you want to **create templates**. You want to create template messages that you can respond to people with. If you're getting a lot of email, most likely, many of the emails are very similar and many of the questions you get are extremely similar.

So, make a list of the questions that you get. As you get a question and you think, "Okay, this is something that people are asking all the time," answer that question and answer it very well and in details, let your personality come through even in that template, so that you can use that easily to respond to people, and you don't have to type out a message every single time.

I don't know about you, but I found that when I have to type out messages every single time, I don't put as much into the messages as I should just because my time is extremely limited. I'm a busy guy. So, I've created a number of templates that I use to answer some of the common questions and to interact with people in some of the common ways.

I want to share a system with you that I use. It's at desk.com. What it does, it basically allows you to manage all your emails and so on, kind of as a support ticket system, and people just send you regular emails and you get everything on desk.com as a support ticket system and you can respond.

Built into desk.com is a feature that they call Macros. With those Macros, you can set up your templates, and you can just click on the template and respond that way. It makes it very easy.

They have an iPhone App so when I'm on the road and I check the app and I see someone ask the question and I have a template response for it, I just click on that response, click on resolve, and it goes out to them. How much time did that take me? Not much.

The next thing I want to talk about is **batch processing**. It's so easy to be checking email every hour on the hour and checking Facebook every few minutes and being on Twitter responding to everyone. That is the most inefficient way of dealing with these types of things. You want to batch process your tasks. Have some time that you're going to devote each day for checking emails, checking and responding to emails. Instead of doing it all day, just say, you know what, this 15 minutes or this 30 minutes. All I'm going to do is check and respond to email. You'd be surprised at how much you'd get done in a very short period of time.

Point number four, and this is the last point I want to make is **get help**. For me, that means outsourcing. With my Biology blog, which is the biggest thing that I'm running right now just in terms of the amount of traffic that it gets on a monthly basis, I don't have the time to deal with a lot of the interaction. So, I've actually hired an assistant and she takes care of all of those types of things for me. I make sure that she's doing it in the way that represents who I am, and that's pretty much it. She deals with that. And, if you are in a situation where you can afford to get help, get help. Hire a virtual assistant. It will help you get so much more done.

That's my answer to your question, Chris. I hope that answered your question. And, I hope you guys got a lot of value from it.

A Little Homework Assignment

I'm going to give you a homework assignment. Are you ready for your homework? I'm a teacher, so I got to give you some homework. Your homework is very simple.

Do something special for someone in your audience, someone that visits your blog whether they're coming to your blog or you interact with them on Facebook, around your blog, wherever it is, do something special. It can be something simple for that person because remember,

these are people. These are not numbers. These are individuals. Do something special, and then, come back and tell me about it, tell me what that special thing you did for that person was.

That's the end of this episode. I hope you got a lot of value from that. I hope you can see why building a community is such an essential thing, is such a valuable thing that can add so much to what you're doing online. I hope you can take some of these tips, apply them to your blog, and help to grow your community, help to grow engagement.

That's it for this episode. I want to let you know that this podcast as usual is brought to you by BecomeaBlogger.com. If you haven't gotten your blog up and running yet, I want you to go to freebloggingvideos.com and there, you can get video training showing you step-by-step how to set up your blog. How do you get a domain name? How do you get hosting? How do you install Wordpress and get a nice design? How do you install plug-ins? How do you add content to your blog? All that good stuff dealing with RSS and setting that up and setting up Feedburner, all that jazz.

Head on over to freebloggingvideos.com and you'll be able to get your blog up and running fast. So, that's pretty much it for this episode. I hope you got a lot of value from it. Until next time, which will be next week, Tuesday, take care and God bless!