

Become A Blogger

Presents:




Like

TONY STUBBLEBINE 

Lift

How to
Accomplish
Your Blogging
Business Goals

Podcast Interview Episode #136

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 where we're changing the world one blog at a time and as usual, I have another exciting interview for you today.

I'm on the line with Tony Stubblebine who is a man who is pretty obsessed with behavior change and how people pick up a new habit. Having been a part of a number of different startup projects such as [Twitter](#), (I'm sure you've heard of that one) Wesabe, [CrowdVine](#), and Lift, he has learned so much about what it takes to be successful in business.

He is the co-founder of the Lift app, which is making behavior change easier for everyone and is an app that I use to get stuff done. It has impacted a lot of entrepreneurs in prioritizing and accomplishing end goals with positive reinforcement and community support.

So today, we're going to be talking about setting goals, Goal Setting for bloggers. That's what we're going to talk about today.

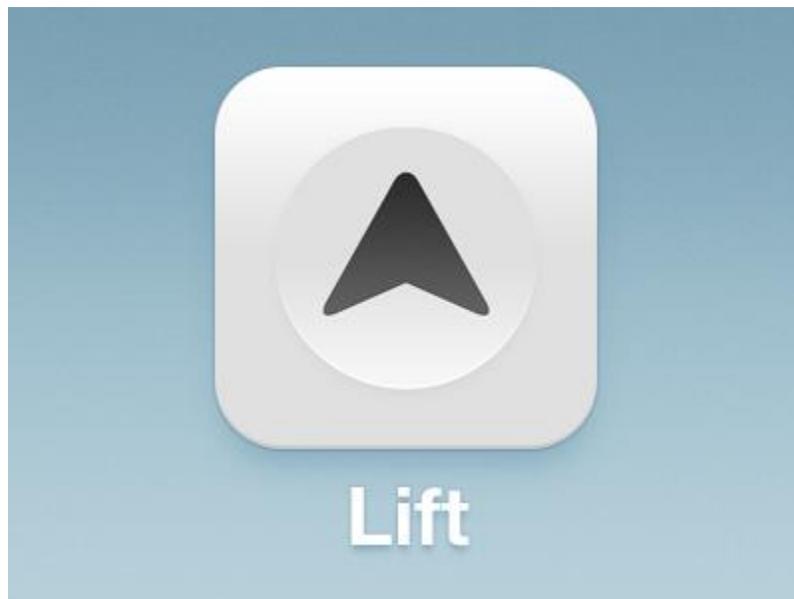
The Lift App

LESLIE: Tony man, how are you doing?

TONY: Hey, Leslie! Good to be here.

LESLIE: Good to have you on here. You are the co-founder of the Lift app which is something that we're going to be talking about significantly today but, what is Lift all about?

TONY: The thing is everyone has unmet aspirations. I'm sure you do, I definitely do and as I was moving off from my last startup, I wondered, "Is there a way that I could achieve everything that I want to achieve in my life?"



What I really came to is, "What if I could have a coach in my phone?" that's everyday guiding me like, "Do this, do this, do this Tony. If you just get off the couch today and do this thing, you'll be so much closer to achieving your goals." That's really the idea that led us to start Lift. Our passion is helping people achieve their goals?

LESLIE: All right, so you've done a whole lot. I see here, you were involved in stuff like Twitter, which is one that we all know about, Wesabe... Tell me a little bit about Twitter. What were you doing there?

TONY: Well, I was the head of engineer. So, I'm a programmer originally and I was working with all of the other programmers at this startup. Actually, it was originally a podcasting startup called [Odeo](#) and it wasn't going that well for us so, we started working on other side projects. And, it was actually, the most successful of those side projects is Twitter.



So, I'm the sixth user of Twitter so, one of the earliest Twitter users ever and I am just amazed by what an impact it has had on the world.

LESLIE: Obviously, it's having a huge impact. Everybody is tweeting these days and people love it.

So, you were working with Twitter, Wesabe, CrowdVine and now, you're on Lift. Simple question, how do you come up with the name "Lift?" What's that about?

TONY: So, this actually ties in to Twitter which is when it came time to start this company, I went looking for friends who could help me. One of those friends was Evan Williams who was the CEO and one of the co-founders of Twitter and he basically co-designed the first version of Lift with me and one of his biggest contributions was what we should call it.

He just sent me a couple of names along with his, like little one paragraph, "Here is what's good about this name." And, that was like far and away the best one as soon as we all heard that we were like, "Oh, we got to go with this."

LESLIE: So, you guys named it, you started working on it... You said you wanted to have like a coach in your pocket. How does Lift work? Is Tony going to be there saying, "Hey, you can do this!" What exactly does it do and how does it work?

TONY: Well, it's not all me, just to be very clear. Our secret sauce is **the community**. Lift has this incredible community of experts and people trying to become experts at something and through them, we've built up a collection of coaching programs which essentially they take you, step-by-step, everyday this is what you should do.

And so, when you use the Lift app, you sign up for a number of goals and those goals have coaching programs behind them that are really, really simple. We just want to take you and have you think in terms of what is the next action that I should take? Because so many people get caught up and almost paralyzed when they think about, well, right now, let's say blogging is a part time thing and I eventually want it to be a full time business.

Well, that's not going to happen overnight. That is a series of regular work, work and practice. You're going to need to work on that for a long time and I think Lift is something that can help you.

LESLIE: Definitely because I need to give a little bit of my story. I started using Lift a few months ago because one of the members in my Mastermind Group, Pat Flynn, he recommended it to me. I checked it out and I said, "Hey, this is kind of cool."



I started using it and while I was using it, I was getting much more done. Then, I stopped using it for a while and I noticed my productivity went down.

One of the things I like about it is that you check into these goals, so you say, "Today, I brushed my teeth or whatever your goal is." And then, tomorrow, you do it again and then, you get notified, "Hey, you get a two-day streak. You can keep it...Just keep it going." And then, three days past and you have that three-day streak and ten days and fifteen days.

What ended up happening with me is after doing a certain habit for ten days, I don't want to mess up my streak [*laughs*] because if I mess up my streak, I'm starting back over. There was something about that that really helped me to keep going and then, you check in and you say, "I've done this" and then, the community jumps in and say, "Hey, good job," and so on.

For me personally, it really did help in getting things done.

TONY: That's great to hear. That's really a realization is that everyone has it in them. And, if we can just give them a little bit of a boost, they can achieve so much more. And so, it could be as simple as "floss" but, a lot of entrepreneurs use Lift to-do things like, make sure they set priorities everyday, make sure they get to inbox or do something that allows them to not be overwhelmed by the amount of people asking for their time.

Pat Flynn is a big proponent of exercise talking about balance in your life.



LESLIE: Definitely. So, with Lift, one of the things that it emphasizes is setting goals. Now, I'm going to ask you a very silly question but, just to get it out the way, why is it important? Why do you think it's important to set these specific goals?

TONY: Well, if you don't know what you want to do, you're never going to do anything. You're going to be sitting on your couch just wishing that you were more successful.

What is the secret of successful people? There is no secret. It's that they **work very hard**. The story behind every successful person is that they worked and practiced very hard to get there.

And so, in order to do that work, you have to be able to define it. You have to be able to break it down into a routine and then, you need to be able to act on that routine.

They are sort of like, on the one hand, that's good news. Like anything is achievable. On the other hand, it's bad news. Okay, you're going to have to actually do some work here. I know it's funny, right? But, one of the things that really does stand out to me is that there's actually very few people who are willing to do the work.

And so, I always ask people, "What if... What if you did this for a week? What if you did this for a month?"

We have this Lift user, she's a designer at a startup here and she wanted to be a professional dancer. And so, everyday for a year, just one year, she practiced dance. It could be as little as ten minutes. It could be as much as an hour and a half. But, on top of her full-time job, everyday, she was just making sure she practiced it a little bit.

Then, at the end of the year, she releases a video of her progress. It went viral like you wouldn't believe. I think it had 2 million views on the first day and now, she's making that move. She's going to be a professional dancer.

And so, a year, that's a long time, right?

LESLIE: Yes, it is.

TONY: But, if you think about, "what is your dream?" Are you willing to put a year into that? Absolutely.

LESLIE: And you know, what was interesting about that because I watched that [video](#), and it was so interesting to see her go through the process and to be consistent with it, day in and day out, she was doing the same things over and over and perfecting them and getting better. And, at the end of the year, she was awesome.



TONY: Yes, she was. It was so great to see that, so inspiring to see that and that, to me, it's really inspiring to know what is possible in a year and even what is possible in a week.

Setting Your "Good" Goals

LESLIE: I'm going to link up to that video. I'm going to include that video on the show notes for this episode because I think people really need to see that.

But, let's talk about the goals a little more. In terms of setting goals, are there good goals and bad goals? Is there a right way to do it when you're using something like Lift or even if you're just setting goals for things that you want to accomplish?

What are some things you need to keep in mind with creating good goals?



TONY: Yes, let's work through something like what are some of the goals you think that you're listeners are having right now?

LESLIE: Well, one of the big goals has to do with content creation. So, there's a discipline of actually writing content, creating that content and that is significant.

#1: Make your goal concrete and well-defined

TONY: Right, okay. So, the kind of default goal that will spill out of someone, this is totally natural and normal is very big. They would be, "I want to create more content," right?

So, the number one thing is to **make it concrete**, to make it very defined. So, if right now, you're blogging once a week, then there's a really obvious concrete next step, which is, you want to be blogging twice a week. That's the first step in setting goals.

LESLIE: Okay, so we want to make it concrete, not just blog more or something of that sort but, it can be something like "blog twice a week." It can be something like "write a thousand words" every time I make a blog post or something of that sort.

I remember for a period of about a month, I did this exercise where I wrote at least one thousand words everyday. That was very specific. It was measurable. It was concrete. You know exactly if you have accomplished that goal.

#2: Get up and get started, and be consistent.

TONY: Right, and you know what's amazing about those sort of consistency goals, is that it's like all these things around them get figured out. Maybe you're afraid that in the beginning, that your content is not going to be very good. But actually, like through that process, you learn how to create good content on a regular basis and a lot of people kind of are hesitant to start and would rather research and analyze and think and plan.

Most people do better if they do like how you just described, if they actually get up and just start trying stuff and improve it along the way.

LESLIE: It's the same thing with the girl that was dancing everyday. When you looked at the video in the beginning and you saw her starting to dance, you might think, "She's not really that good of a dancer." Then, halfway through, you're like, "Okay, she's got some decent moves," and, at the end, you're like, "Man, she is amazing." And, it's because she just went at it every single day and it really made an impact.

TONY: There's a bunch of great stories around **consistency** and how it helped people that are pretty successful. You were saying that you really like the streaks in Lift. A lot of people that compare that to a productivity method, it actually comes from the comedian, Jerry Seinfeld called, **The Seinfeld Method** and his thing was he has a calendar and every day that he writes a joke, he makes a big 'X' on the calendar and his whole productivity method is boiled down to don't break the streak, right?

And so here, we have one of the most prolific comedians of all time. He has his TV show and he did stand-up and it wasn't how many jokes can he write a day. It wasn't how good are those jokes? Just get off the couch and write one joke.

How Lift uses data from their community

LESLIE: That's awesome. It's all about consistency. Now, one of the things I'm curious about with Lift, does that allow you guys, the way to set it up, to be able to analyze like what a bunch of people are doing and try to get some lessons from that?

TONY: Oh, absolutely. Not so much in, I don't actually have data on the blogging communities on Lift—

LESLIE: No, just general.

TONY: ...although, there's a pretty big community maybe 14,000 people I think, tracking their blogging history on Lift but, yes, we definitely pay attention to which are the most supportive goals because every goal on Lift, you're doing it with the other people who share that goal with you. And so, we can say, like how likely are you to be cheered on by someone in that community. And also, what is easy and what is hard?

Yes, I think that's one of the fun things about running Lift is. It's just getting to understand people and all of their various goals and aspirations.

What these data says about setting and accomplishing goals

#1: It just gets easier with time

LESLIE: What are some of the things that you've learnt from looking at that data in terms of goal-setting, in terms of changing habits and those types of things, are there any lesson that you can pull out of that?

TONY: One is that it gets easier over time and we would think that that's true but, that's sort of not knowing, it creates this doubt and I think it's one of the hurdles of taking on a major goal.

One of the things we look at is at what day are you likely to keep going? And so, most things that people take on with the goal of being habitual, there's a lot of drop-off on day one, day two, day three. But, once you get to somewhere around day eleven, the odds that you're going to make it to day twelve are almost always above 90%.

LESLIE: Interesting.

TONY: So, I like that as just as little like, okay, you just need to will yourself to let's say, write a blog post everyday for this week. But then, next week, it's going to feel a lot easier.

#2: Consistency is key.

LESLIE: Got you. So, people are struggling with a specific thing that they know they have to get done with their business or with their blog, try doing it consistently, maybe for eleven days and just tell yourself, "Hey, let me make it through this eleven days." And, it gets easier.

TONY: Yes.

#3: Number one goal set by users in Lift, EXERCISE

LESLIE: Awesome. Now, this is just something that I'm interested in. Do you know what the most popular goal is on Lift that people set?

TONY: It's exercise.

LESLIE: Exercise, of course. That makes a lot of sense.

TONY: We're all so busy, right? That is the thing... Honestly, that's the biggest lesson I learned between my last company and this company. Lift is the second company that I started and I really, I let everything go to make sure the first one was successful but, at the end of that, yes, the company was successful but, I was like, I was out of shape, I'd put on weight and like what was my bigger goal? I had this micro goal of "I want this company to succeed" but, my bigger goals, I want to be happy.



I think it's really important that everyone keeps in mind the big picture and your happiness, your health like that's a big part of it.

The Secret to Behavior Design

LESLIE: Love it.

Now, let's talk specifically a little more about bloggers. We said that one of the things that you want to do definitely is make sure that your goals are concrete. What are some of the goals that you think bloggers should have? If I wanted to, one of the things I'm going to be doing is to create a coaching plan that's going to go along with this episode so that, people can jump on there and they can dive directly into that coaching plan and we can work on building better blogs, blogs where we can change the world.

What are some of the things that you think I need to be putting in a coaching plan for bloggers?

TONY: You know what? I think I definitely have a focus for people that are bloggers but, before we do that, can I share basically the secret?

LESLIE: Sure! Secret, we love secrets.

TONY: Yes, so I want to share this. The secret to behavior design, this is essentially, "How do you change yourself?" is this framework that we use from a Professor at Stanford, BJ Fogg and he calls it BMAT.

It's basically, in order to get a behavior, you need three things.

1. You need the person to be motivated.
2. You need them to be able to do it.
3. And, they need to be triggered. In other words, it needs to occur to them.

If you're asleep, you're not going to do anything and most people when they think about, "I want to be this different person. I want to be this blogger that blogs three times per week," They get really focused in their motivation.

What I like about these categories is that, let's just say, well, there's three things that could be going wrong here. Now that I've set a goal for myself, how do I make sure that I follow through? Motivation is not a problem for you or your listeners. This is your dream. This is your passion. Actually, a great way to look at it is ability.

A thousand words is a lot of words to write.

LESLIE: It is.

TONY: But, is there a way to write a blog post that is useful but, less than a thousand words? What are some systems that you can put in place that make it much easier, much faster for you to get your content out there?

You actually have a great example. I've been on a number of podcasts. And so, I get to kind of see how do they do the production of a podcast? If you just record me and then, edit me and add in all the music, it could be four to six hours of post-production.

LESLIE: Yes.

TONY: And then, how do you do it?

LESLIE: No, I do it right here as we're interviewing right now, once we're done, I export, I tag, and I upload. That's it.

TONY: Exactly right? So, that's genius because what you've done is you have increased your ability to put out a podcast because it doesn't take you as much time. You still love podcasting as much as you would no matter what process you use but, you made it easier on yourself.

When I think about things that we post at Lift, I'm looking for things that are repetitive, that it's like user success stories. Well, they basically wrote the content for us, right? That's an easy quick post for us and I happen to know that they perform very well for us on any sort of our metrics.

Same like, I think interviews are really good. It's just like you sit down, you talk to the person and then, you've got some great content.

And so, for me the next step of the goal is how do you achieve that goal? It's about making it easier on yourself. That lets you get the momentum. Once you get the momentum and it becomes habitual, you're like you're going to figure out all of the problems. You don't have to start out perfect. You'll become perfect. You'll become great at what you're doing if you can just get that engine and momentum moving.

Making it easier to write content

LESLIE: I want to talk a little bit about that some more because, okay you were talking about the able part and what can we do to make it easier on yourself. For my example, that's an easy example because it's what I'm doing right now. It makes it easier for me to create this audio content.

But, let's say, I'm a blogger that is writing content. What are some of the things that I can do to make that process easier on myself?

TONY: That's a good question. What would you say that most bloggers are struggling with when they sit down at the editor and they have to write a thousand words?

LESLIE: I think one of the things that they struggle with is, "What am I going to write about? If I'm writing a thousand words everyday, what are the topics going to be?"

TONY: Right. That idea generation is so hard. The trick that we use is just to do the idea generation separately from the writing. You're busy, you're distracted, you sit down and then, suddenly, you have to have an idea, right there and then. That's a lot of pressure.



And so, what we do instead is that we'll just sit down at the beginning of the week or at the beginning of the month and just brainstorm ideas and take full hour to get that out and then, when you look down, and then, you have like ten or fifteen good ideas, and then, when you sit down, you just look at your list like, which of these resonates with me right now?

LESLIE: I love that one. [Marcus Sheridan](#), I interviewed him a while back and that's one of the things that he said. The way he put it was actually, what are 50 questions that your target audience would ask? You can just make a quick list of those 50 questions. Well, that's 50 ideas for blog posts.

So, when you wake up in the morning and you're getting ready to create, you just look at the next one on the list. Okay, so my blog post for today is going to be how to optimize my blog for the search engines, or something of that sort.

I don't have to come up with the idea right now because I already did that work.

TONY: Right. And, I like his statement, I'll just go down the list. There's a famous blogger, one of the Boing Boing bloggers, [Cory Doctorow](#), also teaches writing and he use this phrase that really stuck with me. He said, "Surgeons don't get surgeons block so, why are writers allowed to get writer's block?"

I just love that he challenged writers. If you are a professional writer, you want to be a professional writer that when it's time to write, you write. I think that's basically the difference between professionals and amateurs that over time, you learn how to write when called upon.

Just to give you the opposite, I'm an amateur writer. I will blog sometimes, but my job is to run this company and build this product and so, actually, I use the opposite approach which is I have a list of things that I want to write about and when I think I have an hour or free time to

write, I just look at that list and think, all right, which one of these is easiest? Which one of these is top of mind right now that I could just blast out right now.

That's the amateur technique for figuring out what to write.

#1: Be motivated

LESLIE: Got you. Okay, so number one, we want to make sure that we're motivated. I am pretty sure that no one that is listening to this podcast have a problem with that. They are motivated to get stuff done.

#2: Be able to do it.

Number two, we look at ability and making things easy on yourself and one of the concrete ideas for doing that is to brainstorm a list of post separately from the time when you are actually writing so that, when it comes for you to actually go and create that content, you have that list. You can just go to the next one or you could choose the one that seems easiest and you can start flowing on that topic.

What about "triggered"?

#3: Be triggered

TONY: Yes, trigger. I wonder if this is a problem for you guys. A lot of people will forget and I guess, it's about carving out time and just remember it like making sure that you remember, set a reminder for yourself or set a prompt for yourself.

One of the really common ways that gets described by people is they say, well, let's say you want to work out in the morning, why don't you put your workout clothes right next to your bed the night before so, you wake up and then, there it is. You wake up and just put on clothes and the easiest clothes to put on are your workout clothes.

And suddenly, you're halfway to going out for a run in the morning. Do you think there is something like that that would work for bloggers?

LESLIE: Definitely. And, it has to do with what we just already spoke about. So, if I am a blogger and I'm saying, I'm waking up in the morning and I wake up in the morning, one of the first things I want to do is create content.

Well, what I'm going to do in that case to make it as frictionless as possible, on my desk, in my office, I can have my laptop right there. I can have my list of topics right there next to my



laptop. I can have my desk clean so, it's not cluttered and it's not blocking my mind from processing and when I come in to my room, it's as if it's just welcoming me to start creating my content.

TONY: Right, exactly.

LESLIE: If I'm the kind of person for example, that needs coffee to get started in the morning, I can have that, my coffee maker there accessible with the stuff to go in to the coffee maker, I heat it up. I walk in to my office and I'm ready to create.

TONY: I love it.

LESLIE: Awesome. Okay, so we found the motivation because we already have the motivation, we've made it as easy as possible by brainstorming ideas separately and we have some triggers. Maybe we wake up in the morning, we have our alarm that's set. We have our desk that is completely ready to go and we just start creating that content.

TONY: I think it's amazing, the work that you're doing, the amount of information that is going out into the world because of the bloggers and your mission to change the world one blog at a time?

LESLIE: That is correct.

TONY: If our advice, our support to help people be more focused, having a more balanced life and be more efficient in the blogging and they're doing, I kind of like help in anyway, it would just be amazing.

LESLIE: That's awesome, I'm looking forward to seeing what comes out of this in terms of the people that are going to be building these habits of creating awesome content.

So, we've spoken about the secret to behavior design. Anything specific on blogging that we want to add in there?

Get Moving

TONY: The thing that I have learned, and this comes up over and over again, the bottom line is just to write anything. We didn't talk about my own blogging history but, I started blogging in 2003 and I have been around all these professional bloggers. We've talked about one of my co-founders at Lift, Evan Williams, he's also the co-founder of Blogger, the blogging engine over at Google.

We've just been watching all of these people turn what was originally just an interest in publishing platform into an actual business.

They just got started and tried stuff. That is just true in life, is that the people that are out there that have momentum, that are aggressively trying things, they find a way to succeed and so, if there's anything I could share with any of your listeners is just simple, "Get moving."

LESLIE: Get moving. I love it. And, what I'm going to be doing is I'm going to be creating a coaching plan for anyone that wants to become a better blogger, to build their blog into something significant.

If you're listening to this, you can get to that plan by going to becomeablogger.com/lift. I'm going to set it up so, it redirects you to that coaching plan. You can sign up for lift if you have not already done that and we can get going on building blogs where we can create content, inspire others, and change the world.



Tony, this was extremely valuable. I'm so glad to have you on here specifically because it's an app that I use. There's an iPhone app but, there's no Android app right at the moment, right? Is that correct?

TONY: That is an excellent question. The answer depends on when we post this podcast. We do have an Android app. It's very close to being launched and if we haven't launched it by the time the podcast starts, at the minimum, we do have a web version of Lift.

LESLIE: That's something that I wanted to point out in case someone is going on Android device because I stopped using Lift because I switched to Android and then, I realized that the web version of Lift is just as, it seems to me, it's just as good and I just install the shortcut on my main screen and I can go directly to it. I can check off my goals and it works very well.

TONY: Yes.

LESLIE: So, if the app is launched, you can check that out in the Play Store. If you're on iPhone, you can get that in the App Store and I'll have all that stuff linked in the show notes. This is going to be Episode 136. You can go to becomeablogger.com/episode136 and it will get you directly to all the information relevant to this episode.

Tony, thank you so much for joining me today, man.

TONY: Leslie, thank you so much for having me.

LESLIE: All right, hey guys so you want to check out Lift, you can go to Lift.do. Of course, all that stuff is going to be linked up in the show notes, becomeablogger.com/episode136 and I

know you're going to find value in Lift. I love it and that's why I wanted to get Tony on here to share some of the things behind the scenes and also how we can go about setting great goals and then, meeting those goals.

If you are enjoying this podcast, I'd appreciate it if you would hop over to iTunes and leave an honest review. This helps me to get additional visibility in the iTunes podcast directory and makes it so that other people can find the podcast easier. This is great because it helps me in my goal of changing the world one blog at a time,

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That's all I got for you for this episode. This is Leslie Samuel from BecomeaBlogger.com. Until next time, take care and God Bless!