

Episode 46: Become the LEADER your COMMUNITY needs! with Elizabeth Henson

Hey everybody, what is going on? I am here today with one of my, I'll just say it best friends in Pensacola. Elizabeth is so many things and we've been trained as coaches together. So I know all of the different ways that Elizabeth can help business owners, but I love that Elizabeth has this focus on community growth strategy.

Because Elizabeth, you, and I know that a lot of people talk about marketing. A lot of people talk about, you know, being there for your community and your group or your program, but not a lot of people I don't think are talking about how can you be dedicated to your community in a way that has a measurable ROI for the business?

Yes. And this is something I've really been researching a lot in the past year. Some of it with your help is how do you measure. The happiness of your community, because we've even talked about engagement, doesn't always mean happy or lack of engagement. Doesn't always mean unhappy. You know? So how do we get really clear and know when our customers, clients, students, community members are happy or engaged or getting what they need. Yeah. And I'm so glad to be here. We are best friends, like let's do karate in the garage.

So, let's talk about like your background in this, because I know that you've gone on this pretty incredible journey as an entrepreneur. and you've got your background in photography. Was that your first leap into entrepreneurship?

Yes. So I was a high school art teacher and field hockey coach. And right after I got married, I picked up my camera, which was like super emotional. The story behind that it's on my podcast. I won't, I won't dive into all that, but being a photographer was really like a stepping stone for me. And to being my own boss, which even as a kid, I knew that's where I was going to end up, but I just didn't know how to get there. So was kind of a career hopper until I got there. But. What I realized with my photography business. Like if you put me side by side with all the other successful photographers in Hampton roads, like.

My business was all word of mouth. It was all word of mouth referrals. I didn't pay for ads on Facebook, the knot wedding wire, and I was booked out and I even had a team at one point and I kind of realized, like I have this superpower of my clients, give me more clients and more clients and more clients.

And I started. Thinking about how can I help other businesses do this? Get more word of mouth referrals, be a better leader, have more impact in the community and be able to attract really powerful communities around their brand as well.

Yeah. and you were, we were talking about that before we went live here.

You were so. Good at this word of mouth community strategy that it allowed you to be super generous in terms of referring work to other photographers. I mean, that's a huge milestone to get to.

Yeah. And so many people, you know, have fear around that and you know, we're human. So of course these things crossed my mind, but I'll never forget when I hit a bride. And choir. And she said, I absolutely love what you do for the community and how you shine the light on other photographers. And I want you to be my photographer because of that, you know? And I was like, what are we afraid of? Like, that builds us up as an authority when we can shine the light on other business owners, even if they're in the same industry, because that just like amplifies our self-confidence right. Or the way that we view our success and that, that want that desire for everyone else to be successful too.

So good. and then you, you pivoted again eventually from photography, right?

Yeah. And I'm still actually doing a little bit of photography. I had my first 20, 21 wedding last Saturday, but this is really exciting and I'm kind of semi announcing it this week, but I asked myself better questions and you know, how important that is because I had a bride contact me this is all kind of like relating to a word of mouth and I turned her away and I said, you know, I really don't think I'm taking any 20, 22 weddings. You know, here's who I recommend and I'm just not ready to commit yet. And she said, I will change my date. Like I've wanted you for years. What can I do?

Oh....

so I kind of like like sat. And I was like, okay, is this the people pleaser in me that wants to say yes, or can I just sit here for a second and ask myself some better questions? So I said, how can I take the stress off of me? So that shooting weddings feels light and easy. But also give these clients an even better experience than they're already having.

Right. Cause it's a lot. And you know, I know I'll never shoot a time like five max, just because I do have three kids that are going to have field hockey games on the weekends and all the things, but I just started asking myself these better questions. So, um, I'm going to be building out a team. To create an experience that no one else in my area is doing. So I'm really excited about that, but yeah, that's just like one little polar, you know, have like multiple passions, multiple revenue streams. but it is really exciting. It feels good. It's gonna like, give me a little more longevity in that industry. Yeah.

That's amazing. That's so cool. And I know like it's, that's really. great example of, like you said, going back and asking the right question or asking better questions around that, because know how much you love the passion of photography and helping people in that way. And I can relate to, I found a videographer here in Chicago. And after seeing what they did, my wife and I started to envision what it would look like if they did ours. And once you start to build that visual, There's kind of no other options.

Yeah. You really, you don't. And I just love customer service and I'm like, if I really truly love customer service and making people happy, I mean, the photography at this point, it's like secondary for me. I mean, it's important, but like anybody can do it. There's a million great photographers here in Hampton roads. Like these people that are still contacting me after I'm not even really showing up for that part of my business. It's because they want me, you know, for the brand, for my personal, you know, experience like yeah. The photo graphs are good. Sure. But anybody can do that part. ,

so do you think that, you know, some people will say, Really given amazing customer experience and the word of mouth and referrals will just come pouring in without you having to work on it. When would you say that that's true or that you found that there's still helpful strategy you can use to leverage growth after you've got a really good fulfillment system in place?

Yeah. I love this question because I have to be honest and say with my photography business, it was effortless and easy. And that's just because I was using all these things that were intuitive for me, that I didn't really know where a system. And then when I pivoted to online, it was not as easy for me.

So I had to constantly ask myself what was working over here that I can systematize and put in place in my online business and coaching, even teaching other photographers, didn't come as easily. As booking out clients. So I did have to constantly kind of do an audit or revisit what exactly was I doing over here?

They got others, word of mouth referrals. And how can I bring that into this space as a digital CEO? So it can be systematized and it's not always going to be easy, but I think we find so many of our answers in the pieces of our business that are easy.

I love that. Yeah. We find so many of our answers in the pieces of our business that are So that, that maybe transitions one thing that I know you and I both wanted to touch on today, which was these, these three things or these three parts to this, the strategy that you have around community growth.

Yeah.

So tell us more about that.

Absolutely. So, you know, as business owners we're constantly asked, like, what makes you different?

Right. So what makes Elizabeth Henson and then everybody else? And I was like, well, I have these three methods that involve like, Really unique leadership skills, not like you read in the books, um, building these social ecosystems that we've talked about and then really using boundaries to leverage that authority.

And those three things kind of create what I like to call it. Funny way, like my anti strategy, right? Like it's a system and these three pillars are super important, but it's not about the perfect Instagram post. It's not about the perfect social media strategy. It's how can we bring these one-to-one relationships, these life skills into our social media and to our communities.

So it feels the same for the people. As it would, if we walked into a room, right. We can touch people's lives by walking into a room and meeting them. And so many people don't carry those people skills onto their social media, because they're so concerned about numbers and metrics and marketing

and that's.

Oh, I'm so glad we're talking about this. Cause that's all well and good. Right? And like you, and I both know how important systems and processes are to a business, but the best marketing experts that I talk to say that, you know, once you've got funnels in place and you've got your overall strategy, there's, it's really much more of an art than a science when it comes to marketing.

So I love the anti strategy approach and let's go, what was the first part of that again?

unique leadership skills. So really focusing on, you know, what our individual superpowers are, you know, building out those elevator pitches or rockstar statements, the things that make us different than everyone else, but also just remembering that like people are humans, how do we want them to feel?

And nobody's gonna wake up in the morning and say, I want to be part of somebody's marketing strategy. I don't want to be curated on social media. Everyone wants to feel seen and heard. So the first thing we focus on is leaderships that create spaces where people feel seen and heard, because they're going to gravitate to you nonstop if they get to talk about it.

Okay. I love this because when you say creating spaces, I think there might be some people watching or listening who have online courses or memberships, where there are those paid carved out spaces like that. But for other kinds of business owners or business owners that are trying to think beyond those types of programs, can your Instagram presence be a space like that?

A hundred percent, your Instagram, your website, a blog Facebook. I truly like to believe that we could grow our businesses without social media at all. So it might be going back to in-person events. I mean, my first membership. Was an in-person membership. It had nothing to do with social media. you know, so just thinking about where do you see success and relationships in your life and why are those people coming back to you and using those super powers and then just building off of that?

Hmm. Okay. So, so really being a strong leader in those spaces, whatever that means for your business. And then what was the second one barriers.

The second one is social ecosystems, which I love because you and I are such a good example of that. And that is the concept of like, if I jump on a zoom call with a business buddy or someone I've never even met, you know, kind of how you and I got started networking, that is going to pay so much more dividends and ROI than this perfect social media posts.

And this really came about for me one night when I was laying in my bed, my kids were next to me. And I spent 45 minutes, Joey, trying to type out this perfect Instagram caption. Now this was before reels and stories like this was it right? Your Instagram picture and your happy captions and I was so committed to that.

Dag-gone Instagram strategy that I lost 45 minutes sitting next to my kids, writing out this post. And it ended up like tanking, like two likes, nobody cared. And that was when I was like, enough is enough. this isn't, what's going to connect me to people in the same way as a zoom call as an in-person networking event.

Like I am an extrovert. I love people. I'm not a great writer. Why am I going to sit here and continue to try to write something at nine o'clock at night? Just to say I showed up. And that was when I really committed to doing things differently. And I saw a really great presentation about marketing for your personality type.

And almost I tested like sell from stage, sell in person. So I stopped trying to like fit myself into a box that wasn't for me. And I realized that these relationships give me access to social ecosystems, which is just way more powerful than just showing up and talking about myself.

And what do we mean by an ecosystem?

So like what we're doing right now. So me having this opportunity to share with you on your page, I'm now exposed to your audience and no matter how big or how small, but the connections that I've made just through being connected to you, our social ecosystems are overlapping kind of how I connected with you with Tiffany for power brand.

That is like so powerful. Like you can put an ROI on that. You can put a number on that relationship. Right.

Yeah. So it's really like looking at the humans behind the numbers of, you know, who's watching and who's liking and all of that. And, you know, one thing that I, that I found to be really helpful about your approach in general is that, it allows us to see, okay, how are we going to find.

Strong li like, to me, there's this question. And when it comes to sales and growing your business, there's always this question of where are the sales coming in, who are our warm

leads this week, or this month or whatever, and where can we find them? And I was talking to, to two different people over the past a week who had slightly different, but it sounded very.

D very different ideas of marketing. One of them said, you know, social media is not really marketing because if you really want to be good at social media, you can't really think about closing every sale that you're on when you're posting and all of this stuff. And I was like, well, that's an interesting point.

They were like, you should like, I mean, have the funnels, do whatever, but if you want to be a social, if you want to really lean in to being a social media pro it's, it's just about connecting with people and that stuff comes and. And then I talked to somebody else who was like, you know, I agree, but I would also say something totally different, which is that it's not that social media, isn't marketing it's that everything is marketing and, you know, arrive at that same conclusion of, it's not just about filling up your lead funnel with leads.

Now that is something that you have to do. But one thing that, what I found is that when, when we really look back. At the end of the month or the beginning of a new month. And where did new clients and customers come from? Most of the time, it's not because some person randomly just saw something from me for the first time, hopped over to my website and bought something.

Usually there was a relationship that was cultivated there. And usually there was some other person who was vouching for me or connecting me to them or something. And so I found that, and I liked the, the ecosystem strategy because when you look at the people who are in charge of these overlapping ecosystems, it really is a, a messy kind of referral being going that's going on.

And in, in that. Kind of more general way. We, we realized that, you know, whether they're coming in directly from referrals or not, most of our business is through referrals.

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, if you're doing your business well, yes. Like I will never forget when I saw someone post, like I'm just not getting word of mouth referrals.

That's not where I get my business. And I was like, that is the biggest red flag you could possibly. See right. Is if you're not getting word of mouth referrals, now you couldn't be doing things right. And you're just not setting people up for success to refer you. But at the end of the day, if you're not getting word of mouth stuff, then that's usually a red flag that there's a missing piece in your customer experience.

Yes. Yeah. Good point. Like for all of this to work, you first have to have a really good customer experience. And again, I love the, I love the ecosystem cause it's almost like you're, You're creating visibility so that the referrals can happen more easily.

Yeah. And then a couple of months to mirror back what we do.

So the more we refer other people and the more that we tag other people and opportunities, the more that's going to be mirrored back to us, because they're going to understand that like that's how we work as a human being.

Yeah. Yeah. Love that. Okay. And there's one more part to this, right?

Yeah, that setting boundaries, that leverage authority.

So everyone talks about boundaries in the form of like self care. And of course that's important, but. It's actually a lot of what we think in our business, right? We need to always be available. We need to be working around the clock. Our prices need to be set at what our customers will pay. Those are all like a lack of a boundary setting, a price at what you want, what you need is a Foundry working less.

Is a boundary and the opposite effect happens where we actually become more desirable and more of an authority when we stand firm in those boundaries. Versus when we're available, like, think about a time where you had impeccable customer service, but didn't even have access to that CEO or whoever it might be.

It happens all the time.

Okay. This is a juicy one because for me, it sometimes often feels like. When I'm at my best in terms of a community leader and being a giver and hanging out in Facebook groups and tagging people. I'm also not having a lot of boundaries for myself. And I like that. You're, you're, you're rounding it out there because you can easily lose a sense of boundaries in terms of your time, in terms of your pricing, when you put being a giver on such a high pedestal,

Right.

And we can be givers and do all of those things. And pricing is one of my favorite pieces to talk about here with my students, because it is a gift to accept money from somebody, because that means that they're committed and that they're showing up. Right? Like, think about all the times you've invested a large amount of money.

Like, that's actually a gift to yourself because you're investing in the change in the vision, whatever that might be. And people are going to say yes or no, whether our thing is \$15 or 1500, there's always going to be a yes or a no that we don't want to make assumptions, but you know, people are going to respect you as the visionary, the CEO, the business, when your price is what it is.

Yeah.

You know, versus like the, oh, well, you know, I really want to work with you. I really want to serve you. And I have a great time story around this, in my photography business, which I always kind of bring into my online business, but I had a bride who was like my budget's \$800. You know, she just think worried, this is my budget.

And most photographers will say, I'm sorry, I can't do it. Right. I said, okay, I actually can come out and shoot about two hours of your wedding for that price. But I really, really like for you to look over my pricing guide because nothing would bless me more than to give you the full experience. I just spoil you on your entire wedding day.

And that was it. Like no pressure, but just like, Hey, look this over. And she came back and booked my highest package because sometimes people just don't know and they're just throwing stuff out there.

Yeah. Good point.

Yeah. That allowed me to be an authority. And to say, I can do this. But this would actually be the better choice to serve you.

And I'm the expert in knowing what the best way to serve you in.

Oh, that's really, really well said. Speaking of working with you.

Yeah.

Cause I know that you are, are now taking on more one-to-one clients who want help with community growth strategy. Can you tell us more about what that looks like when people work with you onto one in that capacity?

I know, I love it. And I'm always joking in our group. Cause when people say Liz, like what do you do? I'm SL zoom space. We hang out on zoom. It's what I do. I'm the anti strategy. I'm not going to give you a course. I'm not going to give you, you know, fancy, um, you know, we're going to do processes and steps, but I really believe in like doing it together.

So, yeah, I've really worked with my one-on-one clients in meeting either biweekly or weekly, and then getting really specific on what their business needs, and their visions. And one of my favorite, like success stories of a student that I've been working with for about six months now. And she, her biggest thing was like, she wanted a brand booster.

Like how can I be different than every other person in my area? I kind of feel like I'm the same, like I'm blending in and. It took a while to get this out of her, you know, because a lot of times we can't really see. Yet, but turns out that she's extremely passionate about like nonprofits. Um, and that's all we needed to do is to get her business and a couple of other social ecosystems.

So not only is she now like working with nonprofits, but she's created a group in her area. To be the dot connector to get non-profits access to vendors. Um non-profits

so that was like a whole niche change.

Yeah. Or like an amplification of like, this is how you become a leader by doing something in your community that nobody does and connecting other people. Right.

Yeah. Yeah.

So we took everything she was already doing, but now she gets to be known for something she gets to be known as the person who helps nonprofits find the vendors they need

so powerful.

And that's what leaders do, right? Like leaders don't sit back and look like everyone else leaders step out and do something different.

And, and speaking of leadership as an online business owner, you know, going back to what I said earlier to where a lot of people who are watching or listening. Probably have a course or a program or something where there's like a paid community. You need to manage. I see people asking in Facebook groups all the time, like I'm at a point now where I need a community manager and I love that.

You're also building out these ways for you to help people, because that is, that is such a, a big pain point for growing online entrepreneurs right now. And again, Your helping people do it in a way where it's not just helping them with fulfillment. It's also helping them grow the business.

Yes. And gosh, you helped me so much, like flesh this out.

I have like two pages of notes of brainstorming with Joey, but yes, absolutely. Like when people are ready for a community manager, they think that they're just ready to hand it off and like, not really be part of it, but there's such an important piece of systematizing, the customer service presence, right?

Like if someone walks in your business, And what are they going to feel, right? Like, have you ever walked in? I think about BBD live, you walk into a room and you can feel the vision, the purpose, and it's bigger than you, but we have to be able to define that we have to be able to define it, write it, put it in a jar.

So that, that community manager. Knows who they need to become, you know, to serve this community in the best way possible. And I think the biggest mistake people make is that they jump right in to hiring a community manager and that community manager doesn't know what persona to be, what to take on, to represent the business in the best way possible.

And I have a ton of, uh, you know, opinions on what makes us a community manager. More successful. Um, but a lot of that really depends on each individual business, but I love helping people set up accountability groups, masterminds within their community group coaching programs. Like a lot of times students are asking, I saw this the other day where they're like, my students want accountability groups.

I have no idea how to set that up. And I'm like, that's really easy for me. So I could definitely help these big businesses, you know, give their students and even better experience. By allowing them to like support each other. That's how, you know, a really great community because the students, the student to student interaction is really high.

Who cares if like they're interacting with you or your posts, but if they're interacting with each other, then they're going to continue to come

back.

I love this. And I want to just say business owner to business owner. And I'm speaking to you all who are watching this live or on the replay are tuning into the podcast.

Elizabeth and I both come from a school of thought in the business world where it's like, when you're building your team, it's great. Wherever you can to find ways to hire people who aren't necessarily skilled at what you want them to do. And then you in-house have a system of processes and systems that can help them learn on the job and then execute really well.

And one of the difficult things about community managers is that they can be expensive to find if something happens and you have to get a new one, you're kind of starting from scratch again. And all of those. Systems and processes that were in the head of that skilled person that you hired goes away.

If something bad happens. And I love that Elizabeth is creating this amazing opportunity for entrepreneurs where honestly, you're probably paying less to have Elizabeth come in at a high level, help you create this stuff. And then you can bring in, an army one or two different teammates that you're not having to pay as much because they're learning on the job.

Yeah. And it's such an effective way of building this out for the business.

Yeah. I mean, I'm not doing anybody any good. If I'm not saving them money, they're not saving money or helping them make money. So it might cost more to have, you know, a high level strategist or advisor on the front end. But like my ultimate goal is to get people bringing in community managers that they can afford, like whether it's hours an hour, right.

Most community managers. I've done a ton of research around this are on salary for 50 to 80 K a year,

which is very fair that they do. Yes,

very fair. But that's for someone who's trained, which again, I researched these job descriptions all the time. People want someone who's already trained. Which is great, but what about all the businesses that are really just starting to scratch that six-figure mark, right.

Or they're getting to like \$200,000 a year. They can't afford to pay half of their salary for inexperienced community managers. So they need to be able to train someone from the ground up and they can spend a little bit on the front end getting set up with a high level strategist, and then they can train that person.

It's such a like lower price point and. You know what a gift, right? What a gift. Every time we get to hire someone and support like a mom who works from home, I mean, those are like ultimate goals, right? Like save money on your business, but provide an income for somebody else.

I absolutely absolutely love that.

And for everybody who's interested because we talked about this before, so I'm not putting you on the spot, but if anybody wants to talk to you about, if you'd be a good fit to help them, is there a good, next step they can take to contact you?

Yes, absolutely. So on my Instagram, I'm Elizabeth dot Henson, but my LinkedIn profile has a link for free coffee chat.

So I actually offer, I practice preach these one-to-one relationships and anybody can book a free coffee chat with me. And there's a whole page that kind of explains like why I do these coffee chats, if it's a good fit for you. Um, and it's totally free. It's 25 minutes and we'll be able to see how I can help.

I love that so much. We'll put a link for, for the coffee chat around this video, in the show notes of the podcast. And, you know, I just want to end this too, by saying that this, this show in this episode is brought to you by the legal launchpad, which is a legal resource I created, for course, creators and coaches and Elizabeth is in that program.

I was like, you better give me a chance to talk because I'm a founding member and an affiliate for legal launchpad. And I just can't say enough good things about it. I think my only gripe is like how hard I have to work to get people to know that they need legal advice. Right.

We spread the word that this stuff is unsexy, but important,

but it is you make it sexy and important,

but I can, I mean, I'm always.

Taking to heart, everything Elizabeth says in terms of things that I can be doing inside the group to make it more engaging. And she's such a great members. So, , a pro tip again, , if you've got an online course or a program, one way to get on Elizabeth Good side is to get her to buy your program. And then you can see how good she is inside of it.

And just kind of see what she's doing and trying to emulate it yourself. That's another strategy that I've picked up.

Oh my gosh, I love it, but I'm seriously. So I'm so grateful to be in there and was to feel like I have that support when I need it. And my favorite part about what you do for us inside the legal launchpad is like, ask us better questions.

Like instead of the fear mentality or. Having us be afraid to take a risk without a perfect thing. It's like, okay, let's get like eyes on. What's really important in your business and where you need support there. And let's focus on that. Or like, have you actually lost any money because of this thing that you're complaining about?

Right. Like these questions always have me like, yes. Why would I complain about that? I haven't actually lost any money. Let's move on.

love that. You say that because. There's this really ties back to what we're talking about, where I think if, if I didn't learn these lessons from you and other coaches, when I hear customer support and cause like in managing a community, it, it seems like you're answering questions that people have for you.

And you're trying to do what you can to give people tips and advice and make them happy. And. One of the things that I love about your approach to community management is it's not just about making people happy and like, feeling like they're there, they're satisfied and got the answer that they wanted because it's, it's our job as educators, as the, the leaders in communities to ask follow-up questions.

And if we're really caring about helping these people, then. We're doing them, maybe an injustice by just answering the surface level question that they're asking in these communities

hundred percent. And, and I, I know you and I are cut from a different cloth there, but that's one of the biggest mistakes I see is that people just want a community manager that I hate to say, well, silence, but like, they want to just give the quick answer so that they can say they gave the answer and they move on to the next one.

Right. Support rep.

Right, right. And that's great. People want answers, but we, if we really want to be the best leader, coach, administrator facilitator, that we can be, we're going to advocate for their best

self, right. Who they can become. And like, I don't know why I was born with that gift, but I just always see what people are capable of.

Like, I can just look at someone and see their strengths and their good and what they're capable of. And we want them to be able to see that and giving them a quick answer. Isn't isn't doing that. No.

So good, Elizabeth, thank you as always for your time. And again, you guys grab copycats Elizabeth. So Jen would prefer to do

Elizabeth henson.co.

I forgot to mention the website, but just Elizabeth henson.co not com, but it's all on my Instagram as well. I like to make real friends on Instagram. So introduce yourself and we'll, we'll talk on Instagram and my seven year old is,

that's a good, that's a good signal to end this thing. All right. Thanks everybody.

Thanks so much, Elizabeth. I'll talk to everybody next week.