



Interview with Roger Edwards of The Marketing and Finance Podcast

RE: My guest today is Gudrun Lauret. We talk about creating and most importantly repurposing content for professional services businesses and entrepreneurs.

We chat about Gudrun's career from journalistic beginnings to building her own copywriting business, what people really want to know about mortgage brokers, financial advisors and other professional service providers.

Turning client questions into blogs, articles, podcasts and videos, how to come up with content which will engage your clients, repurposing your content whether your starting point is a live video or a written blog, and how to boost your content and attract traffic to your website.

Gudrun helps businesses make the most of their podcasts, vlogs and webinars with her transcription and repurposing services. She turns them into blogs, quotable sound bites and more.

She also writes blogs and bespoke copy for successful entrepreneurs who recognize the importance of original, well written communications. Gudrun is passionate about writing and builds on her years of experience to produce the words to allow companies to clearly and effectively share their messages.

Gudrun, welcome to the Marketing and Finance Podcast!

GL: Hi Roger, thank you very much for having me.

RE: Gudrun, tell me, where are we Zooming each other from today?

GL: I'm zooming you from Gateshead, which is the other side of the water to Newcastle-upon-Tyne. I'm not that far away from you, just under the border. It's grey, threatening rain and it is going to be cold later on, so standard North East weather.

RE: Gudrun, you are a copywriter and you help people with podcasts, vlogs, webinars, transcriptions and repurposing so quite a lot of interesting stuff for us to talk about today.

But before we get into that, please can you tell the listeners of the Marketing and Finance Podcast a little bit about yourself, your background, where you

came from, where you're going, what your ambitions are, and basically, what makes Gudrun Lauret tick.

GL: I knew I wanted to be a writer when I was a little girl. I used to write articles based on what was going on in the street, things that were happening in the local area. I actually had my first piece of work published 20 years ago, for Waterstones book shop - they had a magazine with the tagline "for teenagers by teenagers" called "In Brief".

We used to review the latest teenage books critiqued by our school-age colleagues and we also used to go down to London to interview authors, or they would come up to us in Newcastle. We would take it in turns to ask them questions based on what we'd read (in their books) and ask them about their life. One of us would have to transcribe it, so that started out quite early on.

I studied journalism at college and Communication at university, and I realised that writing was the only thing I'd ever wanted to do; it's what I felt I was really good at, so I wanted to make that the focus of my career and my business.

That's what I do. I work with people who are pressed for time, entrepreneurs, thought leaders, people who are looking to be industry leaders, or who already are, to help them clearly communicate their message to reach a wider audience and make the best use of their most valuable content.

RE: You said you were really into writing: you could have developed a career as an author you could have written fiction, or non-fiction, you could have become a journalist. Was there a moment when you decided that actually helping other people to write stuff to help promote their own business was the way to go; was there a lightbulb moment when that happened?

GL: I think it kind of happened organically. I did start out in journalism; I did the National Council for the Training of Journalists course. But what put me off journalism was the intrusive nature. I didn't feel comfortable with that, that wasn't the path I wanted to go down.

When I was an employee a lot of the work I did was in the public sector, so a lot of what I was doing was helping people in the community. I worked for local authorities and for health organisations, so it was quite a natural transition. What I was good at was helping people to share their messages, so it seemed like a natural progression to make that a career.

Rather than being an author, and just putting things out in front of people, it's a much more collaborative process to work with a small business or a solopreneur to get into what it is they really want to say.

I think it's something that people struggle with. They know what their business is, but what is it that they're trying to express? I help them to drill down into their core message, how they run their business and who they help.

It became obvious that was the way to go, because it's something I enjoy doing. I like meeting people, talking to people and finding out about them. Something I felt that was a bit nicer than writing misery pieces for The Sun, so that was how it came about.

RE: You've worked with a few people who have been on the marketing and finance podcast. I think you're doing some work with Andy Hart who is known as "The Voyantist". I think you're doing some website work for him aren't you?

GL: I've been helping him with some of his blogs and podcasts. I've worked with a lot of people you know. I've worked with Richard Tubb, Andrew & Pete a couple of times. Quite a lot of my clients were at Talking Point of Business where you and I were a few weeks ago.

All very varied, a real mix of companies, from traditional business such as finance to digital marketing. A real variety of people who actually all need the same thing: how to communicate their message and explain what they do in a straightforward way.

RE: I think this is something that's really worth having a deep dive into. Funny you should mention the Talking Point of Business conference that we were both at - I was doing a speech there; I think I was the first person up in the morning.

Part of the message I was trying to get across was this thing collectively known as 'the curse of knowledge'. When you work in a specific industry, whether you're a financial advisor or run a hairdressing business or you run a car garage there's going to be language, terminology, jargon, 'industry-speak' in that particular industry that you live with day to day and you become immune to it.

You assume that everybody knows what it is that you're talking about and you assume people know that jargon or those industry terms, but the fact is that the vast majority of people have absolutely no idea about these industry specific words and language that is used.

I think it's easy for people who are in businesses to assume that people have a higher level of knowledge about what they do, than they actually do. One of the messages that I was putting out at Talking Point of Business was to assume that your customer knows absolutely nothing, absolutely nothing at all.

If you start at that level, then actually you've got a better chance of engaging with them and creating a customer out of them because you are effectively talking their language.

GL: That's exactly it. One of the key things to remember here is there's no such thing as a stupid question. We were talking before about a mortgage broker. I bought a house last year and I didn't know what a mortgage broker did. I think for the mortgage broker, they know exactly what they do. Once

you've approached them, they assume that you know exactly what they'll do for you, but in fact you don't.

For example, I worked with a chartered accountant to set up his website. One of the benefits of getting someone else to write your copy and to help you is that essentially, I'm your potential client. If I can't understand what you do, then nor can anybody else.

I don't have to be an expert in accountancy or finance, mortgages or marketing. I just have to understand enough so that I can explain to people who are like me, your clients, what it is you do. What are your most frequently asked questions? What is it that your customers want to know?

You start off with that as your base point. You should come up with a list of your top 10 or top 20 most often asked questions. That's 10 or 20 blog posts right there. What you need to do is explain clearly, and again not using jargon, or that industry-specific language.

If someone's coming to you for your service, what do you think they need to know? It's definitely worth asking people, as you'd be surprised by their answers. It's a really good starting point for anybody who is trying to do blogging or content production. What is it that people need to know about you? Ask them. Your most valuable content is answering those questions.

RE: I think that's interesting; you used an example of a mortgage broker. I've worked in financial services for most of my life and I know what a mortgage broker is. But if I were to ask a mortgage broker what are the sorts of questions that your clients are asking, they may say: 'explain to me what APR means', or, 'what loan to value means'.

But actually, there might be people out there who are just like you that say, 'I don't actually know what a mortgage broker does'. Or there may even be people out there who use the term mortgage but have never actually sat down to understand exactly what it means.

Don't assume that people are going to ask the questions at your level of understanding. They may have some absolutely basic questions that they need to have addressed before you can get into the slightly more technical areas.

GL: That's exactly it. I think one of the things I wish I'd known before I had a mortgage broker was just how many bits of paper he was going to need from me. I just had so many emails.

I think for a mortgage broker a brilliant thing to do would be to produce a checklist: "Things you need to know before you work with a mortgage broker". You're going to need your bank statements, proof of employment.

Or for example, because my mother-in-law was putting some money towards the deposit, she had to produce a letter to say this was really her money and it hadn't been laundered. How could I know that?

Something like that, a checklist, is ideal. "Ten things you need to know before you work with a mortgage broker". "Is working with a mortgage broker right for you? 10 things to think about." That applies to any business; it is that basic information so that you feel fully prepared.

Then, your customer has had their questions answered and they don't feel quite so silly when you sit down and you start talking about things. As you've given them a bit of background and you're preparing them for the in-depth stuff, the discussions about mortgage repayment rates, types of mortgage.

You've given them a bit of confidence and also, you've shown them that they can ask whatever they want and you will be able to help them as you've shown that with what's gone before.

RE: Yes, and I think people feel more engaged with you, if you make an effort to talk in their language and make an effort to keep things simple, don't they?

GL: That's it. I think one of the problems is that when you're writing for your own business you're too close to your subject. I'm probably just as guilty as anybody else of that. That's why it's useful to have someone else to help you. Just to say, hang on, I don't know what that term means.

If I don't know, as the copywriter, your customer is not going to know that either. It's really useful to have that remove, to really look at the language you're using and why you think you should be using that language. Or perhaps why you shouldn't be using that language! I think that is maybe more important.

RE: So, let's talk about how you go about helping one of your customers, one of your clients? What's the process you take them through when you work with them? Is it like you said, you start with that long list of questions and go from there?

GL: It varies; I think the first thing is: why are you producing this piece of content? Or why do you want to re-use something you've already got? I look at their website and the material they've already got.

If, for instance, they want to produce a series of blogs, then we start with that list of questions, what is it that your customers want to know? That's a good way to get started, building their confidence, should they decide they want to write their blogs themselves.

They tend not to, but if they do then at least it gives them the knowledge that they can come up with some ideas and I can then go off and write those for them. Often, it's useful to do a content audit, to see what they've got, look at

where they want to share their messages and how often. What kind of forum is it going to be in, what kind of medium, written, or podcast?

The process works from any direction so you can take a podcast and turn it into something else. You can take a webinar into a podcast if you wanted or into a blog series.

It's very much looking at their individual needs, seeing what they've already got, seeing how we can make the most of that, and look at ways to add to that to really help them to show that they really are the expert in their field, which is usually what they're looking for.

RE: Where do most people start? Do they start with written blog articles or do they dive straight into wanting a podcast or video? What's your experience there?

GL: It's surprising, you'd assume most people start with blogging as it's easier, but so many people hate writing, which is bizarre to me. A lot of people have been doing live video, not so much a formal webinar or vlog or podcast, but they're certainly doing short snippets to their phone camera and sharing it with their audience as they go about their day.

Then they panic and think, "I have this really useful piece of information but it's stuck in a video and what can I do with it?" So more often than not, they're coming from that side and they feel like their knowledge is stuck in a video format and it's up to me to pull that out and turn that into words that they can then share across social media and through their blog.

RE: What would you do then in that example? Say someone has recorded a 20 minute live to camera. A lot of it would have been ad-libbed, they probably wouldn't have been reading from a script, so there wouldn't have been anything written down that you could then take and repurpose. So, what is the process you go through to make the most out of that video content?

GL: If someone's done a piece to camera and you've got a 20-minute recording that should give you around 600 words, which is actually a pretty good basis for a blog post. But if a lot of it is talking about their day out, what they're doing, then I would go back and fill in some of the gaps myself with some research.

So, if they're talking about how to start an email marketing campaign, I would look at their website to see what other information they had that I could include in a blog post for them. I would ask them if there's anything else they think would be appropriate to add.

I often find statistics, data and latest research to add into that to make the blog post more interesting. But it's surprising actually how much value you have in those 20-minute recordings on your iPhone. There's a lot of useful information that your audience would want to know about.

It's quite easy to turn that into a blog post to put on your website and then to share elsewhere on social media or maybe add to LinkedIn. There's actually quite a lot there already it's just a question of pulling that out and editing, adding to it, polishing it and improving it for them.

RE: And actually, that could be a good way for a lot of people to start, couldn't it? As sometimes you're busy, you haven't got time to sit down in front of a PC or start typing, or writing on your iPad with one of those fancy pens, or whatever.

But would you could do, if you have a spare five minutes, you could turn your camera on and just talk for five minutes into a video and then send it to you to be turned into articles and transcripts. Or you could even use the memo recording facility on your phone to record some ideas or to record a monologue into your phone. And use that as the basis for the content you want to produce.

GL: That's right and actually quite a few of my clients do that. I actually did some work with someone who runs a beauty salon and does massages. She wanted to introduce some new therapists who had just joined the company, but she wasn't comfortable doing the writing.

So, she sat down and interviewed them and we turned that into a series of blog posts for her to introduce the new therapists to her clients, so they knew what was available and which additional services had been added. That took ten minutes for her and a bit of time for me, and that was ready to go.

She could get on with massaging people and helping people and I produced the blog posts for her. I've even used the memo recording on my iPhone to write a book. It's a bit of a long process but it's a really good way to get your thoughts down and to send it to somebody else to clarify and improve on it, and turn it into something special.

RE: What was the book you were writing?

GL: That was actually a book for Andrew and Pete, I've helped them with two of their books, and the second one is coming out at the end of the month. They had a lot of resources and useful information already.

We sat down and did a number of interviews and that was the basis for their first book "The Hippocampus" and then they added their own material into that: some diagrams and some marketing models that they trademarked themselves, they added that in, and that's how they created The Hippocampus.

RE: That's really interesting, I've read that book, and it's really entertaining in the usual Andrew and Pete slightly wacky style.

GL: That's how we did that, a lot if it was there already; it was their existing knowledge. It was just a way of getting some of the more involved bits out of

them. By talking to me, it was as if they were talking to a client. We had worked together before anyway, so I'm familiar with how they work.

It was an easier way for them; rather than talking in marketing spiel, they talked to me. I asked them some questions and they used that as the basis to build on the book from there.

You've started off with a list of questions, we've come up with answers to those questions and those answers could have been started as blogs or videos and then you've repurposed them.

RE: Tell us about some of the things you always have in mind when you're putting content together for people and how you keep it simple. As you know, as you were there at Talking Point of Business, I'm obsessed with helping people to keep things simple.

Jargon tends to creep in, however hard we try, management speak tends to creep in, "professional language" in inverted commas tends to creep in, especially if lots of people get involved in the sign off process.

What are the tips that you would give to people who are producing content for themselves that you use when you're producing content for your clients to keep things simple and engaging for their customer?

GL: The main thing is to be authentic and to be you. That's where people fall into what you call the curse of knowledge and using professional business speak. What puts people off about writing is that people think that it has to be an English essay and it doesn't have to be anything like that.

You're not writing for Mrs Smith, your GCSE English teacher, it's for your audience. But also, it's for yourself, and that's a really important thing to bear in mind when you sit down to write. That's why Andrew and Pete do so well, because they're very much themselves.

When I write for someone else, I try to keep that tone of voice and their style. Then it goes back to, what do people need to know? If you're starting to write for yourself and you waffle, you've written a lot and you think, "That's great, I've written 2,000 words!"

You should actually go back and look at it, edit it; it's what in fiction editing they call "kill your darlings". You've written something that you think sounds amazing, but in actual fact what you've done is waffled and repeated yourself.

So, although we know long form copy far outperforms short form copy (which is one of my favourite statistics!), it's necessary to be brutal with your work and to edit it, that's how you engage with people.

Don't repeat, don't waffle, and don't get into that trap of trying to sound clever by using jargon or long words. If you wouldn't use long words in your everyday speech, don't use it in your writing either because you're alienating

your audience, you're not staying authentic or true to yourself and you're going to confuse everybody.

RE: One of the things I always try to test myself to do, if I've written something, and it's a little bit harder when you've recorded a video - I try to do it before I would record a video.

If I've written something I will always say, "Can I turn each of the paragraphs I've written into a sentence?" Or if there's only a sentence there to start with, "Can I shorten that sentence or even take that sentence down to one word?" If you can create that sort of discipline, then often you really can simplify stuff a lot more than you thought was possible.

GL: That's it. When I studied journalism, what they teach you first is to imagine that you're writing with an inverted pyramid. What you do is put the most valuable information at the top and then you put everything else at the bottom.

So, if you were arranging an event like Talking Point of Business, you want in your first paragraph to say: who, what, where, when, why. Further down your article is where you would put a quote from a speaker, such as yourself, or the organiser, or an attendee.

The reason you do that is if it was to be published in a newspaper, your editor would edit from the bottom up and it's the same with writing a blog: you want to draw people in and maintain that interest.

You put the best bits in, hoping you've got enough information to encourage them to read right down to the bottom, but if they don't, they've grasped your meaning and the most important points at the top, at the start of your article.

RE: There are all those great things you've learnt from studying journalism now transposing into the service that you offer for your clients. I know a few journalists who have explained that top down approach to me before, so again if you're writing copy for yourself or even thinking about a script for a video or a podcast, that's such a great discipline to get into.

On the podcast I also like to talk to my guests about marketing they're seeing from other companies, so have you got an example of a marketing campaign or a product that you've seen recently that's made you sit up and think wow, I really like the way they've done that, could you share that with the listeners?

GL: One of things I enjoyed last week or the week before, which wasn't intended as a marketing campaign but worked really well: Did you see the squabble on Twitter between the Natural History Museum and the Science Museum in London?

I loved that; I'm really a fan of these natural, organically-occurring discussions that happen on social media and get everyone engaged and involved. It's a

great way to remind people that these museums are there, and I think they're free; most museums tend to be free these days in England.

It's a really nice way to tell people about what you do and what's available to them, without being a hard sell, and a way of getting some interest, and it was particularly fun as a couple of museums in Australia chimed in and gave their opinion. It was a gentle approach to let them say: we have dinosaurs, we have robots, and we have funny looking creatures! It's a natural way.

I think it's a good example of how marketing has to work these days; you can't just throw yourself at people, and shove their product in their faces and hope they're going to buy from you. You have to be natural and interested and show your personal, human side. And even for big museums like that it worked really well. It was a bit of fun.

It was a bit like the Invictus Games last year when America, Canada and Britain had the little squabble about who was going to win. It was a really nice way of engaging your audience and hopefully get some new museum visitors and it's a good way to show that anybody can do that.

You get a bit of banter going on social media and you get a lot of engagement and lot of good will generated from that. I think it's important for businesses to get that good will and that enthusiasm, people joining in and commenting on what they like about the Natural History Museum or the Science Museum. It's a really nice way of doing things and showing your best side.

RE: Yes, I saw that, and what I found even more interesting, as yes there was banter between the two of them and lots of people got involved, but then quite a lot of publications used them as an example, just like you're doing, as a great way to engage with people.

They became almost an international case study, just from that little twitter engagement they've created a massive amount of media publicity for themselves and I think we can all learn a lot from that.

Is there a business book you've read recently that you'd like to share with the Marketing and Finance Podcast listeners?

GL: I have a couple of favourites and from a fairly specific point of view I like Peter Bowman's "The Well Fed Writer". He uses the term 'commercial writer' rather than copywriter.

That's about how you can make money, and good money from writing. There is that old-fashioned idea of starving in the garret or people slaving over their papers and not making much money. You *can* learn to write and market yourself as a copywriter. That was a really good guide for me to give me permission to try that myself.

More generally, Tim Ferris' "Four Hour Work Week", which I imagine everyone says, but it just shows you can work from anywhere if you're fortunate enough to be in an industry like mine.

You can give yourself time out, you can explore new ideas and new things and you don't have to be tied down to a 40-hour work week. That's a really good lesson for people. It's more about lifestyle, but it shows that there are possibilities and there is potential for business needs to be built around you, and how you can best serve yourself and then serve other people after that.

RE: For people listening to the podcast today who want to get in touch with you, what's the best way people should connect with you?

GL: You can find me via my website, which is www.gudrunlauret.com or I'm also on twitter which is - @GudrunLauret.

RE: Fantastic I'll put the links in the show notes for this podcast, which you can find [here](#).

It has been fascinating to talk to you this afternoon. I always like talking to people about writing and producing content, especially when they are as obsessed with keeping things simple as I am.