

## Janine Coombes

### 00:02-00:25 GL:

Hello, and welcome back to The Apple Cart. My guest today is Janine Coombes. She is a marketing coach and an offer positioning expert for coach-shaped people. She's worked with big brands such as EE, Orange and EuropCar.

She has a business degree, postgraduate Marketing diploma. CIM Dip. Easy for me to say, and regularly speaks on stages like Atomicon, You are the Media and MarketEdLive. Oh, I've been to all of those and probably seen you speak!

Janine and I know each other from conferences, but she may not know that actually, I used to be one of the many fans of her marketing videos back when she used to wear wigs and and do all kinds of fun things. So we like to talk about that. But Janine, welcome to the Apple Cart! thank you for being here.

### 00:50-01:00 JC:

Oh, thank you for having me. What a lovely intro that I definitely didn't write myself. Any good marketer should be able to write their own intro. That's true, that is true.

### 01:00-01:24 GL:

So the podcast is all about creativity and being different, and also being disruptive. So, as I said there in the intro, like a lot of people, I came across you when you were doing your fun videos.

And I think you've re-released some of those. And I think they worked really well. Because I know you, because you stood out. Can you talk us through the inspiration and what that meant for your business, once you'd got regular with those videos?

### 01:35

yeah, so there's quite a specific point of inspiration for those videos. And that was my friend Janine, another Janine. all good people are called Janine. Actually, that no, that's not right. All people called Janine are good people.

Yes, I just alienate everybody apart from Janines. So she was also very active and still is on LinkedIn and she'd done some videos and somebody. A man, I'm not saying anything, I'm just saying, he's a man, said.

Oh, I could give you some, some feedback on your video because that's what I do and I can help you get better results. And she was like, go on then if you've got some feedback for me, because she's an open-minded gal, and he said.

Your voice is too high to be credible, you need to lower it, you look too young. Perhaps wear some pearls. What else was it? More makeup? she needed to wear more makeup and just...

The feedback was hysterical, and her response, her response is very. It was very mature. And she posted: "Oh, this is interesting, this unnamed person gave me this feedback. And what do we feel about this, in light of trying to be authentic and things?"

My reaction was like, Oh my god, this is the most hysterical. Like, did this really happen? And up until that point, I had been on video, but reasonably strait-laced. And we're talking five or six years ago.

So, like video, not many people were really using video anyway on LinkedIn. But my response I could not help myself, I had to put out a spoof video, so I did. I followed all of his advice.

I put tonnes and tonnes of makeup on and I wore some pearls and I changed my voice. And I did, you know, hashtag Credibility makeover? If you search for that, you might be able to find the original video because nobody's using that hashtag.

And the response I got was astronomical, , because nobody was doing comedy videos at all. Like now, it's reasonably common. It's quite an accepted thing, but at the time, nobody was. So it really cut through. And I'm just an absolute tart for compliments.

Obviously, because I was like, Oh my God, I'm loving this. I'm like, Oh, I'm gonna do more of this. So that turned into a series of the Secret Marketing Show, where I dressed up in in outfits and wigs and different characters.

I'd script it and it just all came very, very naturally to me and it was really cutting through. I only did two series of The Secret Marketing Show. But it was a wonderful way to cut through and get visible.

Where it did not work was at that point, I wasn't really clear on who I was helping with, what? So I would be in this weird situation where I'd get sales calls and people like, Oh my God, I want to work with you.

How can you help me? And I was like, Oh, well, you're a bathroom showroom. So I could put together a brand workshop, and then I had, like, a fake tan brand. Then I facilitated some workshops for them and, you know, it was all over the place.

And it just in a way, like I fell off the waggon. I stopped producing it, unpicking what happened. Why I didn't carry it on was probably because I was in my mind. I've made a connection between fun content that I absolutely loved to produce with not quite the right results.

Yes, so it's taken me a lot of unpicking to get to that conclusion. Because so many people would be like, why don't you do those anymore? why did you stop? And I just know that if I kept going like God, who knows where I'd be now?

Because I can see other people doing it consistently and they're putting funny videos out every week, and they've been doing it for years and their profile is much higher than mine. Whereas I took a step back from that, regrouped, pivoted, pivoted again and never really got consistent with that format of video. But it was what I needed to do at that time.

**06:04**

Yeah, and I guess it probably helped you in terms of getting more comfortable with video, because a lot of people really dislike it, you know? And you've made connections, so even if you didn't find the right customers, you've at least made connections.

Once you have pivoted your sofa as it were, that was a Friends reference. And once you've pivoted your sofa, you know, then once you're settled, then at least you've made those connections who will help you.

And I think it's also a really important thing to do. To take a step back from something that looks on the surface like it's working for you. And go. Actually, this isn't. I had an interesting conversation with our friend Amanda Webb about her doing that with her digital coffee and why she stopped doing that.

And I think that's a thing that is difficult for business owners, especially when they're trying to do. I mean, you are a marketer by profession, but for people who are having to market themselves, they're not marketers, they have another business.

It's really hard to go. Yeah, this is getting you some results, but not the results you want, and that's a really, a really hard thing to do, but ultimately it works out. Because as I said, I've seen you speak at all of those events that you've just mentioned so it obviously hasn't done you any harm. One doing them and two stopping doing them, but it's not an easy thing.

**07:35-08:02**

So, yeah, I think it's something that you just learn over time as a business owner, don't you just to go? Yeah, this seems like a good idea, but it isn't. And also we now learn that if you wear pearls, you'll look older, so for all the underage drinkers listening, if you want to get into a club, wear pearls.

**JC:** Raid Grandma's jewellery drawer.

**GL:** That's a really weird piece of advice because, you know, you don't look old enough. That's something that you're not really gonna be able to do much about for the next few years.

**JC:** It was so funny, you couldn't have made it up. Yeah, it was brilliant.

**GL:** Ah, see, one day I will have a profile high enough where people give me feedback like that, and I will be loving it when it happens. But that experience has obviously taught you a lot, and your content is still more creative than most people's.

**JC:** Oh, thank you.

**GL:** Everybody loves seeing Janine videos and reading emails from you and stuff. So you've obviously been inspired to take some of those things with you in your current marketing.

So if you look at other marketers, of which there are many, you're still standing out. Is that fair to say? Do you think, oh, I'd love you to say that? yes?

**08:55-09:36**

It's funny, I hadn't thought of it like that. I think those videos pushed me so far out of my boundary, the comfort zone, boundaries that it meant, that. Writing an email in my own tone of voice and using my way of speaking, it just feels easy.

Whereas I think some people struggle to find their own voice. And sort of an internal conflict with being 100 themselves or being able to express themselves. And I suppose that was a baptism of fire of that. For that like a relatively normal video for me is something very far out for somebody else, I suppose.

**09:37-10:00: GL**

Yeah, but also for anybody listening who hasn't met Janine, what you see on the videos is what you get in real life. You know, Janine is entirely herself everywhere she shows up. So I think that's another key, isn't it that there's often a sort of a front that people put up, and it's sometimes deliberate and sometimes not?

**10:00-10:23: JC:**

And it's this thing we keep hearing about. You need to be more of a personal brand than a business brand. And I think it is difficult to get over that. There's sort of the nerves that are holding you back and the fear of putting too much of yourself out there, but you do have to do it. Hmm, yeah, and you know, I do have a silly sense of humour.

I don't mind making a fool of myself and I will do that on video, in person, in blogs with people. I don't know if that's not your personality, that's fine. Like, there are so many lovely, calm personal brands out there like Fifi Mason springs to mind.

She's an introvert and she's so much calmer, but she's still able to connect. Because she's being herself. And, like you say, you meet her in person, she's just the same, she's not putting anything on. So that's the goal, isn't it? I think? For buddies, if you want to reinforce or grow your personal brand, it's just tune into being yourself and do more of that.

**11:06-11:35 GL:**

Yeah, so let's talk about conferences and events, because that's how you and I really know each other in real life. And pretty much most of my guests I've met in person at conferences. From an attendee point of view, why do you recommend conferences as a way to grow your network and market yourself in a sort of softer way, rather than a hard sell?

**11:35-11:39: JC:** Yeah, I suppose I feel like it's networking. I mean, it is networking, it's not formal networking. That's not the label they put on it. But if you turn up to one event in isolation, well, that's probably quite a challenging environment because you might not know anybody.

But if you turn up again and again and again, and you go to a couple of different events, and then you meet the same people again. That's how you make friends and you make connections. And you might make sales, or you might meet suppliers, or you might just get a support network.

And there's such wide-ranging benefits to going to conferences, like it seems to be that the conference, the people who run conferences know this, and they do include it in their spiel. But the headline is usually like, amazing speakers or things you're going to learn and stuff that they built in so that you actually implement your learnings.

As far as I'm concerned, 90% of the benefit is meeting other people and just feeling that buzz of being around people and that kind of thing.

**12:48: GL:** Yeah, because obviously I was talking to our mutual friend Tim Lewis. It's not a conference unless Tim is there, so that's a lesson for all conference creators. We were talking about exactly that, that it's about the networking, and we kind of said we don't really learn much anymore.

But reflecting on that, I think that's not entirely true. I don't know that I learn anything wildly different, but I think what you do learn is new approaches to old things. But also I think it's about reinforcing your knowledge.

So even if you're sitting there and you're listening and you don't think you're actually actively learning something new, what you are doing is you're just reinforcing that prior knowledge. And as I've been talking to people on the podcast and then out in the...

I was going to say, in the real world. But it's virtual networking, so it's not the real world, but like the real world, that actually, I do still know. I know a lot about content marketing and it's reassuring to constantly just have that reinforcement.

And so that's quite a nice way to think of it. You know, you might not learn anything earth shattering, but at the same time, you might hear something you've heard 10 times before. And it lands differently and then it clicks in your brain and you go.

Actually, now I'm at a stage in my business where that thing that I've heard 20 times before was never relevant. Now it is. So I think that that is a good reason to keep going to networking event conferences, which are also networking events.

**JC: 14:30-15:15**

Yeah, yeah, I agree. You don't need to hear much like in one talk, if you just get one nugget or one reframe or one thing, that's interesting. I mean, I think that's enough. In a way, if you get 50 in a talk, you'll be over, your brain will explode, and that's not nice, is it?

I would say to the listeners, who are a little bit greener to the conference circuit, yes, I would beware, because something I have noticed is. And you and I are probably used to it. And we can absorb it and we can handle it. But you will get, you know, Atomicon, taking Atomicon, for instance, because it's a really, really big conference with loads of speakers all packed in one day.

You might get a couple of speakers who contradict each other. So you get one talk. And they'll say, do this with your email marketing, and then you'll have somebody else and they'll say, do that. And it conflicts, so don't be surprised. And the moral of the story is, you do what fits best for you.

Like, there's not usually a hard and fast rule with those kinds of marketing tactics, so always take advice with a pinch of salt. It's got to be your interpretation of it and how you implement it, and it's got to fit for your business and your personality. And all that good stuff, yeah.

**15:56-16:26: GL:**

And I think also if you are newer to conferences and if you're an introvert, which I'm not, obviously I know it's a shock. I keep trying to tell people that I'm really quiet, quiet and shy and retiring. And even the French neighbours here laugh when I say that.

So obviously, my reputation is preceding me. But what I was going to say was, if you're new to conferences, you might want to go to a smaller one first rather than a large one. Because I think Atomicon can be overwhelming, even if you are a seasoned, extroverted conference goer.

You know, Marketed live. I absolutely love for the kind of speakers that BizPaul gets on and because he is deliberately keeping it small. Which means that you tend to get the same people going, but you're getting a really nice community.

And also You Are The Media, Mark Masters has worked really hard on that, hasn't he? And they are also local, which I think is nice. If you live down in Poole, you know, or that neck of the woods, that there's a community.

But yeah, I wouldn't recommend necessarily going to Atomicon the first time. If you're not very brave about these things.

**17:00:** Yeah, that's a good idea. Dip your toe in the water, I suppose. Did you go to the first Atomicon ever?

**17:20-17:32: GL:** I did because it was local to me at the time. Yeah, so I feel like it kind of we've grown with it. Yes, I think that helps. The first one wasn't as big, was it, 300 people, I think.

**17:33-18:04: JC:** Yeah, yeah, yes, gosh, yeah. Atomicon would be quite a phenomenon if you'd never been to a conference before, to suddenly go into them.

**17:45: GL:** Yeah, and I've seen people talking about it on LinkedIn in the last couple of years, where it's got this reputation for being huge and dazzling and sparkly, which it is. But yeah, for me, I've known Andrew and Pete personally for nearly a decade, you know, and most of the original people from Newcastle, so I don't feel like that.

But actually, I can see why. It's a bit daunting if you're not used to that, but moving slightly on. But staying in the same arena. It's not at the arena, it's at the Sage, which is now the Glasshouse, but it's like an arena.

What about speaking on stages then? Because you've been doing this quite a bit recently, so why did you do that? How do you feel about it and what do you think it's brought to your business?

**18:33-18:50: JC:** Oh, what a rich, varied question. Thank you. Um, you know. I think there was an element of feeling like it's something that I needed to do. So it's one of those shoulds, but I found, like. I loved it, yes, which is rare.

Like, I'm lucky, I love being on video. I love being on a stage, so that is that helps, and that is then the reason why I would put myself forward for speaking gigs. Just a reminder, people, there are no shoulds in your own business, you don't have to do things you don't want to.

But being on stage, I think it's almost like an extension of the networking experience. Because if you're a speaker, you end up making friends with the other speakers, and then people want to speak to you and talk to you about your talk.

And yes, there's the whole authority building piece, which is powerful and useful. Yep, so yeah, it's like an obvious thing to put a focus on in my own business.

**19:43: GL:** But I think if there are, as you said, there are benefits to speaking, and I think sometimes, I mean, I'm really confident of public speaking. I just never do it. So that's probably a waste of talent there, don't tell Simon Raybould.

He'll hunt me down, but you kind of have to. For some people, there are going to be benefits, but you've got to push yourself out of that comfort zone, haven't you? Yeah, you know, because you've got a message that should be shared.

**20:13-20:19: JC:**

Yeah, a conversation I have a lot with people, especially in the last few months, is. When something is intuitively right to you. So for some people, like being on a stage, it's the right decision, even though it's scary.

For some people, it's not the right decision and it is scary. But that doesn't mean that it's just because it's scary, doesn't mean that you need to push your comfort zone. So it's how do you tune in to your intuition about what's right for you and your business, and how to know when it's you keeping yourself small? I think that's something I've been thinking a lot about recently.

Stroking your beard. Nobody can see me stroking on my beard. What do you think about that, Gudrun? What do you think?

**21:07-21:28: GL:** I think it depends on your overall aims for your business as well, doesn't it? Because, you know, not everybody wants to have a six-figure business. I hate that six-figure business. It's all bollocks.

But, you know, I think it depends on what you want your outcome to be for your business. And I wonder if you're not going to be comfortable with being the sole focus, which I find really odd. Why wouldn't you want to be the centre of attention?

Is there scope for doing panels? Can you only be a panel speaker if you've been a solo speaker? Or what about? And I don't like the term. But fireside chats, you know, where you're in a conversation with somebody else.

And when people started doing that at Atomicon, where people are actually sitting down and having a chat. Which must make things more comfortable, even though the people who've been doing it are actually seasoned speakers.

And I wonder if, much like some professional comedians I know, prefer to be the emcee rather than an act. Because that's where they feel most comfortable and most entertaining, you know, is there a way? I wonder if having a career as a panellist?

You just be a bit more imaginative, but be more creative, more creative with the opportunities that are there. Yeah, I like that. I feel like I've turned the tables. I feel like we've just revitalised and reinvented the in-person conference space. Take note, everybody.

So let's talk a bit more about putting yourself out there and marketing. I know you're in the process of writing a book. at the time of recording, you're quite some way down the line with your book. Tell me a little bit about that, please, oh, with pleasure.

**23:22-23:39: JC:**

So the book's called the Easy Yes, and it's for coaches who want to make sales easier and not resulting to sleazy tactics. So it's good-hearted people who want a decent business and get an easier yes from their prospects.



**23:41-23:44: GL**

That was a very nice summary.

**23:44 – 23:48: JC**

Oh, thank you. I've written the blurb several times, yes.

**23:49-23:50: GL**

I thought you might have done.

**23:52-23:52**

Yes, I have. It was all in my head already, so getting the bulk of the book down was easy. But now it's the annoying bit where I'm sort of tying up loose ends. And oh, that chapter. I've only put the title and not actually written it, and the intro doesn't make any sense.

And how the hell do I end a book? So it's the tricky bits that I've got to finish off, so on the surface of it, it feels like I've nearly finished. But really, there's a lot of work left to do.

**24:30-24:34 GL:** And what was your main reason for wanting to write a book, and this book in particular?

**24:35-24:46 JC:**

So there's several things happening in my brain. Let's calm down. Because I did start a book many years ago and it was the wrong book at the wrong time, and I decided not to finish it. And that was the right decision, and I wanted to write it.

For all the reasons that you get told that writing a business book is a good idea, it's the authority, thought leading, establish yourself as an expert in your sector, etc. But maybe, I mean, definitely was too early on.

For me, I wasn't ready and I think maybe I had succumbed to the shoulds a little bit too much. Whereas this time round, I ran a workshop early summer and I mean, I stuffed way too much in it. And I'd come up with this, really, what I thought was a genius concept.

And I was getting ready to run it again and do it as a series of workshops so that I had more space for it. And then I saw a post and an email from a friend of mine who's a book coach and she books small books.

And I thought, Haha, I like the sound of that. And it just it was like, Oh, this is it. So, I think, going back to that, what I was saying about your intuition about what's right for your business, I felt like it was a very positive.

Yes, there was this positive click, and it wasn't a should, it didn't come from a place of scarcity or fear. Or, if I don't do this, my business will end. It was like, Ah, I want to do this.

It logically should help my business, but that's not the main reason I've got this really good concept. It didn't fit into a workshop. I want to get it down as my IP in a book as soon as possible, and so I'm doing it in micro book format.

**26:30: GL:** So what does micro book mean then? Presumably, this is about length rather than size of the book. Is it like a Stephen King novella?

**26:43-26:57: JC:**

It fits on a first class stamp. I'm very good. No, not really a very strong magnifying glass to read it. Yeah, so it's a term. Micro book is a term that Vicky Quinn Fraser coined. She's the one that I'm writing the book with on her coaching programme.

And yeah, it's length of book. So a typical normal business book would be around 50 to 80,000 words. And whereas her definition of a micro book is no more than 15,000 words, she's got some nice examples of micro books.

None of which I can remember, but one example of a book that could have been a micro book is Profit First, I don't know whether you've read that. Yes. Mike Michalowicz. Yeah. Like, the core of it could be easily covered in 15,000 words or less.

But it's a full book. It's almost like the publishers were like, Okay, this is a business book. We've got to cover it. You've got to have tens of thousands of words here. Utterly superfluous.

Like, the key concept is so strong and so useful, it could have been covered in a much shorter book. So that's kind of how I felt about my topic for this book, which is without prompting, I'm just going to expand on it now. By all means, go ahead.

It's kind of like a fresh take on a buyer decision making journey, knowing what to do with your marketing. To feel like you're guiding people through whether they want to work with you and whether they're actually ready to take action or not.

Those two things are usually jumbled up, or one part of that is ignored in most of the buyer journeys that you see. So I've combined them into a beautiful model.

And it makes, I think, a lot of sense and it's particularly useful. I've written it and positioned it, so it's particularly useful for coaching people. So coaches, mentors, trainers, consultants who work very, very in depth with people one to one.

**28:53-29:04: GL:**

Yeah, well, I'm looking forward to reading it, and I hope if I buy a physical copy, I'll get a string of pearls. So I look more professional. Maybe I could have a cut out. That would be good if you get masks of the Queen's face and it has a little string of pearls.

That would be quite good. Do you think, then, this concept of the micro book, that there's scope to write more?

**29:27-29:43: JC:**

Oh, it's like you read my mind. Yes, it's interesting, I think. When I first started writing a book, I felt the urge to cram everything I knew about marketing and what have you in a book. And this format means that I can just be really disciplined about, right? This is the concept I'm dealing with in this book.

And then the next one, I already know what the next one's going to be about. It's going to be about the actual offer. Yeah, it'll be concise and specifically for coaches, and yeah, it has legs I think I'm going to be addicted and just be churning out micro books hither and thither.

**30:02: GL:** It sounds like a good idea. And you could then do like a Dickens serial and combine them into one mega compendium of books that you could also then use to hit people who criticise your marketing approach.

**30:18:** Well, I'll have so many I can like, lob them one after the other like a snowball fight. Oh, this is a good idea.

**30:22-30:36**

I like that. I mean, yeah, I'm intrigued by Vicky. I were connected on LinkedIn and I know Aileen Smith, who's a nutritionist, She's worked with Vicky, so I am intrigued.

**30:37-30:38**

Yes, yes.

**30:40-31:08**

So just about final question. We've talked a lot about creativity, and I think, by definition and extension, about standing out. What would you say to somebody who isn't quite as extroverted as we are, or comfortable about talking repeatedly and for long periods of time?

How would you say to somebody? What advice would you give to somebody who wants to try and be a bit more creative? And stretch the boundaries of their comfort zone a little bit.

**31:14-31:22**

I think the answer to most questions is experiment, isn't it? See what you like, try some different things. See what pricks your ears up and makes you go, Oh, that could be fun. Don't squash it.

Notice when the negative keeping you safe voices kick in and just sort of go, No, I'm going to just try this. Don't have to do it forever, don't even have to put it live. You could do a little mini podcast and just see how it sounds and see how it feels without actually putting it live or the same video.

Or, if you prefer writing, then you can do so many different formats of all of those main types, you could do long blogs, short articles. You know, Substack or LinkedIn newsletters? Experiment.

**32:07: GL:** Yeah, I think that's good advice, because experimenting helps you find what you enjoy and what you're comfortable with. And that makes you feel like you're expressing yourself and your thoughts. And I think that's got to be key, as we've said, there are no shoulds.

By all means, try and expand your thinking and push out of that comfort zone, but you don't have to do anything that anybody else is doing. And if video doesn't work for you, it might work for you, but you're not comfortable with it, then don't keep doing it.

And I think that's the best advice for creativity - see what you like the most out of all the different options that there are.

**32:52: JC:** Yeah, and of course, it doesn't all have to be about business, does it? Like, you see people sharing personal posts about. So Vicky Quinn Fraser shares about her. What does she call it aerial acrobatics, like she does?

Yes, I've seen that, yeah, but maybe you knit, or maybe you paint, or maybe you sculpt. Or, you know, I've seen people do stop motion animation. Or, you know, little creatures. And then they move and they're so cute, all sorts, like the sky's the limit.

It's whatever you are interested in. It could be sharing your love of gardening or topiary. Or, you know, cat dancing, or, I don't know.

**33:38: GL:** hmm, cat dancing. I like the sound of that. I don't know how the dogs would feel. If I decided to train a troupe of cats to dance.

**33:48: JC:** I think dogs would be easier to train. Would they dog training then instead? But don't, you know, don't let us dictate which animals you're going to make dance?

**33:56: GL:** No, I mean, people used to have flea circuses. And I probably have an entire circus of fleas ready made on the dog, who's currently snoring. I might just pick out some of her fleas and train them.

**34:11: JC:** Beautiful, just zoom in there.

**34:13-34:19: GL:** That's it, it's a ready made niche. The dog's here, she's growing their fleas.

**34:19-34:35: JC:** Oh my gosh. I can see, I can see, like a Flea sitcom or soap opera. Yes, yes, a modern. A modern day version of a Flea circus would be a Flea opera. Oh, it could be like Big Brother Flea.

**34:36-34:45: GL:**

Yes, yes, I like this. Yeah, yeah, stay tuned people. I'm going to scrap the podcast and I'm just going to do short films, short videos with short fleas.

**34:46-34:49: JC:**

Lovely, yes, I'm itching just at the thought of that.

**34:51-34:52: GL:**

Itching to go?

Janine, thank you very much for your time. If people want to find out more about you, pop themselves on the waiting list for your book, find out where you're speaking next. Where should they be going?

**35:06-35:21**

Do connect with me on LinkedIn. I am there as Janine Coombs and I'm just checking the link to my book. Because I bought a domain, because that means it's half done, doesn't it? If you buy a domain,

**35:21: GL:** Oh, that's it. I mean, it's practically over.

**35:22-35:23: JC:**

So it's easyyes.com and that should redirect you to my waitlist for the book.

**35:24: GL:** Oh, fantastic. I will include the links to those, and I'm looking forward to hearing more progress about the book and receiving my pearls.

So thank you very much for your time and I will speak to you soon. Thanks, so much, thanks.