

Laura Robinson

00:02-00:33: GL:

Hello and welcome back to The Apple Cart. My guest today is Laura Robinson. She's a marketing and copywriting mentor for online business owners. And I'm going to be honest and say that I am one of Laura's clients.

Laura's really good at the things that I'm not so good at, so she helps me to do better with things like sales pages. And also, let's be honest, just marketing myself, because that is, I think, a problem for most small business owners. Laura, thank you very much for being here. Would you say that marketing is a challenge that people just don't want to do it?

LR: I think I definitely attract people who find it really cringey and uncomfortable, I think probably because even though that's what I do. Like, I've been in online marketing a long time.

I did marketing in my corporate job before I did this, and I've had this business for 10 years. So a long time I've been doing this for I still find it extremely cringey and uncomfortable for myself. And I'm really like, open and honest about that.

So don't know whether it's a problem. I just happen to see a larger proportion of people with that problem. Because I'm so open about it that I kind of attract them to me.

GL: Yeah, and I wonder if it's a specific problem with creatives. I was talking to Kristina Adams, you probably know Khristina, she's a novelist as well as a copywriter, and she was saying how icky she finds that self-promotion.

And I wonder if it's a creative thing, because we feel like we're making wonderful art. That we think that should just be given away for free, rather than, yeah,

LR: I think there's partly you're probably used to going with inspiration first and following that. So when you create something, it comes like there's a spark, there's something in you that wants to create it, and so you just go with that flow.

Whereas when you write for marketing or create videos, or even like, create graphics marketing, you're starting out with a function. And like, there's a purpose, there's a goal, there's - I needed it to achieve something and then working backwards from that, so it is a completely different process.

And I think for some people that it can feel like uncomfortable and manipulative because you aren't creating from a space of like. I have to do this, like, I can't keep it inside me, I have to share this with the world you're creating. Because you think I have to make some money and to be able to do that, I need to send out this email and so now I need to figure out what I'm going to write about.

GL: Yeah, one of the things I saw you post, I don't know if it was in your Facebook group or just on Facebook, was about why. We all struggle with pricing. And what you said was, when we've all been employees, we've never had to do that.

Somebody else has assigned a value to our work and our skills, and now we're in charge of that ourselves and that's really hard. Yeah, I like. Obviously, I do a lot of mindset work and I do believe in this idea of like that, we can hold ourselves back.

And there's some subconscious beliefs going on there, but also I think a lot of the times it's a much obvious, more obvious answer. So if you're struggling to set a price for something, you could spend a lot of time like breaking down.

What's my relationship with money, and why do I find this difficult, and why don't I trust myself or value my worth and all of those kind of things? Or you could just get really honest with yourself and say, How is this logical? In what way is it logical that I would find this difficult to do?

Well, I've never told somebody what I'm worth before. If I've ever bought something. It's had a price on it in a shop, and I'm like, I'm in Britain. We don't haggle. If that's the prices in the shop, that's the price that we pay, like there's no question for the price is the price.

And with salaries, I guess once you get to kind of managerial position, there's a bit more wiggle room. But they usually come with a bracket. So you're told you're going to get paid somewhere between this amount and that amount, and there's a very small amount of wiggle room.

So, but yes, there is a whole bunch of mindset stuff going on there. But also we just haven't done it before, and just like anything when you haven't done it before. The more you do it, the easier it gets, and the less of a big deal that, it seems.

GL: I want to ask you about doing things a bit differently in business. Now we're talking on Zoom, but I know that when you're doing client calls and things you don't use Zoom. Can you talk a little bit about why you do that differently? And do your clients just go along with it? Or do you ever have people going? Can't we just use Zoom?

04:33-04:57 LR:

So I like everybody else, I think when I set up my online business, everything was on Zoom, like that was just how I thought it was done. And I'm a copywriter, like my one-to-one skill. one-to-one services I sell is copywriting services.

And you know, it was going really well, but I also have chronic migraine and it was well managed for a long time. But, quite understandably, at the end of 2019, it started to flare up.

We were having a big building project at our house and I moved in with my parents for a few months. And then it was Covid and so my migraine flared up and it never calmed back down again.

And I pushed on through, pushed on through. And then, towards the end of 2021, it was really bad. Like I was thinking, I can't work, I'm gonna have to stop work. This is so debilitating and my availability is so unpredictable that I would struggle to take on one-to-one copywriting clients because I didn't want to let anyone down.

Mostly, I was writing sales pages, and when they needed them, like they needed them because they had a launch coming up, they needed the money that that sales page was going to generate. So I started to feel really low about it.

I took a break over the Christmas period, didn't work and my migraines went away. I came back to work in January and I had a two-hour Zoom call to kick off my working week. And I was laid out with a migraine for, like, the next three days.

So I just decided I wasn't doing it anymore, and that sounds like a simple decision, but it really wasn't. All. My one-to-one copywriting clients started with a Zoom kickoff call, they had update calls all the way through the projects. I was on a retainer with someone. That paid me like a few hundred pounds a month to have Zoom calls with me, and I had to let that go.

And I was a copywriting coach in somebody else's mastermind. And I got paid a few hundred pounds a month for that as well. And I had to let that one go as well. So it was a big deal to say I can't do this anymore, and I did it from a place of if I stopped work completely, what would people miss out on?

Not just drop Zoom, but if I never, if I didn't do another day work, what would people be missing out on? And I was trying to imagine, like, what are the ways that they would tempt me to come back to work? Like, if I paid you a thousand pounds, would you do this for me? And I'd be willing to work with you in this way.

So I just sort of played around with the idea in my head and, like my idle dreams. Imagine people begging to work with me because they still wanted to access my skills, and I still wanted to be paid for them. I didn't want to work in that format anymore.

And I just came up with one-off days, VIP days. And we did it all via Voxer, so I was doing some copywriting for them, they were doing it. We were co-working on a Google document, and all the interaction was via this walkie-talkie app called Voxer. And I loved it and it sold really well, it was sustainable for me.

And then people did those days and they asked, like, how can I work with you long term? And they were happy to do that via Voxer because I'd already introduced them, like we'd had a day together. They knew that that worked, and then that was it.

Though, almost all of my client work now happens via Voxer, and I do do Zoom to do podcast interviews because this would be very difficult via Voxer. But yeah, the majority of my work is communicating either on a on my course platform, via email or via Voxer.

GL: Yeah, I was talking when I was talking to Kristina because she has fibromyalgia. And we were talking about balancing your health and energy. Because I have a couple of chronic health conditions, that mean I get tired easily.

Well, we're talking about how important it is to prioritise your health, but also to explain that to people. And to be brave enough to say, Look, I can't work like this. That doesn't mean I'm bad at my job, it just means that I have to have these adjustments.

And I think a lot of people kind of get to that. When they're in a business, they're working for somebody else where you just you can't do it anymore The main reason for me being self-employed was just that. sometimes I have to have a nap at right at a random time of the day.

And when you're an employee, they don't like it when you have a nap in the middle of the day. I got to the point where I just could not do a job because I had an overwhelming need to nap.

08:40-09:10: LR:

Same, same, same. And I've got a. There's like a chapter, I've got a book that's about having a business that's more comfortable, and in one of the chapters I talk about that. That the things that meant you didn't, that you couldn't have a job.

Like most of us, or most of the people that I work with are self-employed because we tried a career and that was a disaster. Like that was not going to work. But this is not for me. Maybe we started out with the idea that we'd have a short break and go back to it, which is what I thought I'd do.

Or maybe we just bailed out completely and went, nope, never gonna have a job again. But the things that meant that you weren't compatible with the job, you're bringing those with you into your business, and they will still make life hard as a business owner.

And I see sometimes people beat themselves up because their business isn't growing fast enough, or they haven't achieved this thing. Or they feel like they're behind from where they should be.

But they haven't factored in, "Well, I left my job because, I'm caring for a three-year-old and an elderly grandparent, or living with this health condition, that that still counts. But that's even though your business is more flexible when you're at home and you can nap when you need to.

That is still impacting how quickly your business can grow. So those things haven't gone away, you've just flexed around them.

GL: Yeah, and you've got to be kind to yourself, you know, if that's what you need to do, then then you do that. And I think I think the thing is for me, I knew I couldn't really do a full-time job, but I did keep trying, and I kept trying for far longer than I should have done.

So I think it's about being brave enough to go. Actually this traditional way of working just isn't working for me.

LR: You want to have a bit more liberation from that. I find it really interesting to really search to where the traditional ways of work. A week - why are the days Monday to Friday? Why do we work as many hours as we do? Why do children go to school? How? Why do they go for the term dates that they do?

Like, once you dig into the why of things, it's much easier to shrug and go. Well, that really doesn't apply anymore, so I don't like we don't need to conform to that anymore. And when that, when things change, when there's mass change, there always has to be those early adopters that go.

Yeah, I don't really believe in full-time work, that doesn't make any sense. S we're the pioneers, just shrugging off the whole days of the week concept and the 40-hour working week.

GL: yeah, we should all be more pioneers. And children. Until about 150 years ago, children weren't considered children, they were just small adults. No, I've read this somewhere. There was no awareness that a child was the same as an adult,

LR: like developmentally, they're not.

GL: Yeah, they're just they're just small, and then then they'll stop being small and they'll be big. And so there was no sort of there wasn't school or anything like that, because they're just they're just small adults.

LR: Yeah, and I think, like school started in the poor houses as well. I thought I just find that like, really, the whole evolution of the school system very interesting. Which then made it much easier for me to sack it off with my own kids.

That's just how I get brave to do things that are a bit unusual. I like to understand, like, what is the thing that I'm throwing in the bin? Let me understand it really well, where it came from. Okay, now I'm ready to just put it in the bin and do things my own way.

GL: Yeah, I love that. I love that you've given it some thought and gone, Yeah, okay, but it's that's just that's just nonsense, isn't it? and gone, fair enough, I've had enough of that.

And you've just mentioned your book and it's an amazing book. I'm looking around my office, I've got a copy of it somewhere. Tell me a little bit about that and what inspired you to write that? Because we've been talking, I've been talking a lot with other guests about books and things, so tell me about yours.

12:15-12:33: LR:

I have no idea why I wrote it, I had no appetite to write a book whatsoever. It wasn't. You know, people thought I have a book in me. I can't wait to fight, like, No, not interested. It

wasn't gonna write a book. I had a collection of thoughts about why, I just like why I'd shaped my business the way I had.

I had my backstory of how I left my job and how difficult life was when I left my job. I had two young children. I shared it on podcast, but I'd never really written it down somewhere, so I wanted to write that down.

So I got that down. It lived in my... I use a thing called notion, where I store all my ideas and everything, so that lived there. So that was kind of a bit of the book. I did a talk at Atomiccon. I got to talk on stage and like, bless Andrew and Pete.

I'm pretty certain they thought I was going to talk about writing pages. And I got out there and I talked about how hard it is to be self-employed and how important it is to look after our mental health. And I had an amazing reaction from people about that.

It was fantastic it was, and I like, I hate, I hated the whole like it did not enjoy being on stage. It didn't make me think I want to do that again. But at the end, people came to talk to me and then in the bar afterwards, people came to talk to me.

And I was like, this is incredible. Like, I want to talk about this more. So I wrote down everything I put in that talk and some of the things I said to people afterwards. I wrote that down, so then that was like another bit of the book, but I still didn't know it was going to be a book.

And then I just had a couple of experiences where I really felt like people like us who are? I think we are flipping incredible. Like we are scrappy as heck. We like, look at the cards we've been dealt. We're like, yep, still gonna make a living out of this?

I'm somehow gonna cobble together a business and I'm gonna support myself and I'm gonna make this work. And I would meet people like that who I really admired, and I'd hear them put themselves down because "Oh, but I should have this many subscribers, or I don't earn this much money, or it's taking me this long."

And I'd be looking at them like, how can you think this about yourself? Like the things that they had been through, what they'd been able to achieve. I saw them in a different way than they saw themselves, but I also realised I did not see myself that way.

So all the things they were saying about themselves, I was saying about myself and I just felt like we needed something where someone was writing, "Hey, it's like, it's okay". It's absolutely fine. You don't have to have a business that's going to want venture capital investment to take over the world and turn over millions.

You don't even have to turn over six figures, you don't ever have to have another single employee like, you can just do it however you want. And you're still an absolute hero, and you've still achieved amazing things.

Because you decided what you wanted and you went out and you got it. And so I eventually, I kind of cobbled together all these notes that I had I had no intention of making into a book. And kind of relented and went, Yeah, that's gonna be a book.

But it's a really short book because we don't have a lot of time for reading, because we need to take naps. And it's got a lot of reflection questions because I don't want to tell people how they're feeling, I don't want to tell people how they should do things.

So what I've done is share things like: This is how it was for me, and this is how I created movement around this issue. Or changed my perspective on it. Here's some questions that might help you do the same.

GL: Yeah. I think that's really refreshing for business owners because I know when I started, it was all like, you've got to be really ambitious. And this thing about six figures, I hate hearing that, oh, six figure business, well, what does that even mean?

That doesn't mean anything. And I think the fact that not only are you not running a business like that and lots of other people aren't, is that we're talking about it. You know, and like for me, because I, because I sleep a lot.

My business has been effectively what you'd call a lifestyle business, and for like, the lifestyle business was sort of sneered at, oh, you only want a lifestyle business. Don't you want to be making 20k a month? Well, well, yeah, all right, give me 20k a month, but I can't work, I can't do an output for that.

I want to just be comfortable and work because I enjoy it and that that should be enough. That should be more than enough.

LR: And the things that you have to do to have a business that size is different to the. So, it's not just about the amount of work you're doing, it's the type of work. So because I'm a copywriter, the very obvious suggestion from a lot of business coaches has been open an agency.

So hire some copywriters, hire some proofreaders, they can all be freelance, you know, they don't have to be employees. And you make some packages and then you go out and you sell to people, other businesses, like corporate deals.

You know, tens of thousands of pounds per deal. And then the copywriters do the writing for you and I'm like, where, what? Why would that be fun? The bit I like is the writing! I don't want to go and speak to corporates, I don't want to sell stuff like, that's not, that's not fun for me.

I have one person that works for me and that works amazingly. But I think she would heartily recommend that. Nobody else work for me because it is a disaster area, like I'm not an easy person to work with.

I can't imagine running a team. So it's not just about the amount of hours you'd have to put in, it's the energy that you would have to bring to that type of work. And like, what would you be getting out of it? Like, when I write, that recharges me, so it does take energy out of me. And I do need to have like focus to be able to do it.

But I don't feel like completely spent at the end of a day writing. I feel like, well, that was. I'm glad I did that, I'm really proud of what I've created. But if I'd spend the day, I don't know, pitching corporates. I'd probably have to go and hide in a hole for three months to recover. So it's not really going to be sustainable for me.

GL: No, and that you wouldn't be able to manage your team if you were in a hole. I mean, managing a team doesn't, it doesn't appeal to me either. I mean, very early on, my first proper job was at a local authority, and it was not long after my A-levels. So I was quite young and at that point in time, I had two male managers.

I was actually an admin, doing working across two teams, and they were quite ambitious and they were quite ambitious on my behalf. And I remember thinking, Oh, yeah, that sounds amazing. You know, I could rise through the ranks of the council, and I could be managing a team.

And then very quickly, it turned out that what we'd all thought was, well, we just thought I was a hungover teenager was actually a chronic problem. That meant I couldn't stay awake at a full, do a full day's work.

I used to sleep in the ladies toilets and a friend used to come and get me. And I think once that happened, that sort of killed any ambition I had about being a team leader at the council. but it just means you just reframe your, your ambitions and your ideas. It doesn't mean that you're a failure.

LR: It doesn't sound like they were your ambitions anyway, and I don't think they were no. And I say that from the perspective of someone, like when you just said they were very ambitious for me, I was like, Oh, that, like, I felt that with every fibre of my being.

When I was 10, I was, like, marked as one of the ones that was likely to pass. My 11 plus and it was really important for my primary school to get as many people through the 11 plus as possible. So I became very aware that, whether I mean, I actually kind of enjoyed that bit.

So that was like, I wanted to do it. But I was also aware that that was not just my responsibility to pass my 11 plus. Like I was doing it for the head teacher, who I loved. And then you went to school and it was all about like...

But we need to get this far on the league tables because we need to beat these other schools. So you need these exam results so that we're this far on the league tables. And I went to uni and it was exactly the same.

Like, we need to have this. Many people go into employment straight after their degree. And then when I got into my job, exactly what you said, like, ambitious on my behalf, and it took me so.

And when I left the attitude was I was throwing it all away. Because I could have had this amazing corporate career and it took me a long time to realise. *Of course* those managers were saying I had ambition, they were going to take me with them because I was doing 80 of their job. Like I was doing so much work that they were getting credit for.

Of course, they were saying I'm gonna rise to be director and I'm gonna take you with me. *Of course* you are, because you can't do it without me. I felt like it was me. "Oh, no. I must fulfil my ambition!"

And it took a long time to come to terms with the fact that wasn't my ambition at all. It was theirs and it was pretty obvious why they had it.

GL: Yeah, yeah. And I love it when you see other like entrepreneurs talking about how they left a glittering corporate career. And everybody said they were mad. Even one of my favourite, in fact, my only favourite recipe blogger, because I don't follow recipe bloggers, is an Australian woman called Nagi.

And she what she talks about is how she had a glittering career in finance and she gave it all up to be a food blogger. And I just think it doesn't matter what your job is or what you go on to do. Is that sometimes you're gonna give up that so-called glittering career and you're probably gonna feel a lot better about it afterwards.

21:12-21:42: LR:

It's just a different adventure, isn't it? Like, we're not, we're not here for a very long time. If you spend 40 years on the same career, that feels like a lot of missed opportunities for other adventures.

GL: Yeah, yeah, it does. And can we talk a little bit about, how you? Because you've got a lot of offers, you talk about why you, why you have your offers like that, your different programmes and one-to-ones and things. Because it. It fascinates me, because I really should do that, but I don't have as many ideas as you!

21:42-21:59: LR:

I kind of dread this because I think people watch what I did over the last three or four years and went, Wow, that looks like really well thought out. Let me, let me replicate this. Like, no, that was not. There was no strategy behind this whatsoever. When did I start creating courses?

I had a membership about eight years ago. I created a couple of courses, I was gonna sell them, and then I realised, Oh wow, this is gonna be really hard work. I have like 100 people on my email list and I've priced these courses at 20 pounds each, so it's gonna be tough going. So I never sold the courses as courses.

I bundled them up and turned it into a membership, and I launched with 40 members at about, I think it's about 30 or 40 pounds a month. So it wasn't an amazing money. But it was enough for me to basically drop one copywriting client so that I could put my effort into having this membership.

And so that was the beginning of creating courses, because I wanted to create material that was inside the membership. And then at some point, I wound that up again. I'm not, I haven't got very good attention span, so after about 18 months, I'm like, yes, time for something new.

So I think I that that grew and it became like a higher touch thing. And then when we were doing the building work, I just couldn't carry on having a membership at the same time, I was like, there's just too much, there's too much, so I wound that up.

Then I had all these courses, um, so I released some of them separately. And I kind of got addicted to this pattern of having an idea for something that I knew. People would want to learn. Pre-selling it to see, like, do you actually want to learn this or not? Like, I'll write the sales page.

If enough people buy it on pre-sell, I'll create the course. And I did that, like, over and over again, maybe five or six times. It was a great way of making money, it was really low pressure, they sold really well. I felt amazing writing the courses because I was like, I've already been paid to do this if I worked out my hourly rate. If I would, if I'd worked for a client, I'd have earned this money once.

But I'd have no course, but I was getting paid, I'd have the course and then it would keep making money for me in the future. So I did that for a couple of years, so then I just ended up with a whole bunch of courses.

I was in Lizzy Goddard's Profitable Playground, just kind of like a mastermind thing. And that did teach about this model of having lots of different offers at lots of different price points. So I was just kind of addicted to doing that.

Then I needed to figure out how do I keep selling? Now they exist, how do you possibly promote like 18 different courses? And I don't love the format of having like two-tier pricing, so you have a price that's the full price on the outside.

Then if somebody downloads your freebie, you offer them like a flash sale. Like you've got three days or a Tripwire price to get it at half price or a third off. And then a couple of times a year you do another sale and they get the chance again. But it works, and I'm not saying that other people shouldn't do it.

I just wasn't comfortable doing it and also having 18 products like that. There's just a lot like that was a lot of different price points and checkouts and funnels and things, and I wasn't really enjoying it.

This is the bit that makes me nervous because I don't want people to go. Indeed, this looks excellent. I'm going to do this. I just decided to bundle them all up and make them available as an all-access pass.

So instead of paying to own a course and people wondering which course should I buy next? Which felt like a tight and difficult and uncomfortable decision. And like they were missing out on the other courses because they could only pay for this one course right now.

I said, Okay, it's £97 for the year. You can have access to everything, so it's kind of like a Netflix subscription for my courses. Yeah, knock yourself out. And that felt much more comfortable. I really enjoyed that because it meant that when people said to me which course should I take, I could say, Well, I think probably this one and then this one.

So if you just buy this pass, like, do these three, and then you'll have had your money's worth. And you've still got access to the courses the rest of the year. But I am not jumping around telling everybody if you've got lots of offers, you should bundle it up into, an all-access pass type deal.

Because I'm a year into having that and I don't like, I just haven't nailed it down. I haven't got it right yet. I'm enjoying it and people are buying it, and I'm committed to that format. But it's just not at a stage yet where I feel comfortable saying to people, this is an excellent idea and you should do it.

But I didn't know what else to do. Let's try this and see what happens. And it's kind of evolved from there.

GL: Yeah, but I like that because that's the fun thing about being in business is that you can try things and it should be fun for you. If it isn't fun for you, then you might as well just still be back at the corporate.

And yeah experiment and see if it works. And maybe it's not ideal for everybody else, but it works for you and it works for your clients. And that's, that's even something like people have something to think about now.

LR: So people have seen me do it and I always said, just ask me just I'm happy to have a conversation about. There's a reason why I haven't created a course on it yet, because I don't, and it's just not there yet. But I'm really open to answering questions.

So I've had lots of great conversations with people where they just hire me for 20 minutes and they say, I'm thinking of doing the same. What do you, what should I know, or what should I avoid?

A couple of people have settled on almost exactly the same format, but most have taken the idea and then worked it in a slightly different way for them. So I'm figuring it out in a way that works for me and I like that.

It's like another option that's been thrown onto the table, like we don't all have to do the same. There's not all this one way of selling online courses, there's lots of different ways of doing it. And I feel like I've just thrown another option out there and it's fun for people to adapt to.

Also, I feel like I need to. I didn't invent that, but the way I'm talking is as if I'm saying, like, I didn't invent that. I'd seen two or three other people do it as well, and I was like, Oh man, I wish I had thought of doing that and then decided, nah let's just do it anyway. It's not too late.

GL: Yeah, I suppose. It's not always like, it's not always going to work if you're selling courses. The way I want to work with people is in over, like a three month period as a project, and I don't know what then they'd be coming back for after that.

So I think if you work like that it's not quite so practical. But I do, like, I have some little courses and I like the idea of offering them as well. And you still do one-to-one work, don't you?

What are your tips for business owners to be a little bit more creative?

LR: Oh, I, I don't ever think of myself as being creative So I was, that kind of thing really stumps me. And then I look at what I do like in my home, the way I cook dinner, you know, the way I write.

Yeah, the fact that I'm enjoying learning how to doodle, and I realised like, I am, I am creative in a really broad way. Probably more so in writing, but um, just go like it doesn't. There's not a particular standard and you don't have to stick to one thing. Like art is not just that's not the only way to be creative.

Maybe you're really like arranging, like when you get a bunch of flowers. Maybe you put extra special effort into the way that you arrange them. Or when you're wrapping presents, maybe you put extra special effort into the way they look.

Or you're decorating the Christmas tree. Or there's areas in your life when you're probably already creative and you don't realise that you're doing it. And so for me, I need to to notice where it's already there, yeah, and lean into that more. And then that makes me a better writer and it helps me think in a more creative way.

Yeah, without, I don't have like anything amazingly beautiful to show for it, but it's it does. It helps me acknowledge that part of me exists and helps me kind of reconnect with it.

GL: Laura, thank you very much for your time. Where can people find out more about you?

LR: Uh, go to my website, which is Worditude.co.uk
Forward Slash Newsletter, you can join the Comfy Business newsletter. Which is definitely the best way to stay in touch with me because I'm not much of a social media person and it's a very nice newsletter and sometimes it features seals.