

BUSINESS MADE EASY[!]



Episode 03

From Passion Project to Full-Time Business

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G'day g'day and welcome to another episode of the Business Made Easy podcast where we make business easy. I'm your host Jason Skinner and wherever you are listening in the world, I want to welcome you to the show and I hope business is going well for you. Today's episode is an interesting episode. It's an interview with a lady that I've known for some time now Donna Webeck and Donna's got an interesting story in that she converted a hobby that she was doing in terms of copywriting and blogging and turned that into a business in a niche area that she's equally passionate about. So she's merged these two passions that she has had together as a hobby and then turned it into a business as well as raising a young family as well. She's balancing life from all aspects. And I really love her story and the journey she's on. So I met up with her recently so I'll head over to the interview now. But yeah I'm sure you'll enjoy the story.

Jason

Hello everybody and welcome to the show. Today, I am very fortunate to have a very long-time friend of mine, Donna Webeck from Prestige Property Copy. And Donna has a fantastic situation since that she's taken her passion for writing and blogging in, rather than just by going up and trying to make another blogging site she's actually niched down and found a particular niche that not only is largely untapped and there's a large need for, but she's equally passionate about. So we're very fortunate to have her. She's going to share a story with us today. Good day Donna, Hey there!

Donna

Hi, thanks for having me, Jason!

Jason

No worries! Great to have you and how about if we start with, where is your business at the moment? What's going on in your business at the moment?

Donna

My business is really still in a growth phase – I've been serious about it for the last 12 months. And I've got big plans for it in the next coming 12 months for our hope to grow a lot more, but sometimes I am still surprised that I even have a business. Sometimes I've got to remind myself that I am in business and not just doing a job that I love...

Jason

So is it fair to say that when you did start, it was like, I'll see how it goes and that just evolved?

Donna

Yeah, definitely! It's more of a passion project. I wanted to be able to make money by doing something that I enjoy. And I love writing, and I love property, so that seemed to be a natural fit. It was only when we were selling and buying property ourselves that I realise that a lot of the listings that real estate agents have were written quite poorly, not very emotive, and I thought that's something I enjoy doing, writing like emotional copy, something that's going to resonate with people. So I just started sort of making subtle inquiries and had my background in writing and then

eventually I managed to start my own business and get my first client on board, and that's snowballed from there.

Jason

So it actually came from just like identifying that there was no one actually servicing that market, and then you're going, "hey..."

Donna

Yeah...

Jason

"... that's a passion as well..."

Donna

Yeah...well, I didn't get the best...uhm, I asked a couple of real estate agents, you know, "Hey, who writes the copy for this ads?" and most of them were telling me that it was done in-house and that real estate agents didn't like to pay for that sort of thing and I'd probably be best directing my attention elsewhere, so I was a little bit defeated by that, but then I thought surely there's got to be people out there that are time-poor, like agents that are time-poor, and I've just got to find them. So I just continued my search until I found the first one. And I felt, as soon as I had the first client, I started to feel legitimate, like hey I can call this a business now. So and that's when I decided to stop calling myself by my name, Donna and decided I needed a business name, so Prestige Property Copy was born.

Jason

Great, and so now you've just got agents that's spread. How did you typically grow? You're doing social media? or...

Donna

Yeah,...a little bit of everything. That's how I get my first client, was through LinkedIn. I did an ad and a post on there, and an agent got in touch with me and said he was willing to give me a go. It took a little while for him to actually get around to using me, so I was so nervous for a couple of months thinking, "Do I really have my first shot or not?", But then he was true to his word and gave me a go, and I felt, once I had that first person I could really pursue it. I could show that I had a portfolio and then I could chase other potential clients. So I did use social media, Instagram actually was quite useful as well.

Jason

Is that because of the visual nature....

Donna

Yeah, yeah, and using a lot of hashtags, you get found a lot more, because of the hashtags that you use. Something like some business through LinkedIn, business through Instagram. But I also find "word of mouth" – agents that are happy to refer you in-house to their colleagues as well, and I've had a couple of people just find me by my website as well.

Jason

So just organic search... that traffic coming to your website.

Donna

Yeah...

Jason

Great!

Donna

Not a lot of that. I still need to work on that part of my business quite a bit, but it's more me being proactive rather than my website being proactive.

Jason

Okay, so you're driving...you're actively out there still driving business to come in.

Donna

Yeah...the goal is to get my website to do that for me, that's one of my business goals in the next 12 months as well.

Jason

You mention the hashtags with Instagram, that's something often we've looked a lot too. It's whether, or not they really do make a difference, do you... have you found that?

Donna

Yes, totally! Well, I wasn't sure... I was on Instagram with my personal account, wasn't that fussed on Instagram. I realised I was in a visual medium, I should really try and explore it, and I gave it like I did a little bit of research

into it and everyone was really big on the hashtags. I thought okay, even not seemed to be a little bit icky...a little bit tacky. No, give a go... and went from like zero to a thousand followers within months just because of hashtags, I believe... Oh, the content I was sharing too obviously appealed. There was a mixed... not just the properties that I was involved in.. I was making sure I found beautiful imagery of interior design and things like that, beautiful properties all over the world. But I've always hashtagged them with about 20 different hashtags and I kept getting found and followed, so yeah really seem to help.

Jason

I think I've seen a little bit the same thing... do you think that because you're putting those great images straight into that category...that's probably helped.

Donna

Yeah...works quite well

Jason

That's fantastic, Donna. Tell me when you started the business, some of the trials that you had along the way, has there been many obstacles? You got a young, a boy and a girl?

Donna

Yup!

Jason

Your husband is working as well, so life's always a balance – how's that been for you?

Donna

It's definitely a juggle... for so long I've always made my work come second to everything else, but when I got serious about it and realised this is what I wanted to do, I had to step up and claim my share of needing to have days, dedicated days for work. I need help with drop-offs for schools and pick-ups and things like that. And I'm lucky that my husband was quite willing to step in as and when needed. But it's always at the back of your mind, you know, that you're not quite in business a hundred per cent yet because that's there's that part of you that still needs to be there for the kids. My youngest still isn't in school. So as soon as she goes to school next year, that's when my grand plan for expansions really going to kick in.

Jason

Do you see, because also I believe your office is at home, which is also another challenge, has that added to the weight of it?

Donna

Yeah, Because you will never really leave work when you work at home, it's always there. I've walked past my desk countless times a day. But I think that in saying that when you love what you do you don't mind to dedicating extra hours in the day or night to it, around your normal work hours. If I have a deadline or commitment I'm going to make it no matter what, so it does mean I had to work at night when the kids are asleep, I'll do that. And I don't resent

it as much because I love the job and I wanted to build my career in this field, so I just know I have to do what I have to do.

Jason

Great! And I guess other problems that you've had in terms of going into business, the transition to identifying that it is a business from a hobby because when you do start out, it starts as a passion project and you hadn't necessarily looked at the monetisation of it or a business. How was that realization?

Donna

Yeah, it's funny because I remember one person saying to me, a friend "Is this even a job, like, don't these agents have good enough grammar to do it themselves" ; like, "Who's going to pay you to walk around the house and write a few notes", and you know, "put a few sentences together." And that kind of knocked my confidence a little bit, because I said,, people don't actually think this is a legitimate thing to do. But I've realised thankfully that person was in the minority, and there really is a way that you can grow. You've just got to believe in yourself enough that it is worthy of a business. And you just got to find the right client. There are a lot of real estate agents out there that do believe they can do it themselves and didn't want a professional copywriter to help them out, but I've just learned to not target those ones anymore, just look for those who higher agents who have the marketing budgets to be able to pay for things like that.

Jason

So you've eventually now sort of identify a key target, customer avatar.

Donna

Yeah... Your average Mom and Dad buyer who are buying the house worth \$500,000 - \$700,000 or something like that, (I'm sure there's still house out there for that, worth that somewhere) those agents generally aren't going to be my target market, but anyone who's selling prestige property is going to be more interested in having a professional copywriter. Not only do they not have the time, I think I just want to make it stand out from the crowd, so that's one of their avenues of doing it. And I know people think too that it's the images that's more, attractive more than the words, but I think it's the combination of both

Jason

a visual...

Donna

Yeah, and that's what'd I found when we were looking to buy, I was just as interested in reading about it as I was looking at it, so I figured, If was like that then the others are like that too.

Jason

So in terms of the business plan for that, have you, looking at a business, have you actually sat down there and worked out a business plan for the next period of time ... or still a little bit of part evolution.

Donna

It's still a part....sometimes I think I need to get more serious about it and think, you know, I have to remind myself this is a business. I'm not just somebody who's writing copy for real estate agents, this is a business. So I have started to think about what I need to do, to get more serious about it. I guess I should call that a business plan. It gets a bit daunting though because you think you're doing something that you love because you love it, and then the kind of enjoyment gets taken away when you get to start thinking about tax returns...Yeah, things like that. And you know, you've got to be responsible I suppose. And make sure you've got all bases covered.

Jason

Yeah, particularly then the protection of that business – the building of goodwill, and building of the client base and then there is going to have a time when you got your money you actually realize you've got to plan for tax...

Donna

Yes, and I know the superannuation and things like that. They're all things that I just think that older people think about, and then like, "Am I, do I have to think about that?" I'm sure I do have to, but I was trying to be ignorant to those what it was at the moment.

Jason

Yeah, It's one of those things that everyone puts off, but then realise that the hardship... And so business plan is in the wind.

Donna

Yeah, It's on the to-do-list...

Jason

It's on the to-do list. And you have been doing work with still growing the business... How do you scale what you're doing – have you looked at ways you can scale what you do? There's a lot of physically writing.

Donna

Yeah, I know a lot of people have, my husband for one, suggested, I need to streamline things a bit more, like maybe have templates and stuff like that. But I don't know, I just treat every project so individually. I want to give it my all and my every new attention, so I tried to keep, I just want everything to be fresh. Maybe I'll get stale down the line, but Uhm, that's probably the better way, more efficient way that I could do things, but the passion is still running so high for that at the moment I haven't really gotten to that jaded point yet, but I need to...

Jason

Wait until you get the tax bill... you'll be like “what am I doing this for?”

Donna

Yeah, that's right I know it and I need to, learn to delegate and things like that, which I'm starting to, which is good, outsourcing things...

Jason

Do you have a team that you can outsource things to?

Donna

I haven't, but I've just started, like my website, for instance, though I could manage things like that website myself, but I'm not technically-minded at all, so I could spend the whole day staring at the back-end of it, and not know exactly what I need to do, but think that I should be doing it, because it's my business. And I've just started to realise, okay, I'm wasting my time by doing this. I could be chasing another client or doing something else more valuable with my time. So now I got someone to help me with that. I'm going to be getting a bookkeeper onboard soon and to make sure I'll look after everything to do with that, BAS some things like that. And that's the extent of it so far, that's going to be the next few steps in my plan. And then I think once it's been done, I'd really feel like I'm in business... on a serious thing.

Jason

Yeah, yeah, Because I think, that's the thing, it's a smart way to go is to package up the things you're not good at and then just really clear enough to focus on things that you are good at.

Donna

Yeah, That's what I've been trying sell for this, real estate agents that I work with. You need to do what you do best...and sell. And so I'll do what I do best and right for you. But then I wasn't doing the same in my own business. I was still thinking that I had to be in control of everything. I sort of forgot that once

I got the website build, I didn't really think long term of that, you need to keep updating and evolving and things like that...

Jason

Then you've got to learn WordPress.

Donna

Yeah, yeah, not easy when you don't have that sort of tech-savvy frame of mind. Yeah definitely learning to delegate and I've got a couple of people that are on standby, should I get really busy, that I can pass on some work off to.

Jason

So are they ghost-writers that can write for you?

Donna

Yeah I never started off with any grand plan of expansion of having like a team or anything like that, but the further I go along in business, the busier it gets, I think "hmm, It might not be bad to have something to fall back on if you need to.."

Jason

Particularly, is the clientele based mainly in one region or one area, like, Gold Coast area?

Donna

Yeah, mostly Gold Coast area... I have some marketing clients in Sydney that I do some brochures and things for and a couple in Brisbane, but the majority

of market clientele now are locals so I can go and view the properties in person. They take a little bit longer to do it. It's a lot quicker when you can actually beset the images and texts from that something out from there. So that's probably another way I could market myself down the track – is to bring in more work that won't take as much effort to get done – won't have to factor in the travel time and viewing time and things like that.

Jason

Is this something you've got to do – see the property?

Donna

I like to do it, because I really like to get a real sense of the place and I minute I'm driving there, I'm taking notice of the street that I'm driving into the shop that is around, I could get real sense for that area and I like to talk to the vendors and casually ask them a couple of questions about, “What did you like about living here., what's your favorite thing about living here, what are you gonna miss the most, and it just gives you another hook to include in there and just think if they like that then potential people that might like that too. So just trying to weave as much information as possible in there.

Jason

Fantastic! You mentioned earlier that you're wanting to grow your business.. and getting your website growing more to work for new customers as supposed to physically having to go out and chase them, how are you approaching that within your business?

Donna

I'm currently doing a very intensive SEO, Search Engine Optimisation course at the moment. So that is designed to drive more clients to my website without me physically chasing them. There's so much more to SEO than I ever knew possible. I thought it was just sitting in and throwing a few keywords in here and there into your website. I think the course convenor is great, she said something like most people just publish and pray and hope that that's going to hit the spot, and I think that's what I've been doing. But I've realised there's so much more work to be done. But when you do the work the payoff is really good for business that's definitely something I would recommend.

Jason

So you're actively working on the SEO, so everything you're putting in your website are actually including an SEO concept.

Donna

Yeah, yeah, everything, everything I'm doing with my site now is with that in mind. Hence while, I've just engaged with someone to help me with my site because I realised that I can't do it all myself. So you know, getting my site-speed fixed, so with that's going to help with my SEO, my bounce rate, and you know optimising my pages and focusing on my keywords.

Jason

So explain a little, a bounce rate is what?

Donna

Uh, so people might be looking for a real estate copywriter and then click on

to my site. But if it's not loading, fast enough, they're going to click off straight away...

Jason

Oh, so that's something like a metric measuring whether people are sticking around....

Donna

Yeah, they're not going to stick around so they're going to bounce off to another site, instead. So trying to get my speed improved, scaling my images down, so many things I didn't know that I was doing wrong, but I guess knowledge is power and now I know these things I'm just trying to rectify them so that my website will work harder for me.

Jason

Because that's the trick when you start out, everyone says get WordPress and start building it and you think "okay, well it's done now and everything should just flow". But there's so much in the background. Probably a good reason that if you're not working in that web space that you're actually outsourcing.

Donna

Definitely..yeah there's no way I could fit it all in, so it's such a relief to know that there are people out there that that's their job, that's why they do it - happy to palm that off to someone else so I don't have to stare at a blank screen and think "I don't know what I'm doing here".

Jason

So the future is I guess driving more traffic to your site organically through SEO, and then scaling your time to be able to handle that and then at the same time the background will I guess just summarize is to have a better accounting, putting a business framework down behind your passion project...

Donna

Yeah, that's perfect! I really, I can't bury my head in the sand anymore and pretend them, just somebody doing a job that she loves, and oh, I'm in business, that's right. I've got to be more serious about it. Take it more seriously if I wanted to succeed, and I do, then I have to make sure that the frameworks are in place and I'm doing all the other parts of the business that you need to do in order to be successful.

Jason

I think to have that under control you mentioned the fun aspect of that before, the passion aspect... if you get that back end under control, you've got that piece of mind that all that is under control, we can still focus on that and still have that passion for them in doing them

Donna

Yeah, definitely... And I think for so long, I just didn't realise that I was allowed to delegate these things. I just thought I have to do them all, but then it's just a relief to know it's okay. There are people out there that specialise in these things... you don't have to do it all. You can get other people to help you

with these things. You just do what you best, and let them do what they do best.

Jason

Yeah, yeah, and that's under control

Donna

Yeah...

Jason

Cool, the future for you

Donna

The future is hopefully bright....and as I mentioned before my daughter goes to school...my youngest will be at school next year, so I can really throw myself into this a 110%. That's what, I feel like everything has been leading up to that moment. So, all the stuff that I'm trying to cram into in the second half of this year's in preparation for next year, like, really a very big year, so I hope to have exponential growth next year.

Jason

That's fantastic Donna and that sounds like an exciting road ahead. Growth is always good in business and it's good to see particularly that you're putting that framework in behind it, as you go. So thank you for coming on today. I really appreciate you sharing your story with us... your journey and where you're heading.

Donna

Thank You!

Jason

If people will find more about Prestige Property Copy, where will they go?

Donna

Yeah, they just head to my website, which is www.prestigepropertycopy.com.au and everything that they need to know will be there.

Jason

Fantastic, that's great! Well, thanks for coming in Donna we'll talk to you soon!

Donna

Thank You!

Well, there you go, guys. Donna Webeck from Prestige Property Copy and I'm sure you'll agree she's she's had an amazing journey going from a hobby that she's passionate about turning it into a full-time business that's just doing well and she's got an exciting journey ahead of her balancing family as well as growing businesses. And she's really I'm sure you'll agree got in there and learned a lot as she as she has gone along so good on you Donna. Looking forward to we may even catch up with Donna next year see how she's

progressed and we'll do another interview and just see just see what's evolved for her.

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Thank you for Tuning In

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Thank you again,
I appreciate you!

*Regards
Jason*