

The Peaceful Productivity Podcast
**Ep #89: Creating Compelling Content
with Lauren Hicks**



Full Episode Transcript

[The Peaceful Productivity Podcast®](#), with your host *Kim Christiansen*

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Kim Christiansen (0:03) - Welcome, everyone. I'm Kim Christiansen and this is the peaceful productivity podcast, where I share strategies to help you get the most out of your time and feel better in the process.

Hi, everyone, welcome to this episode of the peaceful productivity Podcast. I'm really excited to be joined by My guest today. My guest is Lauren Hicks. And Lauren is an amazing marketing. And would you call yourself an advertising person or I'll let her to explain it. But all I know is I went to her website. It was gorgeous. So I wanted to have her on the podcast to tell us more about what she does. So Lauren, can you please introduce yourself?

Lauren Hicks (0:51) - Absolutely. And thank you for having me on your show today, Kim. I'm Lauren, I'm the founder and CEO of New River Media. We specialize in content strategy and thought leadership via three main pillars. So that would be writing internal and external media, speaking and presentation development. And then finally podcasting.

Kim Christiansen (1:12) - Okay, so if somebody has a business, and they're looking for someone to write content on their website, or get help producing a podcast, you're their person, is that right?

Lauren Hicks (1:25) - Absolutely. Yeah.

Kim Christiansen (1:27) - As a relatively new marketer, I've been in business for myself since 2021, I can appreciate the need for good quality content, writing, what you do is phenomenal, so amazing. And the visuals that you create on your website, too, I was blown away by those as well. Very much a huge need, I would imagine for this type of work. And I'm curious, how did you get interested in journalism and writing and all of that in the first place?

Lauren Hicks (2:01) - On the more personal side, I have a deep love and appreciation for the power of storytelling. As an LGBT founder, I've seen firsthand the impact that telling someone's story can have it can instill self love and self compassion. embolden voices that aren't listened to often enough. And it can transform hate to appreciation and understanding. And I've seen that and I get to, I have the privilege of doing that every day for people that I work with. And right before I launched New River Media, my Nana, so my mom's mom passed away. And she was a powerful, caring woman whose presence was larger than life, her incredible stories in her unique journey. She was my best friend, and my biggest supporter. And so she taught me that making a living is not the same as making a life. And so I guess New River Media is an ode to her.

Kim Christiansen (2:55) - That's gorgeous. I love that. And you just demonstrated the power of story right there. It was so good. I totally agree with you in terms of how story is such a powerful way of educating and sharing experience. I was wondering if you could say a little bit more about that. I'll just share with you my own experience. So as you know, I'm starting at a new Toastmasters club. So I've been a Toastmasters since 2014. And what I've noticed in listening to 1000s, of speeches, and presenting hundreds of my own speeches, is that as an audience member, it's way more compelling to the listener. When there's a story involved. I think, as an accountant, I also see this as well, I've seen so many presentations, where it's just a chart or a graph or a list of bullet points. I've seen it both done well, the use of story, and I've seen it absent and be so dry and boring. So I'm curious, why is it that story helps our brains pay attention more and learn more? Why is that?

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Lauren Hicks (4:16) - That is a great question. And it is because at our core humans are communicators, communication, verbal nonverbal, whether you're aware of it or not. It's how we understand ourselves, our situations, and others, were not computers. And so a slide with a bunch of stats and numbers is great for different purposes. But the baseline as a story with relatable elements for an audience is what's really going to pull people in and whether that's for an individual or a full organization. Everything has a story. And I think that's my New River Media's kind of slogan is great stories pop into those who can tell them because everybody has one.

Kim Christiansen (4:59) - That's it. parade slogan, I love that. Yeah, I agree wholeheartedly, and I can appreciate it too. Even as a listener, I very much pay much more attention when there's a story element to it. I think the reason why, in addition to what you're saying is because there's an emotional component to it. As you said, we're not computers, we're not robots, we're emotional beings. And so we are driven to pay attention to our environment, based on the emotional signals that are coming from what we're interpreting. What do you think about that idea? Does that resonate with you?

Lauren Hicks (5:39) - Absolutely. It's a key part of what I do, especially in thought leadership for a lot of my clients, people need to have that emotional connection to you, they need to trust you, it helps build that authenticity. So I absolutely agree.

Kim Christiansen (5:53) - I love what you said emotional connection. And I think it starts to with understanding your own emotional landscape. So translating that or communicating that to other people is very, very challenging. If you're not emotionally connected to yourself first, what would you say about that?

Lauren Hicks (6:12) - Absolutely. So that's a big piece of it is taking time to reflect on these things, not just pushing out content that needs to be authentic. People can read through fake advertising language in two seconds. But if you show up authentically yourself and speak to what you truly cared about, people can tell, it's a problem that a lot of people have is people aren't used to talking about themselves. People aren't used to writing, for example, in the first person. So that is, a lot of what I do is it's easier to write about somebody else in their voice than it is for maybe that person too, as well.

Kim Christiansen (6:50) - So true. So true. That was my own experience is that speaking from that authentic voice, when I was starting out my business was very, very challenging, because I was used to speaking in a way that others had dictated to me that that's the way that I was to communicate and present myself. So I think all of us, to some degree, create a bit of a mask that we present to others.

Lauren Hicks (6:50) - Absolutely. Yeah.

Kim Christiansen (7:16) - So what advice would you give to people in business who are trying to be more authentic, trying to drop the mask a little bit, but still wanting to present themselves in a way that makes them credible business leaders as well?

Lauren Hicks (7:33) - Yeah. And that's it? That's a great question and a question I get a lot. I won't lie it it's hard. And it takes a bit of time, I think to really nail that voice. But I think a big piece of it, like you said, is there's always a part of your mind and your and your thought process of well, what are other people going to think about this, and you're picturing a massive audience? Well, really, whatever your authentic message is, as long as you're coming at it from a place of compassion, kindness, and knowledge in what you're offering, or what you're talking about, you're going to attract the right people.

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I think that's a often overlooked aspect is that you're not talking to everybody, you're talking to a very specific group of people. And it doesn't matter if anyone outside of that circle doesn't agree with you. It really comes down to who you're talking to being authentic. And I think the rest will, will fall into place. Obviously, there's more tactics and nuance to it than that. But as a whole, I think that's a big piece is that you're talking to specific people, not everybody.

Kim Christiansen (8:38) - That's such good advice. That was advice that I received early on, and I'm still practicing, when I'm sending out an email to my email list, or I'm making a podcast, or I'm putting content on my website. If I think about the people collectively, I become very vague and general, and my messaging is unclear. But if I think about a specific person that I want to help, that I would love to work with, then it becomes much easier and clearer and specific. So just to really hit home on that point. How do you help them to think about a specific individual?

Lauren Hicks (9:26) - There's a few methods. So one would be picture, you're talking to your brother, you're talking to your uncle, people you can actually put a face to and you know, their personality? What features about them? Do you want to attract your own business? And what would make them respond well to that, another one is just very much archetype thing, customers and customer profiles. So based on where you get your most sales from, deep dive into that data, and how old are they? Where do they live? What media are they reading, because there's a lot of different media out there, all of these different things you can really take and actually put a name to. So draw it out on a whiteboard, whatever you need to do with a little stick figure, then name them, What job do they have? How much do they make a year? What are their hobbies? What gets them really passionate about something archetype that out, and then write to them. So it's not writing to a whole auditorium not writing to a stadium, it's you're talking to one person, if that person on the other end feels like you are talking just to them, that is going to create that trust in you and your brand, it's going to make people a lot more likely to take that desired second action.

Kim Christiansen (10:43) - Oh, that's so good. That is so good. I have done some of that archetype work before I call it like my ideal client. And then what I'll do is I've got in the abstract, I've got my ideal client in my head. And then I'll think about my clients, the ones that I have helped in the past. And that gives me a concrete example of that, what I'll call the ideal client, and then I speak to her, and then it's easy. It's like I'm, I'm chatting with my best friend, it's so easy, the messages come clearly quickly. And I think more than anything else, and you've tapped on this earlier, is the spirit by which I'm delivering the content changes. So my passion comes through when I'm thinking about a specific person that I'm trying to help. My passion comes through in the delivery of the message, and then it becomes more compelling as well. What do you think about that?

Lauren Hicks (11:42) - Absolutely. I think it's a strange phenomenon, that business owners think that writing in a very mechanical way and sticking to very strict rules and not you know, using your authentic voice, that's what's going to make you successful. When really, if you reflect on it, What brands do you like, or feel a personal connection to that do that? Who do you follow on LinkedIn that you're like, I love their content, and why? It's because that person is speaking from their authentic voice from their experience. They're being vulnerable, and they're being relatable. If we really reflect on, well, what would make me buy a product? Or what would make me invest in a service with this person? I think just reflecting on that of our spending habits, as ourselves is a great exercise to do.

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Kim Christiansen (12:33) - So good. Yes, it reminds me back in the day. Actually, when I was in corporate, we used to talk about sales scripts all the time, much of what you're saying around the sales script is that it feels very artificial. There's no, it's like what we were saying earlier, there's no human behind the words, it feels very mechanical, contrived, artificial. I can also understand where the idea of a sales script comes from, though, because when we're first starting out in business, it can be very intimidating to tell someone, oh, you just need to be yourself. That's also a place of maybe fear, fear of rejection, or anxiety or confusion, you know, so there's a lot of that emotion behind it. So if you had to choose between confusion and anxiety, or a sales script, I can see why people might choose the sales script, even though it sounds a little bit more canned. So it's, would you say that maybe getting the practice under your belt is what ultimately leads to the confidence to show up authentically? Or how does that come about?

Lauren Hicks (13:51) - I think that's a big piece of it. And what you said is so true of, you can't, as a business owner, write a personal full length email to every single one of your customers, that would take way too much time. But there's also systems and processes that you can put in place that is a hybrid between those two things. And so you can have a sales script, but you can leave out one line as like a template, take that as your opportunity, speak directly to somebody or offer something, oh, I saw your post on LinkedIn. Or if you're talking directly to somebody, it can be a combination of those things. And I think that having a template having a script is so important, especially in the early days. It's what's gonna keep you consistent in your efforts. But it's important that people don't see you as a robot and see you as just as another spam email.

Kim Christiansen (14:43) - I love that you brought up consistency because that's also something that I have struggled with in the past and I think that the hybrid approach that you suggested is brilliant, because it allows people to at least put themselves out there in a safe and secure way, but also experiment with little tiny bits of that authenticity so that they are building confidence in themselves over time so that eventually, they are feeling more confident about showing up as themselves. And they're also publishing consistently. So I think that's brilliant, really good. Can you say a little bit more about why consistency is so important?

Lauren Hicks (15:29) - Yeah, consistency, people need to see the same thing every time they approach you. So oftentimes, it's going to take multiple times for somebody to recognize you recognize the name, recognize your brand, if they're showing up to your website every few weeks, and considering it and it looks different, it sounds different. All of those things will subconsciously signal. I'm not sure about this. So consistency is really in that trust building piece. They like you as a person. They like what you offer, but they also know that what they're getting in return is going to be consistent quality, high quality. And yeah, that's vital. Content marketing is a long term marketing strategy, there is no overnight fix of I need my customers to trust me and like me, it doesn't exist. It's like a podcast. It's like listening to a song. It's like reading a column. It's all of those things. And that's how we, as humans, form relationships with other people. But it's also how we as customers, make decisions. And so it's that consistency, but also that right messaging.

Kim Christiansen (16:36) - Yeah, it's a relationship. Exactly. Yes. It's like, even if I hear about a new restaurant in my town is an example. Probably won't think anything of it. And then it's almost like over time, I have to build a relationship with that new restaurant in order for me to, like you said, know, like, and trust them. So maybe I hear somebody else raving about this restaurant. And I think to myself, the

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next time I'm asked where I want to go, I'm like, Okay, I want to check out this restaurant, we go. And then I make a determination whether or not I'm gonna go back or not. But it's a slow, a slow burn, kind of it's a slow build, it's me building a relationship with that restaurant in a very small example.

Lauren Hicks (17:21) - Well, it's it's a slow burn, but it's, it's a deep burn. There's marketing that the strategy is front and center, we're having a sale flash sale, that's going to trigger something else in your psyche, that's going to kind of make it urgent for you thought leadership is about that long, slow burn of, you're creating customer loyalty, bottom line. And what that's going to do is it's going to create more sales, and in larger amounts, because people are going to come back to you, they're going to recommend you to people, like you just said, that person you talked about that really loves that restaurant, they have a relationship to that restaurant, for some reason, they are loyal to that restaurant, they are going to recommend it with their full heart. That is powerful, but it takes a long time.

Kim Christiansen (18:06) - Amazing. You've given us so much to think about. So I really, really appreciate your coming to the podcast today. And I wonder if you could leave us with maybe some words of wisdom for people who are at the early stages of their business, and they're trying to find that authentic voice? Or maybe they've been in business for a while. But they're now like starting to market more or go online more. So what advice do you have for those people who are new to marketing in the online space?

Lauren Hicks (18:41) - I think I'll start off with a bigger piece of advice that I would have given myself. I think entrepreneurship is a lesson in identity, self discovery and resilience. I often reflect on the famous quote by Thomas Edison, if I haven't failed, if simply found 10,000 ways that don't work. That is in everything that we do. There are going to be failures, but it's about changing your expectations of ourselves of others and our environments.

Our expectations can be our downfall or our biggest strength. So at the beginning of a new founder may have goals entirely predicated on finances, and it's a big ambitious goal. And yes, like don't get me wrong. Goals are very important to keep you on track. But what happens if you work away for a year and that specific goal you were only looking at through one lens isn't achieved, you're going to give up you're not going to try again. But most importantly, you're blinding yourself to everything you have achieved outside of that finance first lens.

I think we rob ourselves of desired recognition and celebration by limiting our perspective and markers of success. So my biggest piece of advice would be instead of viewing a fulfilled touchdown, right now as the ultimate Goal, focus on moving the goalposts focus on a play at a time. Because if you look at a play at a time of play every day, over the course of a year, well, that's impressive. And so I think, both in terms of very specifically content marketing and business as a whole, it's about the long term, setting realistic goals, but also recognizing that what you're doing is incredible.

And it's important in terms of that authentic voice piece, and finding it, first of all, nail down and ask yourself the question of why do I exist? What am I trying to do? And how am I serving people, and I think your own passion will flow into that. There's specific nuances and techniques you can use to get there. But at the base of everything, it's why do you exist. Why do you wake up every morning and do what you do? That's really marketing and content marketing, it's an extension of yourself, and really creating that relationship with your customers.

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Kim Christiansen (20:59) - Would you be willing to share your why?

Lauren Hicks (21:00) - It comes down to every person I've ever talked to. And it sounds like a crazy thing. But why went into journalism, why I've gone into content marketing, it's my love for people and helping people. And it does help people telling stories is powerful. It changes the life of the person whose story that's being told. But it also helps people think and connect with their communities. It helps people do good for others. And so I think that is, that is why I do what I do and why I wake up every morning ready to go.

Kim Christiansen (21:37) - Yeah, it energizes your why almost energizes you and exactly pulls you forward instead of pushes you from behind? Yeah, my why is similar, in many respects to what you just said. And in addition to what you said earlier to about building that relationship with yourself and the journey of emotional resilience. That was a big reason why I started my own business. I wanted to challenge myself and grow that relationship with myself, too. So it's been a journey, I tell you.

Lauren Hicks (22:10) - It always is.

Kim Christiansen (22:13) - So good. I love it. Lauren, thank you so much. For everything that you shared with us today. It I'm sure will help many, many of our listeners today. If they wanted to follow up and connect with you learn more about you. Where would they find you?

Lauren Hicks (22:27) - Absolutely. So they can find New River Media at newrivermedia.ca. Very simple. And I'm also on LinkedIn, so you can connect with me there. And I'm happy to have a virtual coffee chat.

Kim Christiansen (22:39) - And if for no other reason, you should check out our website because it's gorgeous. It's beautiful. Thank you so much. Thanks for coming today.

Lauren Hicks (22:49) - Absolutely. And thank you for having me.

Kim Christiansen (22:52) - Are you looking for a coach who will help you increase your business profit while protecting your time and your well being? If so, I'll invite you to check out my website, financialwellnesscoach.ca