

Riches in Niches Ideas Podcast – Heather Lutze Interview

Susan: I am Susan Friedmann the NichePreneur Coach and welcome to Riches in Niches Ideas, a podcast series where entrepreneurs and small business owners who are successfully niche marketing their products and services, share some practical tips and techniques. I called these savvy individuals "Nichepreneurs".

Today's NichePreneur guest is someone I truly admire. She is the queen of findability. Heather Lutze is a nationally recognized Internet marketing speaker, trainer, and consultant in search engine marketing including SEO, page search, and social media marketing findability. Heather Lutze's speaking engagements are conducted in the same irreverent style of her book, "The Findability Formula: The Easy Nontechnical Approach to Search Engine Marketing" that delivers equal parts, good information, and good entertainment to audiences nationwide. In other words, Heather knows just how to get found on the Internet, so welcome to Riches in Niches Ideas podcast, it is so good to have you here.

Heather: I am so excited because I am back on your show again.

Susan: Yes! This is the second time I have interviewed you. I love it. We have to do more of it. So Heather let's talk first of all about findability, because it is such a crucial part of doing business today. Can you give us a 101 intro into findability?

Heather: Absolutely. Let me give you some background. I started my agency, and I do what I do with clients, because a lot of people have a very distorted view of what findability means to them on the Internet. Findability is often focused around how businesses see themselves. They see themselves as their own niche phrases. They see themselves as their own name. What they don't realize is, from the searchers experience, it's all about the searcher, and what their pain is, and what their problem is. How to relate these between the business owner's ego, and how they see themselves, and the searchers path to pain, and how the two of them can meet - so getting them to meet in a way that is meaningful is what findability is all about.

Not necessarily about how the business owners see themselves, but purely connected with what searchers need, and that you can answer that specific need, especially from the niche standpoint. Search is the main thing because people trust that search box on Google or Bing or Yahoo, and they are going to put very long search terms in that search box, and they want a very custom response. How small business has responded to that is really what findability is all about.

Susan: We can talk more about searching these phrases that people type in, but first tell us why did you start your niche business? How did you go about that? What was your motivation?

Heather: I was working as a conversion manager for a .com company, and we were spending a lot of money blasting huge audiences, millions of viewers, millions of readers, millions of traffic, dual boards on highways - the whole traditional marketing method that that more people who see you, you are going to get a percentage of return from that group. And the larger the group, the better. Well, when I started working in Yahoo search marketing, we specifically trained advertisers about how to bypass that thinking, and so I got very, very interested in findability, especially because it was the opposite of traditional marketing. And traditional marketing states that the bigger the number, the better the return, and that does not apply to search marketing at all because users will go to Google, type in their specific phrase, and they look for a specific response based on what they wanted. They do not want to be sold.

People love their keyboards because they can escape all the advertisements that are not related to them, that do not speak to them personally. So I was motivated to start my niche business really out of the need of frustrated business owners who have spent a significant amount of money on search marketing efforts, and still weren't getting what we call "conversions" on their websites. They were getting lots of traffic, but the traffic was not converting into something that was meaningful. This is my 10th year in business, and I have been working with business owners to help redefine their understanding of how they get found and connected with a viable prospect on the Internet. When you sell a very specific product or service that only specifically markets to a group or niche you have got a really big connector. When you get connected and it's specific-industry, you can sell to them in such a hyperrelevant way that you are going to connect with them and turn business over, that was really my motivation.

Susan: That is a wonderful lead into talking about your niche marketing ideas and the ones that you use as your favorites. Obviously, you must do your own search marketing, but what else do you use that is effective for your business?

Heather: That is a great question. I do a lot of speaking and I do not just speak to any groups. I have had to get clear over the last five years I have been aggressively speaking. What kinds of groups are really going to resonate with my message? I can speak to the national plumbers association and I am glad to do it, but often times they are not big enough or they do not have the prowess to really to take on a search marketing initiative that is going to result in the kind of work I'm interested in. So what I have done, from the niche standpoint, is I found organizations primarily CEO organizations where I can go and speak to them for an hour to three hours at a time and we can focus on building a findability action plan for the company in a way that is meaningful at a CEO level. We don't go into a lot data to look into analysis, we don't do a lot of coding, rather we keep the it at a high level and strategic. And that has made a good sixfigure difference

in my business, when I went from, "I'll speak to anyone and everyone." CEOs, chief marketing officers, they know my message, and I'm able to really get business from clarifying my niche when speak to those sorts of audiences. And that has made a huge difference in my business.

Susan: So how long did it take before you established that you needed to niche yourself like that?

Heather: Oh my goodness, it was a good two or three years. I think I fell into the spell of, "I just love to speak." I think a lot of speakers, especially if they are industry matter experts, they just want to share their message. I'm a huge evangelist. Give me a soapbox and an audience and I'm "on." But for me it was about getting clear about the fact that I have a family who likes to see me on occasion, and I can't be on the road all the time. So questioning what is the best use of my time, if I'm going to leave my family. The more I spoke to CEOs, the more it resonated with them, and the more bottomline turnover we had from the prospect standpoint.

So then when I got called for speaking engagements, it became clear, and I had the right sort of questions to ask the event planners about who's in your audience? Are they decisionmakers? It became very easy for me to start separating what I thought was really high value it and a great opportunity, to what was the most highest value and the best outcome that I could expect from those particular audiences.

Susan: Fantastic. Now we talked a little bit earlier about these longer phrases with regard to searchability. Can you tell us a little bit more about that, and perhaps how you use it to market yourself?

Heather: Yeah, well we use a lot of keyword tools on the Internet, but the one that we use almost exclusively is something we call the Google Keyword Tool. If you type in "keyword tool" in Google, it's the first organic listing that pulls up. So it's pretty easy to find. And this tool will tell you how to connect with the searching audience.

So say I'm going to blog, and I want to make sure that my content reaches a specific kind of search. One of our clients is Parelli Natural Horsemanship. They have a very, very specific niche audience of horse lovers, and horse experts - people who are really devoted to their horses. So when they go to write a blog, say on "horse biting", they go to this Google Keyword Tool, they type in "biting horse, " and they can see all the different ways that people are looking for answers around horse biting, or horse trailing, or whatever might be right for that particular blog post.

Now that I know that there are 5, 600 searches a month under "horse biting problem" I can then title my blog post "Horse Biting Problem Answers Revealed, " then I've got the keyword in the title, and now I'm going to sprinkle that keyword

phrase "horse biting problem" throughout the body copy of my blog. So what happens here is now you've gone out to the Keyword Tool, you've asked a searching group how do they search for problems around biting with horses, you found a keyword phrase that is exactly how they search. You know it's got a nice amount of search volume, 5, 600 searches a month, and now you've written a blog post that connects the two of you together.

So oftentimes I think people are really frustrated with blogging because they feel like they're not really getting their voice out there. But the problem isn't just out there. Can your blog post speak, and be ranked in Google, to connect with the very nichebased audience, for example, "horse biting?"

When you get clear on how to connect the two together, that's when you really start seeing a relationship not only with people who care about your content, but people who also will eventually buy your books, buy your products, hire you as a consultant, whatever that might be.

Susan: Fantastic. You've done a lot with your business over the last ten years. What do you believe you're most proud of in terms of what you've accomplished?

Heather: Yeah, gosh, most proud of? I think I'm most proud of my staff. I think part of the big issue with being an entrepreneur, a nichepreneur, is that I think I should do it all myself. I'm the only who knows how to do this. I'm the only one who knows how to speak about my products. I'm the only who knows how to market this. And letting go of that, and being willing to bring staff in who are trainable, who are smart, who are eager. I now have 15 people on my staff whom I trust implicitly. They know my vision. They understand the philosophy. They know how I want the company represented, so I can now focus on being the evangelist for the company. And I know I've got key people in my paid search and my SEO, working in my social media departments, who are vital to me. I rely on them now. I think the reason I've grown as a business owner is because I've been willing to let go of the actual daytoday management, and be more the visionary - the thought leader.

I'm most proud of that because I know how hard it was for me. I just hired a vice president of operations, that's been excruciating for me, because I've been so hands on for so long, and now I just couldn't be there for my staff the way that was meaningful anymore, because I've been traveling so much. I had to find another me, someone who understood it at my level who was on the ground in my office. That's been another huge hurdle for me. So I would say I'm most proud of my staff and what we've created.

Susan: Yes, letting go that's such a big piece of being your own boss and you've got 15 people which is already a very large company for an entrepreneurtype operation, or a nichepreneur operation. But it's grown, as you say, suddenly you realize you need somebody to fill a certain role, and I'm sure it's really tough to

find the right person, because as you said, you try to find another you to take over that role.

Heather: Right. I'm never going to find her. Until they get cloning more worked out, that's just not working. I care very much about my family, as much as I care about my business, and you just have to at some point say, "you know what I can't be the webmaster, I can't be the marketer, I can't be the chief operating officer, I can't be the financial officer." At some point you've got to be able to delegate, and to be really proud of that delegation, and not see that as a flaw in your ability to manage everything.

Susan: I think that's a very important point because you're right, we often see it as a flaw. We think we're not able to do something anymore, whereas that's not the case. You follow some great people! JC Penny, when he let go of the ownership, he grew his business!

Heather: Right.

Susan: When Heather Lutze let go of her business she's growing!

Heather: And you know what? I'm happier too, Susan, because I was able to really give away what I don't really want to anymore, and focus on what I love. And being able to get that clarity and that focus in my own career has made me happier. Because I'm not doing everything that I don't want to do, but rather what I do want to do.

Isn't the whole point of being an entrepreneur, isn't to create your dream job? Isn't that why we're doing this?

Susan: Yes.

Heather: If I can't really, at the end of the day, create my dream job, why am I doing this?

Susan: I think that's a very important thing to remember and to keep focused on because it's very easy when you get into the every day, nuts and bolts, of what we have to do to lose focus of the dream, the reason why you're doing all of this.

Heather: Yeah! If you're so bogged down by accounting, and Quickbooks, and managing your own website, that's not a good use of your time! Although I can do all those things, there are people who are better than me at those things. And I want them on my team, even if they are contractors or consultants or vendors.

I think that's another thing I'm most proud of in my business too, Susan. It's really being open to asking for help when help is required. And not being so consumed by my own ego that I can figure it out myself.

Susan: Yes, that took me a long time to give myself permission to ask for help, and not feel that I have to do everything myself.

Heather: Well, I'm not embarrassed by asking for help, that that's a sign of my power, it's not a sign of my weakness.

Susan: So, let's talk about mistakes.

Heather: Yeah.

Susan: I'm sure you've made one or two in the 10 years you've been in business!

Heather: Absolutely not.

Susan: Are there any that you would be willing to share with us?

Heather: Oh, gosh! Where should I start? It was funny because I was watching an interview the other day on a true Hollywood story for a rock musician, I can't remember.

And he said, "I became successful when I stopped denying my own success." And I think that the biggest part of my failure was accurately acknowledging my own ability to be successful and to not be afraid anymore and to not be afraid of risk. And every time you take a step, it's a huge risk in a small business and it could be detrimental or life changing, right?

As an entrepreneur, when you take out that first line of credit to fund a project, that's a huge risk. When you add an employee, that's a huge risk. When you move into bigger office space, that's a huge risk. And I think the biggest failure, and why I didn't succeed quicker, is because I had a lot of negative self talk, and when I got over that and I said, "You know what? The risk is part of the game. You either go big or go home. Or go back to your cubicle because this is what being an entrepreneur is all about."

And so risk would probably be, I think, the scariest and the best part of being an entrepreneur. Because, you have to engage risk. You have to be able, and willing to relate with it. You got to love it. You have to be willing to understand the risks in engaging in all the steps you're going to have to move through to become successful.

And I think that that's been my biggest challenge, is overcoming my fear of risk. And the more I get clear about that, the more successful my business is.

Susan: Yes. It's as if I'm looking in the mirror as I'm talking to you because it's absolutely that fear of being successful. There's a fine line, the fear of failure, but also that real fear of being successful as well, that you can't even handle that success.

Heather: Right. And I can assure you that you adapt and you're so fulfilled when you do achieve those levels in your business. I think every entrepreneur sees a potential, I think most entrepreneurs are futurists. They see the potential, they know where they want to go. And when you start getting there, it feels great! And you have to jump over some pretty big hurdles to keep walking that path.

Susan: Absolutely.

Heather: Yeah.

Susan: So, let's end off with a golden nugget. If there was one piece of advice that you could give our listeners, what would that be?

Heather: I think for me it would be, surround yourself with advisors that you trust and are experts in their own right. I have surrounded myself with experts. I have a board of advisors. It's almost like a pseudo board of trustees or a board that takes care of my business that I go to when making big decisions.

We all get together on a regular basis and they all support my business. And those are the board of advisors that I trust, who are all specialty industry experts. That has really helped me through a lot of tough times and helped me to move through to better, more profitable times.

And having a board of advisors, no matter how big you are, is fantastic. And I reached out to people I admire, people I know, people who are already successful in their own right, and I leverage them on a weekly basis.

Susan: That's quite something. So, how do we find you, Heather? Do a little promo for yourself.

Heather: Sure! Well, you can always Google Heather Lutze, LUTZE on Google of course. Or you go to findability.com and you'll see all of our offerings. I'm writing a new book on social media for leadership teams. I think I'm going to call it "Chief Ignoring Officer" but it's a working title. And I'm really excited about the new book, and I'm so excited for 2011, it's going to be a great year.

Susan: Fantastic. So, thank you to my guest, Heather Lutze. Go and check out her website at findability.com and see her vast array of products and services. So listeners, my challenge to you is to take one idea you've heard today, to use it to help you get Rich in your Niche.

For more niche marketing ideas and coaching services, go to my website, richesinniches.com and read my blog. Until we meet again, this is Susan Friedmann, the Nichepreneur Coach.