

[INTRODUCTION]

Samantha Mabe: Welcome to Process to Profitability, a podcast all about the tools and strategies you need to serve your clients and grow your small business, hosted by me, Samantha Mabe of Lemon and the Sea. Join me as I chat with creative entrepreneurs and small business owners about how they built and grew their businesses and how you can do the same in a way that fits you. Let's get started.

Welcome to Episode One of Process to Profitability. Today I'm talking with my friend, Cinnamon Wolfe, all about using your blog to educate your clients. She gets into a lot of great topics like how she has used her blog in the past to reach and educate clients in the wedding industry and she is transitioning to be an educator for small business owners. We also talk about her process for blogging as well as some SEO tips that can help your blog get found online.

Cinnamon is a former corporate gal turned photographer, blogger and educator. She is an army wife, stepmom, pet mom and the friendliest introvert you'll ever meet. She is obsessed with helping others realize they are capable of so much more than they think they are. She's a self-proclaimed podcast junkie and hosts her own show with her husband where they chat with business owners about all things photography, business and blogging. Her life goals are as big as her Netflix obsession and she can always be bribed with skinny vanilla lattes and deep conversations. I hope you enjoy this episode.

[INTERVIEW]

Hi Cinnamon. Thanks for joining me today.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Hey Samantha. Thank you so much for having me. I'm so excited to be here.

Samantha Mabe: Cool. Why don't you tell us a little bit about who you are, where you're from and how you got started in your business.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Sure thing. So I am Cinnamon Wolfe and I am ... The 'where you're from' question is kind of difficult because I'm kind of from all over, but I'm originally from Albuquerque, New Mexico, that was where I was born and raised. And then for work I actually moved to Seattle, Washington and I spent some time there and that's where I met my husband and he's in the army. So because of that we ended up in a few different places. We've ended up in California and now we're in New Jersey and we'll be going back to Seattle probably next year some time. So I'm kind of from all over but I live in New Jersey now and I was born and raised in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

I do a few different things. I run Cinnamon Wolfe Photography, which is a wedding and family photography business based here in New Jersey. I also run an educational site called cinnamonwolfe.co, which is a photography business and blogging resources for thoughtful creatives. How I got started in all of this is

kind of a funny story because it was totally like a complete accident. I didn't really have dreams of being an entrepreneur. It was kind of always something that interested me, my dad is kind of an entrepreneurial spirit. But I went to college, I got my master's degree in human resources, I had a career in human resources for a long time.

And then when my husband and I moved to California we moved to a really small little town in the middle of the Mojave desert that really didn't have a lot of corporate-y type jobs. So I found myself without a job for the first time in a really long time and I was really looking forward to it. I was like: I'm just going to take some time and kind of just do things that I really enjoy doing. I had a personal blog at the time so I was going to spend some time doing that. I was going to learn to cook and I was going to just exercise all the time and ... I had big plans.

But instead, I ended up getting really bored and ended up going back to work kind of part-time, a very relaxed, very small kind of job at the church we were going to in human resources. I also at that time began becoming really interested in photography. A friend of mine had a camera that she didn't know how to use so I was like: Hey, let's kind of figure it out together. I just kind of dove in, which is kind of my nature. I really like to just really immerse myself when I'm learning something new. I started learning all about photography, really enjoyed the creative outlet that it brought me. And then, of course, a lot of people in my life started being interested in the fact that I was interested in photography because I could benefit them. So I started doing sessions and I started really kind of realizing that: Hey, this could actually be a business that I run myself. I don't have to necessarily work with someone else.

And so through the course of that happening, that's when Cinnamon Wolfe photography was born. I spent the couple of years that we were in California really working to grow that business and then we moved to New Jersey, which was a big change and a big challenge and so I started learning all other sorts of things about how to really effectively optimize my website. I got into some networking, some groups here in New Jersey. Started doing a lot of second shooting for weddings. That was kind of like how it all started. I've been kind of doing teaching here and there throughout my life, I guess. I taught some classes at the University of New Mexico. I taught some classes at Bellevue College throughout my time living in those places.

That's actually transitioned me into having kind of a passion for teaching the things that I've learned throughout the past four years of my business. That's kind of how cinnamonwolfe.co was born, it was born out of the need and the passion that I have to help educate others in a variety of different ways.

Samantha Mabe: Cool. I think ... It's funny that you mentioned that you got bored when you moved to California.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah.

Samantha Mabe: Because when I moved to Richmond I spent like two days unpacking my apartment and I was going to relax and I had some freelance stuff lined up but I was like: I'll get to that in a couple of weeks.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Right.

Samantha Mabe: I got so bored after like two days I was like: Nope, we're just going for it.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah. It's so funny how in actuality it's much different than what you ... You think it's going to be super great and then you're sitting on the couch twiddling your thumbs like: What do I do now?

Samantha Mabe: Yes. I think that a lot of entrepreneurs feel that way. We just have that spirit of we want to be doing something, we're not good at sitting around and doing nothing or watching TV all day.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Right.

Samantha Mabe: Although Netflix is always very tempting.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah. Maybe like one day a month sounds really good, but ...

Samantha Mabe: Yeah. So I know that you had started blogging on your Cinnamon Wolfe Photography and now you still have that but you've also moved over to the cinnamonwolfe.co.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Correct.

Samantha Mabe: It's funny because I actually read your blog post before I knew you were.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Oh really?

Samantha Mabe: I realized that after the fact. I was like: I have read some of her Squarespace blog posts and followed them.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Oh, that's so cool.

Samantha Mabe: How have you found that blogging has benefited you as a small business owner and how can it benefit others?

Cinnamon Wolfe: Oh gosh. Well, how long do you have? Because I really can't say enough about blogging. I feel like it's absolutely had the hugest impact on my business and my business would not be where it is today without the focus and attention that I spent on blogging, and all that to say that I don't necessarily ascribe to the theory that you have to have a blog in order to be successful. I think that there's many businesses out there that don't blog at all but they go about things a different way or maybe they have a different business model. But for creative

small business owners I think blogging can benefit you in multiple, like a million different ways.

I won't go into all of them, obviously, because that would take forever, but the first thing that I think is important to mention when it comes to blogging is that blogging really allows you to show your expertise and your knowledge on different subjects in a way that's very apparent. You're writing and showing pictures or whatever. Even with my photography blog, yes I was writing but the majority of the blog posts was my work, my actual photography work. I could show so much more of my work through a blog post than I could just on my homepage or my gallery page. Those pages were really meant to show off kind of my best work and the work that I wanted to continue to book, but I could showcase every aspect of a wedding day on a blog post or some of the different ... When I go about a family session I may not necessarily show a picture of the kids by themselves in my portfolio, but I can definitely show those in the blog posts.

You really get the opportunity to showcase your work in a broader way and your expertise, especially if you're blogging on subjects like tutorials or how-to subjects or even like client education. It really can increase your credibility with your potential future clients. If I'm hitting a website and I'm kind of maybe uncertain as to what this person is offering and then I go over to their blog and I see this treasure trove of information that's helpful to me, the credibility of that person has just increased ten-fold, which then will help them to book you, which is essentially what we're wanting, right? The sole purpose of being in business is to get clients who we can work with who will pay us the wages that we're looking for.

You can do all of that through a blog. There's just so many different ways that you can utilize your blog. It doesn't have to be boring, it doesn't have to be pages and pages and pages of content. I think one of the biggest struggles that I hear a lot of people when they approach the subject of blogging, they think that they have to be this amazing writer, like oh this like Shakespeare. And really it's not ... You don't. You don't have to be the best writer in the world. Does it help if you either enjoy writing or feel like you're good at writing? Sure, that's helpful but it's not the end-all, be-all. You don't have to be the most amazing writer in the world, you just have to be able to showcase your personality and your expertise and you can do that in a lot of different ways.

Samantha Mabe: Right.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah. And I was say that blogging for me, because I kind of skipped over this question, but you know everything, all of the business that I got when I moved to New Jersey from California I would say... I mean, it's hard to ... You can't totally grasp the exact number but I would say like probably 65 to 70% of that came because of my blog because people were either finding me on Google because I really was concentrating on optimizing my posts and trying to get found for certain search terms or it was because of me showing my knowledge

and expertise on various things like blogging or Squarespace. You mentioned that you saw some Squarespace posts.

I spent a lot of time when I first got to New Jersey talking a lot about Squarespace because I love Squarespace. I've been using it ever since I started my business and I tend to be kind of one of those people who's really into tech. A lot of people don't like that part of their business but I really do. I enjoy figuring things out. I enjoy the tinkering and figuring out how things work. I really enjoyed doing that with Squarespace so I started just writing blog posts on how to do things in Squarespace that people didn't know how to do and because of that I've gotten quite a few clients who've needed help with their Squarespace websites. It's through those things that you can really start to draw clients into your business by showing them the level of expertise that you have and just the credibility that you have as a business owner.

Samantha Mabe: You mentioned that you were able to optimize your posts for when you moved, but I think blogging is huge just in general for SEO and getting found on Google. I get asked that a lot for my web design clients is: How can I improve my SEO? How can I get to the top of those search result pages? I say some of it is time, some of it is doing the things that Google wants you to do, but a lot of it ... You have to have the content, you have to be helpful and sharing knowledge that people are looking for.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Exactly. Yeah, Google likes words and words live on your blog. They don't live as much on your homepage or your portfolio page or your 'about me' page. They are there, but you can only put so many.

Samantha Mabe: Right.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah.

Samantha Mabe: Awesome.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah.

Samantha Mabe: How can listeners find topics for their blogs that are going to serve their clients but also be something they actually want to write about? I feel like it seems like it's a hard balance because we are afraid that either we have to talk about really boring things that our clients would like or things that our clients are going to be like: That's weird. Why are you talking about that?

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah. So I think that when you're looking for topics the number one thing you really should be thinking about is: Will this benefit my reader or my potential clients. Because people are looking for help, that's why they go to the internet. They go to the internet, they go to Google looking for help for something, or if they are maybe thinking about booking you and maybe they're going back-and-forth between a couple of people, your blog is the perfect place for them to

determine: Are they actually going to be helping me with the problems that I have and if you have blog posts that helps them with maybe their smaller issues right away, they're going to trust you to help them with the bigger issues, right?

Samantha Mabe: Right.

Cinnamon Wolfe: One of the things that I like to tell people who are kind of struggling maybe with thinking of blog topics or not knowing what to write about, especially if those people already have some clients. This might not work if you're just like brand new and starting your business from day one, which you probably would want to wait a little bit to start a blog anyway, but think about the questions that your clients are asking you. So as you're working with a client and they're asking you questions about whatever they might be asking you about ...

A real popular, very easy example For me to share with you is if I'm dealing with a wedding client and we're getting up to their engagement session, I would say 100% of them are like: What do I wear? I don't know what to wear for my engagement session. How do I get ready? How does this all work? They don't know, right? This is the first, hopefully or maybe ... It doesn't have to be hopefully, but it could be the first time they've ever done this. People don't just go get pictures taken a lot so they don't know what to do, they have no idea. So they're asking you as the expert: How do I prepare for this?

If you're getting those questions often, those are the best questions ever to write a blog post about. It doesn't have to be boring. You can make it fun. You can integrate pictures of your past clients at their engagement sessions or maybe some past projects that you've worked on or you can do a video tutorial. I'm just trying to think through other subjects that people might be wondering about. But yeah, those pain points that your clients are asking you about that you are kind of tired of writing in an email back to them: This is how this works. This is how you prepare, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Send them a link to your blog post instead.

You can make the blog post really meaty. You can spend some time, maybe even more meaty than what you would have put in the email in the first place, and then you can just use it over and over and over again. Not only is that going to be helpful for the client but it's also going to be helpful for your SEO because you're redirecting people back to your website so they're going to be spending more time on your website and then maybe they might start clicking around and then Google's just going to up-level you, up-level you because it's seeing that you're a trusted source that people keep coming back to your website.

Samantha Mabe: Right.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah. So that's always what I try to think about when people are struggling with ideas. What you said is true: It is a fine balance and what do my clients want to hear and what do I actually want to write about. I would hope that those would

be kind of in line, that the things that your clients are asking questions about are things that you either know really well or that you have really strong opinions on, that you want to help them out with.

Samantha Mabe: Right.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah.

Samantha Mabe: I think it's important to remember that even if using something is really simple or something everybody knows, that's not actually the case.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Oh my gosh. So true.

Samantha Mabe: Especially for your clients because if they're hiring you to do something, provide them a service, then they clearly don't have the knowledge to do it themselves so those really simple topics are things you can write a blog post about quickly, easily and it's going to serve them really well because it's a question they may not even know that they had but that you can provide a lot of value in.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah, absolutely. That is so true. I think that's one of the hardest things for us as business owners who are kind of like in this world all day every day. We see so much and we begin to think that everybody knows what we know, but all it takes is for you to ask a friend of yours who is not in the creative business industry or maybe just doesn't have anything to do with this world. Just talk to them and you're going to find out that they don't know anything that you know, right? What starts to feel so obvious to us is really not obvious to the majority of the population. It can be kind of a struggle to kind of get out of that bubble, as I like to call it, but talking to people who are not in the creative industry can really help because then you can also start to get some ideas about what are people who don't know anything about this, what are their questions and how can I answer those questions?

Samantha Mabe: Right.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah.

Samantha Mabe: So how do you balance sort of sharing personal information on your blog and tutorials and really helpful information?

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah. So Cinnamon Wolfe Photography, I made it a rule to kind of weave in one personal post like a month usually was kind of my general goal. I think it's important to do that because if you're running a personality-based business, which most of us in the creative industry are, you are the face of your business and people want to get to know you. People want to know who you are, they want to know what you're about and they want to read stories about you. I typically like to keep my personal blog posts story-driven as opposed to like ... We went on a trip to wherever. I mean, maybe we did but I would want to

weave in a story that might be related to my clients so that they can relate to that as opposed to just kind of giving an update on what I did this weekend or whatever. That could work too, there's no really right or wrong, but the important thing to remember is that your clients are dealing with you, the person, right? And they want to know you and the more that they know you the more that they can trust you because they hopefully like you and what you're sharing.

I would say ... On cinnamonwolfe.co I don't do personal posts as often and I think the reason for that, I haven't really like really thought about it and I've actually been thinking about: Do I want to integrate some personal posts on cinnamonwolfe.co. For the most part all of my posts on there are more technical-driven, but because of new fun things like insta-stories, there's different ways that you can let people know about your personality and who you are through social media.

I've been focusing more lately on kind of sharing some of my personal life and my dog and me and my husband. We have more fun on insta-stories as opposed to me sharing a lot of personal information through my blog. I'm not totally opposed to it but I haven't really gone down that road with cinnamonwolfe.co just yet. But part of the reason for that is with my photography business I'm dealing more with couples who are probably ... Obviously they're about to get married and so sharing personal information about me and my husband, that's very relatable to them. Stories about my first year in marriage or five lessons I've learned, those type of things, or the story of how me and Paul met.

I have a whole series of blog posts that go through how we met and kind of our first date and all of those things because those are very relatable to couples who are about to get married. So yeah, I think I kind of just rambled on there but ...

Samantha Mabe:

That makes sense though because you're looking at who it is that you're trying to talk to and figuring out how a personal story might be able to relate to them so on a wedding blog it makes sense to share about your wedding and sort of your life together whereas on a business blog maybe those stories are more related to how you started your business and business lessons that you've learned and it's still your personality and your life but it relates back to the audience, who is actually checking it out and trying to learn from you.

You made a good point about social media: There's a lot more freedom to share things there that can be more personal and that's what people expect on those places. If you share a picture of your kids or your dog that's not going to feel really out of place.

Cinnamon Wolfe:

Exactly. Right. Yeah. If I were to throw a post into cinnamonwolfe.co right now that was like Paul and I's weekend, it would feel weird because it just doesn't really fit in with the other content. But I do, and I will say this, I am trying to incorporate more and more video into my blog posts for a couple of reasons: Because video is just popular now, everybody's kind of interested in video, and

you are able to showcase your personality through video as well. Even though you may not be talking about personal subjects, if you're showing your face and your inflection and ... I like to kind of joke around a lot, I say silly things. All of that is my personality and being able to showcase that through video as well is very helpful and it makes more sense in context of a technical blog post.

Samantha Mabe: Right.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah.

Samantha Mabe: I think it's all about figuring out the best way to balance the information that you're sharing and also have it be personal. We don't have to write blog posts that feel like the five-paragraph essays from high school, which gives you a lot of freedom to write the way that you'd actually talk and how people are going to interact with you if they hire you or they get on call.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah. Absolutely. That's one of the things I also like to tell people who are kind of like: Oh, I don't know if I should blog or I feel like I'm not good at writing and I'm not a writer and whatever. One of the biggest encouragements I tell them is: Don't just ... Write like you talk. You're not writing a college essay. I use all sorts of weird things in my blog posts that are things that I would say. I get a lot of compliments about that too. I get a lot of people telling me that they've read my posts and then they meet me in person or they hear me talk and they're like: You sound exactly the same. It's almost like you were talking to me. I don't know that that's necessarily a skill. Just write it, and if you feel like: I want to delete this because I feel like I'm going to get a bad grade on my paper, then don't. Don't delete it. Leave it there.

Samantha Mabe: Yes. We don't have to follow all the grammar rules.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Exactly.

Samantha Mabe: Although things should be spelled correctly. That's something I struggle with, but ...

Cinnamon Wolfe: I agree. Unless you're trying to make a point with the misspelling, but for the most part, yes, make sure you have correct word skills so people know what you're actually talking about.

Samantha Mabe: How often do you think that people should be blogging?

Cinnamon Wolfe: That's a good question. I think it really depends on a couple of different things: It depends on your goal, like what you're trying to accomplish with your blog, and it depends probably on your audience, what you're trying to talk about. For photographers, some of that may vary based on the number of sessions that you have because I would say most photographers try to at least blog every session that they do. So if you're in the middle of dead season and you don't

have any weddings, the number of blogs that you may put out there may be different than when you're in the height of wedding season and you're just shooting engagements sessions and weddings all the time.

But in general I would say that for most creative online business owners I would say once a week is a really good starting place, and if once a week even feels may be overwhelming, go twice a month. Make it consistent, that's probably more important. If you decide that you're going to post once a week, pick a day Monday through Thursday because those are the best blogging days and always post on that day and try to do it at the same time. With every website platform out there you can typically schedule your blog posts ahead of time so you don't really have to worry about waking up in the morning and posting the blog post, you can just schedule it.

If you're going to be picking once a week, which I would say, again, is a good starting place, choose Tuesday mornings at 8 a.m. and that's when you're going to blog every single week. You also want to make sure that you are really focusing on ... Like I said, it kind of depends on what your goals are with blogging. If you are going to be only posting once a week, try to make that post substantial, like make it meaty. Give readers a lot to look at. Don't post once a week and only have it be two paragraphs. You want it to be relatively substantial so if that is feeling overwhelming to you then, like I said, knock it down to twice a month and then make sure that you're just focusing on all the different things that you want to fit in that blog post and then make sure that it's optimized.

We're really looking at quality over quantity in this instance because Google is really going to prioritize the quality content. Google's not going to care if you're pumping out five posts a week and nobody cares about what you're writing about and none of that content is helpful. Google is going to prioritize you. Even if you're doing once a month. I know some big-time bloggers or content marketers who post once a month and those posts are intense, it might actually take you a month to read them. But there's so much good, valuable content in that one post that people keep coming back to and people share that Google's just automatically going to up-level that because it's actually providing answers that people are looking for.

Don't get hung up on: I feel like I need to be posting four or five times a week. That's really hard to do unless you have somebody helping you, somebody that you're outsourcing different things to. So definitely try to keep it ... I would say consistent is more important and substantial is probably the next biggest thing you want to be paying attention to.

Samantha Mabe: Yeah. You mention optimizing your posts. Do you have any tips for people who aren't sure how to get started with optimizing their posts to make it easy and not feel like really intimidating and getting into the nitty-gritty of the details?

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah. Definitely. I would say there's three main things that I would focus on when you're thinking about optimizing your blog posts. The first one is to make sure that your URL has some keywords in it or that it's a keyword-rich URL. If that sounds like complete Greek to you, let me help you understand what that means a little bit. When you're thinking about being found on Google for a certain thing that people might be typing into the search bar, that's a keyword or a keyword phrase. For me that might be like 'New Jersey wedding photographer'. If I'm really wanting Google to return my website when somebody types in 'New Jersey wedding photographer' into Google, then those are the keywords that I want to start thinking about.

Now, you might want to think about ... And again, this is very different and keyword research is a whole big other topic, but you want to make sure that whatever those keywords are that are related to what's in your post, you want to make sure that it's ... You don't want to just include keywords that have nothing to do with what you're actually writing about because then maybe your post is returned and then it has absolutely nothing to do with what the person was searching for and so Google's going to be like: Uh, uh, uh that's not going to work.

Samantha Mabe: Yes. Google is smart, it knows.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yes, it knows, it definitely knows. We've been there too, right? We've searched on Google and clicked on something that had nothing to do with what we searched for and so that's frustrating to us, right?

Samantha Mabe: Yeah.

Cinnamon Wolfe: You want to make sure that you're kind of thinking through the experience of the person who's looking for that thing. Those keywords, you want to make sure that those keywords are in the actual URL of your blog post. That's probably one of the biggest ways that you can optimize your blog posts.

One of the second ways is to make sure that any images that you have in your blog posts also have what's called alternative text or alt text attached to them. You add that alt text in a couple of different ways based on whatever platform you're working with. That alternative text is basically like ... What's a good way to describe it? Kind of like a way for Google to read the image because Google can't see what is on the front of a JPEG image. It doesn't know what the image is about and so we as blog posts creators have to go in and tell Google what that image is and we do that through the method of alternative text.

If you have a picture, I'm actually looking at a picture of a couple on my wall right now, an engaged couple that I have a picture hanging up. Google doesn't know what's on that image so I might type in the alternative text: Engaged couple sitting in front of a barn wearing blue shirts, because that's what the image is. I might include romantically looking at each other or something like

that. Because that's a way that you can tell Google what that image actually is, which will help you in search results as well. Any sort of images that you have on your blog posts you want to make sure that you're adding that alternative text so that Google knows what those images are.

The third thing is that you want to make use of header text. This is something that I think a lot of people either forget about or they don't know about. Using header text is really important because Google gives priority to header text. If you have ... In WordPress and Squarespace it works kind of similarly but a little bit differently as well. If you want a good example of this, just go to one of my blog posts and I'm sure, Samantha, you probably do the same thing. You'll see the differences in the header text.

Samantha Mabe: Yeah.

Cinnamon Wolfe: The one thing that is really important that a lot of people probably, it's subconscious, they don't actually realize it, is that when you're reading through a blog post, header text makes it very easy for your reader to figure out what's going on, to orientate themselves to the actual content in the blog post because they can quickly see, you know, because we all skim. No one has time to read super long blog posts all day long.

We want to skim through the posts and see: Is this content relevant to what I'm looking for? Maybe this paragraph is interesting to me but this paragraph is not. Header text helps you do that and Google knows that and that's why Google prioritizes header text. If you're including header text in your blog posts, it's a good way to separate out the content that you have in your blog posts and also make sure that those headers that you're using are also potentially keywords that would be helpful when somebody is searching For the content that you are providing in your blog post.

Samantha Mabe: Right. Yeah. That makes sense. It's a pretty easy thing to do, especially on Squarespace, you just change that to the header ...

Cinnamon Wolfe: Header one, two or three.

Samantha Mabe: Right. It's not like you were having to do anything complicated. You just change it, square space automatically then tells Google on the back-end business header text, it's more important.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Exactly. Yeah. I definitely read command that for every blog post.

Samantha Mabe: Yes.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Those three things. There's other ways that you can optimize your blog posts as well, but I would say those are the top three things that if you're kind of just getting started with optimizing your content to pay attention to.

Samantha Mabe: Right. Those are pretty easy things once you sort of know where you go about changing those to make sure you do and you just make it a part of your process.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Exactly.

Samantha Mabe: Can you give us an outline of your process, sort of brainstorming a blog post idea to actually getting it published.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Sure. Yeah. I brainstorm subjects for my blog posts kind of all the time, especially when I'm driving because they just come to me usually because my mind is just thinking of things. I have a notes app on my phone that I usually will jot things down really quickly if I'm not going to be near a computer anytime soon, just so I don't forget it and I'll feel better if I've written it down so that I know that it's not going to just fly out of my brain and I won't remember. I'm sure there's probably at least 20 blog posts that were so good and they're just out there in the ether land now that I can remember.

But yeah, so then I will ... When I'm back at my computer and I have the ability to kind of dump all of those thoughts or ideas, or sometimes I'll just brainstorm while I'm sitting at my computer. I'll just take 10 to 15 minutes and just kind of think really deeply about different subjects that I might want to talk about or subjects that I think that my clients might want to read about and I'll just make notes. Currently I'm using CoSchedule to kind of plan out my blog calendar so I can make those different ... I don't even know what they're called, but like there's different notes in CoSchedule for each blog post idea.

So then what I'll do in CoSchedule as well, I will write out a very brief outline for what just my thought process is around the content for that specific post. That's super brief, like literally it's like maybe five bullet points of what I might want to actually flesh out in that actual blog post. I'll do that probably for quite a few different ideas all at once. So I'm never really liked just: Oh, I have this idea, and then I just write the whole blog post. That doesn't rarely ever happen. I don't know that that's ever happened. It's kind of like a process of going through different stages.

Once I have my outlines kind of written, now it's a little bit easier to actually go through and flesh out the content because I'm not doing all that heavy lifting and all that heavy thinking all at the same time for multiple posts. Once I have ... Maybe I'll have like 10 ideas down and all of them are already outlined, so now I'll look at my blog calendar and I see that I have a spot coming up where I need to write a blog post, I can just pull one of those ideas and start to flesh it out, right? I'll start under each of the five, six, seven bullet points I already have listed, I will start writing out the content for each one of those things so that the whole post itself is completely fleshed out all those ideas. If I need to be taking screenshots or anything like that, I'll be doing that at the same time and kind of organizing all of that together.

Usually I will have my graphic designer ... Like if I have maybe five or six posts that I know that I have an idea for, I'll send her those five titles so that she can create graphics for those and then she'll send them back to me and then I can organize then with each post so that they're ready to go when I'm ready to actually make the post.

Once I have the post kind of all written now, that's when I'll transfer everything over to Squarespace. I will open up Squarespace and I'll put in my title and then I'll put in ... I'll usually copy and paste the content, format everything so that it looks good. All my header text is included, all the pictures are included, I add my alt text, kind of all the back-end stuff that you do to make a post ready to go and pretty. Then I'll schedule it in Squarespace. I'm usually doing that ... I try to schedule posts at least a month in advance, sometimes that ends up being like two weeks in advance. Sometimes it does happen where I do it the next day, it just depends on what's going on in my life. I try not to be too hard on myself, though.

Then I will schedule out the social media. So I can do that in CoSchedule as well. I will copy the link over and then I'll make kind of the prompts for my social media that are going to be associated with that post. It's really nice in CoSchedule because it does post everything out for you and you can make a schedule for it so that it will do it that day, the next day, two weeks from now, a month from now, all at once so you don't have to go back, which is really nice.

Then I just have everything scheduled and ready to go. I will then usually post ... I'll schedule a picture on Instagram as well that's related to the blog post so I don't have to think about that on the same day either, like: Oh, what was on the blog today? I can't remember what I want to put a picture of. I'll try to do that ahead of time as well. And then when the day comes I'll try to check everything to make sure everything posted out correctly and then I'll just engage with any comments that come in through social media.

Samantha Mabe: It makes it easy to not have to rush at the last minute.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah. So true.

Samantha Mabe: Yeah. And then if you have all your ideas written down and you're writing out one of them, this happens to me a lot, I'm like: I'm not actually feeling inspired by this idea, I'll just switch to something else.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Right. Exactly. Yeah. That's kind of the beauty of having lots of different ideas in front of you because ..And. And there's nothing wrong with that, we've all been there. We think of an idea and we're like: Oh, that could be really good, and then when you're sitting down in the moment to do it you're not feeling inspired by it exactly. It's hard to really put some time into it because you're just like: Ugh, I'm not feeling this right now. Maybe you will be again at some point

or maybe that was just an idea that was an idea and was never meant to actually go anywhere, and that's okay too.

Samantha Mabe: Right.

Cinnamon Wolfe: So yeah.

Samantha Mabe: Yeah. Okay. Did you have anything else you wanted to share about blogging and educating your clients before we get to the wrap-up questions?

Cinnamon Wolfe: I guess I would just want to say, I just want to offer some encouragement to people who feel like blogging might be kind of frustrating or like it's not going to get them anywhere. Blogging is definitely a long-term process, it's not something that's going to show you really super quick results. My encouragement is just to stick with it because you will see the results eventually. It's a lot of hard work but the hard work, it really does pay off. I would say right now in my time in New Jersey ... We're almost two years here in New Jersey, it'll be two years in July, but I would actually say ... It's been really interesting the past probably four months. Every single inquiry that I've gotten for a family or wedding session has been through Google, every single one.

Samantha Mabe: Wow.

Cinnamon Wolfe: It's taken a while to get to that point, but it has paid off. A lot of my other, through cinnamonwolfe.co and some of the education I've done on blogging and Squarespace, that's just paid off, I can't even tell you, like ten-fold because of the time and effort that I've put into getting some of those posts out there into Google, into Pinterest so that people can find me. So stick with it. That's my encouragement, is just stick with it. It will pay off. Try not to get too frustrated. If you get frustrated just send me an email and I'll encourage you.

Samantha Mabe: Yeah. That's good to know, especially if you feel like you're not getting comments and people aren't reading. It always surprises me when somebody will come back and say: Oh, I've been following you for years, since you started. I'll be like: I did not know that people even knew I was out there.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Right. Yeah. It's interesting. I would say that it's a trend lately that people are not commenting on blog posts as much as they used to. Definitely I feel like a few years ago it was a much bigger trend to comment on blog posts and it's not as much now, so if you're not getting any comments don't get too frustrated. Pay attention to your Google analytics, that will show you a better picture of how many people are actually landing on your blog posts and reading through them. Don't get frustrated if you're not getting comments.

Samantha Mabe: Yeah.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah.

Samantha Mabe: Good. Okay. Why is serving your clients well so important to your business?

Cinnamon Wolfe: Oh gosh, because then they tell their friends. I mean, yeah. I always look at ... I've spent a lot of time working in customer service jobs throughout my years of working and then being a business owner. I think it's just ... We've had those experiences where we've gone somewhere to buy something or do something and we've been treated poorly. Those experiences, they stay with you and they create a lot of negative word-of-mouth for sure. I can't remember the exact statistic, but I remember reading somewhere that people will share a negative experience with a business like 10 times more than they'll share a positive one.

That, I think ... Not only does it drive me but also just treating people like you want to be treated I think is an important way to live just in general. That's kind of my mantra and life is like: Well, I can't complain if I'm treating people poorly even though they're treating me poorly back. You kind of get what you put out there.

Serving your clients well, not only does it make you feel good because you feel like you've done a good job, but you have made them feel valued. You have provided them a good service and you've given them a reason to prop you up with their friends, people that they know. They'll share about the great experience that they had with you, especially if you do some stuff that's kind of unique or out-of-the-box, that makes it even more likely that the going to share about you. It just makes people feel good. I think that is just really super important, especially when running a business. Even if it doesn't turn into any future business for you, at least you know that you've taken care of people and that you've helped them solve a problem. I think that's really important.

Samantha Mabe: Yeah. Especially because most of us are running businesses that are ... It's just us or it's us and a couple of people, We're the face of our business. There is not really very much wiggle room for treating people badly ...

Cinnamon Wolfe: There is not.

Samantha Mabe: ... And getting bad word-of-mouth out there.

Cinnamon Wolfe: So true.

Samantha Mabe: It's not like we're these huge companies that people are going to come buy stuff from us anyway.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Right. Exactly. Yeah. One negative experience can really put a damper on your growth for sure.

Samantha Mabe: Yeah. All right. Tell me two things that you're loving right now. They can be business or life.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Hmm. Let's see, two things. One thing that I've recently discovered that I'm still kind of getting the hang of but I'm really liking it so far is the new social media scheduling program called Social Queue. I don't know if you've heard of it. Have you heard of it?

Samantha Mabe: I've heard of that, but I haven't really looked at it.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah. Or actually SmarterQueue, sorry. Not Social Queue, SmarterQueue. It's kind of like Edgar, or Meet Edgar, where you kind of load it up with your posts, different things that you've written and also other interesting content that maybe is relatable to the audience that you're trying to serve. You can just kind of load it up into the queue and then it will just post out for you on a regular schedule.

Samantha Mabe: Okay.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Then it will rotate through all of those posts. I've got it kind of set up, like I haven't ... I need to go back in and add stuff to it because I put like an initial load of stuff in there and now I need to kind of go and add in. It's really nice because you can add in like RSS feeds from different places that you maybe read blog posts a lot or that you think your audience might be interested to read those posts as well. Then you can just add them into the queue right from the RSS feed, which is super easy.

You can add in things from Twitter and all sorts of things. It connects to all of your accounts. They're in the process of, I think, hooking up with Pinterest, which I'm really excited about because I think that would be amazing.

Samantha Mabe: Yeah.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah, but for the most part it's working out really well for me and I'm liking kind of where it's going, but again I've only been using it for a couple of weeks so I'm not like an expert on it or anything, but I'm liking it so far. The price point is much lower than Meet Edgar so that will be interesting to see kind of how that plays out because I think it does essentially the same thing.

Let's see, what else. I also ... Todoist. I'm a huge Todoist fan. I feel like Todoist doesn't get a lot of love in the creative industry and I'm not sure why because I love it, I think it's great. It's a task manager, basically, and it's very simple. It doesn't have a lot of bells and whistles, which I think is one of the reasons why I like it so much because it doesn't distract me or confuse me. I can create projects.

I have a lot of different things that I am working on so I can create different projects that have specific tasks in them. I can color code them. It syncs up with my Google calendar. I can copy ... I make like a wedding workflow and then I can copy that onto a new ... When I book a new bride I can copy the whole thing so

it saves me a bunch of time. I just love it. It keeps me on track, it keeps me focused. I look at it every single day. I check things off, which is always fun. I feel very productive.

Samantha Mabe: Yeah.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah, so I'm loving Todoist. Like I said, I don't hear a lot of people talking about it in the creative space. A lot of people talk about Asana or Trello, which are both great products, they just haven't worked for me the same way that I wanted to and so, yeah. Todoist is kind of my jam. I love it.

Samantha Mabe: Okay.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah.

Samantha Mabe: So what are you working on? What's coming up in the future that people can check out?

Cinnamon Wolfe: Oh gosh. Well I just launched my supply closet, which I'm really excited about. I've been working on it for a long time and it's finally out there in the world, which is great, it's a great feeling. It's a product that's available on my cinnamonwolfe.co website. It's basically a closet, a supply closet full of good stuff. I love the name. When you're working at like a corporate job and you need something, that's where you go, you go to the supply closet, you get your pens, you get your paper, you get your sticky notes, you get your folders, you get whatever you need, right?

Samantha Mabe: That's my favorite part of the business.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah. When you're a creative business owner you don't really have that. There are all sorts of things, I think, that we need as creative business owners that they're out there but they're kind of all over the place. Everything that's in the closet you can find somewhere else, but again it's all over the place. Different people are selling different things. Email templates and blog graphic templates and hashtag guides and workflows.

It's just all of that in one place that's easy to find. Once you subscribe to the closet you can just access it whenever you want. I also have some really cool Instagram quotes and stock photos in there as well because we all need a good Instagram quote every now and then and I never know where to find them. You can find them sometimes through Instagram itself but then sometimes they don't look that great and then I don't really like to scroll through Google looking for them. I just have a lot of them included in the closet as well so that if you are needing something to post in a pinch you can just go in there, grab it and put it on your Instagram or you can take the images that are in there and schedule them out.

So yeah, it's a really cool thing. I'm really excited to see where it goes. I think it's going to be really helpful for a lot of people and it's going to grow over time. I have plans to include even more stuff into the closet to make it a really valuable resource for people that they can access whenever they need something from the closet. That's kind of the main thing that I'm working on now.

My husband and I, we run Focused Podcasts, which we still have lots of good stuff in store for that as well coming up. So we're excited about that. Like I mentioned before, we're going to be moving probably within the next eight to nine months and so that's kind of on the forefront and we're thinking through what that looks like from a business perspective and getting transitioned and finally settling down. We haven't been settled really since we got married and so that's going to be kind of new and exciting and we can't wait.

Samantha Mabe: Yeah. Lots of exciting stuff.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah. It's going to be a fun year.

Samantha Mabe: Okay.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Yeah.

Samantha Mabe: Where can people find you online?

Cinnamon Wolfe: So I would definitely say cinnamonwolfe.co is probably the best place you can get in touch with me, which is www.cinnamonwolfe.co and same on Instagram, that's where I kind of hang out most of the time, Instagram cinnamonwolfe.co. Yeah, that's where you can find me.

Samantha Mabe: All right.

Cinnamon Wolfe: Cool.

Samantha Mabe: Awesome. Thanks so much for joining me.

Cinnamon Wolfe: No, thank you for having me. This has been a lot of fun.

Samantha Mabe: Yeah.

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