



Marketing Moxie Podcast

Episode 30: Breaking the Rules of Opt-ins with Makenna Johnston

Show notes at: <http://www.maggiepatterson.com/episode30>

MAGGIE: Welcome to Marketing Moxie, Episode #30.

INTRO: Welcome to Marketing Moxie with Maggie Patterson where we get down and dirty on all things marketing for entrepreneurs. Maggie takes a practical, no holds barred approach to helping you take action on what matters to your business, all with her signature moxie and sass. Now it's time to roll up your sleeves and dive in.

MAGGIE: Hey, everyone. This week we are on Episode #30. Can you believe it? I'm super excited to have you join me today, and we are going to talk about another unconventional tactic. We are going to talk with business strategist and bliss coach, Makenna Johnston, and she's going to share how she did free weekly coaching to help build her business. I really love what she did, and I think that there are some really good learnings from our conversation, so let's go ahead and dive in.

Hey, everyone! I want you to join me in welcoming Makenna Johnston. And she is here today as part of the Unconventional Tactics series. Makenna and I got to talking in, actually, the playground group, and she shared something I thought was a little different she was doing with her free calls. Makenna, why don't you just kind of fill me in on these free calls you were doing and how you structure them because I like how you've leveraged your time in this model.

MAKENNA: Hi! Well, I started my free calls as my opt-in because I didn't want to have any other opt-in, and I had a slurry of free ebooks that I hadn't read, and I was already in a lot of Facebook groups. And so I figured what better

way to get people to opt-in to my list than to offer them free coaching once a week. It was once a week, and now it's once a month.

But it started as a once a week, full-on strategy call, and everybody who showed up got to ask one question, and sometimes that was 20, and sometimes that was 2. It was a really great tool to get people to want more because, even if there were only two, I didn't let them ask more than one question. So they got one question answered, and then I sent them on their merry way.

They could listen in if they wanted to or not. That was up to them. They could just come in and ask a question and go, or they could listen in to the whole conversation. So it just felt like a really good opportunity to give people a sense of my style without doing extra discovery sessions. In a lot of ways I was able to stop doing discovery sessions for people who came to the weekly free calls, which was AWESOME.

MAGGIE: I think the beauty of this too, and this is what really appeals to me because I was like, this is cool, I should do this, because instead of getting on the phone one by one with all these people who really, A, aren't sure or, B, have no intention of ever hiring you, this is just an elegant way of kind of dealing with that whole situation without giving up all these 15 or 20-minute blocks of time in your day.

MAKENNA: Yeah, and it was really great because it allowed people to also talk to each other who had been on Facebook. Oftentimes people who had been, you know, the way serendipity works, people who had been talking on Facebook would both end up on the same call. They would be like, oh, my gosh; it's you! This is the first time I've heard your voice! And so it was a way to kind of take the community off the screen and really add some dynamic touches to it. But it truly was a timesaver also.

I won't lie. I still have to do discovery sessions, but I try to convince people to come to a freebee call before they sign up for a discovery session, and I try to keep my discovery sessions more along the lines of a similar thing of: you've already asked a couple questions. You know how I work, so you can ask one more today, and then I'm going to jump into my sales pitch. It streamlined my discovery sessions into more being: so tell me actually how your package works in your words rather than a "discovery sessions" to get to know you.

MAGGIE: Yeah, and it's also just a great way of warming people up, and you're creating this -- my project manager would be all over this because you've created a really strong funnel then, so by the time somebody gets to that discovery session, the time is well used.

MAKENNA: Yes. I was a former project manager myself. That was one of the reasons why I thought of it. You know, free coaching, a lot of people do free coaching calls, but I really tried to structure it as a weekly opportunity for a while because it was a way to really offer a ton of value as an opt-in. Of course, per usual, opt-ins, not everybody took advantage of it.

But the people who did become really dedicated evangelists of my brand and evangelists of my work. I was able to get good testimonials even from just their one question on these weekly calls. The reason why I stopped doing them weekly is because I got booked out of my one-on-one sessions, and so I didn't really need to keep doing weeklies. I switched to the monthly model and it still works as a great opt-in, and it's still a high level thing that people can put tangible value on, but it also is still a lot less of my time, which has been awesome.

MAGGIE: I think, for the listeners, there's kind of a couple really good lessons there I want to key in on. Number one is about the opt-in. The opt-in works because it has the people taking action instead of just one more PDF in your email, which, Makenna, you alluded to that in the beginning. You have all these ebooks that you haven't actually read, so how can you make it more active? How can you reflect your personality? How can people get to know you and shorten that time for them to trust you?

Then I think the second lesson is just about giving that ability, the time and space for your personality to really shine so they know before they even get to a discovery session, like, is Makenna the right fit for me or not.

MAKENNA: Yeah, that's been really awesome for me. When I started doing these, everybody, everybody balked. I think that my coach almost threw a coronary. She was just -- everybody was beside themselves in the mastermind group I'm in. And I said I'm going to do this because I don't want to make another ebook.

MAGGIE: Yeah.

MAKENNA: It's work. And they said, and this works too, but this is more time. But it might help. And it turns out that it was really effective. And it's been fun to see other people use similar strategies because they see that it works. It was really -- it was a big thing to put myself out on a limb for because it was an hour of my time a week. And that's time I could have used doing a lot of other things. But it turns out it was a really good investment of my time.

MAGGIE: It's interesting how people were reacting to it because, at the end of the day, doing free stuff is scary for people because we talk about boundaries and respecting our time and now devaluing our services. How did you go from actually giving them this, basically this free time with you, to booking yourself out so that you didn't have to continue doing these as frequently?

MAKENNA: Well, I think that I spent a lot of time investing. I spent a lot of investment of my time on making my one-on-one sales page and my package really desirable. And I worked with other sales page kind of gurus, so to speak, on helping with that. I didn't hire a copywriter. I DIY'd it, but I did hire someone to do a review of it, which was super affordable and worth every penny. It was \$50.

MAGGIE: Yep, money well spent, second set of eyes.

MAKENNA: Yes, totally, and we spent an hour kind of just dissecting it and just moving certain things around and beefing up how I talked about it. So I have that, and so whenever someone would say, "But I have more questions," I'd be like, well, I do one-on-ones, and I still have space, and so I would shoot them that way. I also made sure that I didn't offer recordings of the calls.

MAGGIE: Yeah.

MAKENNA: Either you were there or you weren't, which was really helpful to get people there. At first I was offering recordings, and nobody was showing up, which kind of made the recording useless anyway. So I said, you know what? I'm just going to do this live, and if you're not there, you're not there. The end.

MAGGIE: Yeah.

MAKENNA: And so that was really helpful, those two things. Then also, in a lot of ways it was just that the opt-in grew my list so quickly when I started it that it really helped me reach the audience I was trying to reach. It was less that my time really became, like those people became clients. But it was, as my list grew, my client base grew, and that was my main catalyst for getting people on the list.

MAGGIE: And I think that there's something interesting to that because I do think that most people I know, and I'm sure you experience this, is I am a lot pickier. I know my friends are a lot pickier about giving out email addresses.

MAKENNA: Mm-hmm.

MAGGIE: But you were promising me something that has a direct, immediate return to me and my business. All of a sudden there's this urgency created where I'm like, okay, yeah, I'll give you my email. No problem.

MAKENNA: Yep, totally, and it's interesting. I've been testing different verbiage, and right now my current verbiage on my website is not working, so I'm going back to my older verbiage because at first I was just calling out the fact that free coaching every week, and I had the time. And so that was what worked best. And so I have to go back to that model.

I was trying to downplay it a little bit. I don't know why. I was just trying to test some things. But it was true that showing that value very quickly was very helpful. And so, yes, that worked really well.

MAGGIE: Cool. So would you say -- like, Makenna, I'd love to know just from this because these are all unconventional tactics, and you're kind of boldly going where people aren't. Were there any downsides to doing this, in

your mind, or kind of pitfalls along the way you thought, ooh, I wish I thought about that a little bit more?

MAKENNA: You know, not really. I really wish I could say there was because that would be a great learning, but for me it was a really powerful lesson, and it was a really powerful battleground for my coaching skills too. It was a really good way to test rapid fire coaching. And I was able to build an entire product around this.

Actually, one of my products is now weekly calls in a larger group format, and so there was a huge upside. The downside in some ways was, because it worked so well for free, I thought it would work really well in a paid model, like, at a really low level, several hundred dollars. And I proved that that was not as effective as I thought it would be. My launch was not lovely. It wasn't awful either, but it wasn't what I expected it to be. There wasn't a run on the course because it's an ongoing thing. I'd say that's the only downside is that I was like, well, if it works for free, I bet it'll work for cheap, and that was not the case.

MAGGIE: Yeah, there's kind of an interesting whole dynamic there of free and cheap. Sometimes cheap is not good.

MAKENNA: It's true.

MAGGIE: Someone will consume it for free or they'll consume it for a lot, but they will not consume it for cheap because, cheap, you go, oh, maybe it's not that good.

MAKENNA: Yeah, and it's been interesting because I just launched the program, and I'm only in my first week, and the people who did pay were like this -- I would have paid for just one call for this price. Hopefully they'll be the evangelists eventually, and that'll be great.

MAGGIE: Yeah.

MAKENNA: But it's true. I really, really thought that, oh, you know, if it worked free, cheap would be great, and it was definitely not the case.

MAGGIE: Yeah, I love that learning. Free does not equal -- going to work as cheap.

MAKENNA: Nope.

MAGGIE: I think, when we're all looking at pricing things in our business, it's: how much will the market bear? How much is it worth? How much are you worth? But also too, what is the perception, and what does this say about your brand and your brand story, ultimately?

MAKENNA: Totally, and that was a very interesting lesson because part of my brand story for so long was trying to offer affordable options for coaching.

MAGGIE: Yep.

MAKENNA: And that had worked really super well when I was doing scholarships for my one-on-one, but that did not translate. I don't do all scholarships. I take one to two total at a time, which means that if they stick around for a year, well, then tough cookies to the people on the wait list.

MAGGIE: Yeah.

MAKENNA: When I mean scholarships, I mean people who literally it would take food off their table. I'm not saying it would take a sweater or that extra dress they want to buy. That was a really interesting thing because the whole point of it was my brand story was to offer affordable options. That scholarship model worked great, even though it was a higher price point. And the affordable group coaching thing, not as effective, which was really interesting to me because I kind of thought they would also marry each other. That just shows that there's a bunch of ways. And so all of this marketing I have done in my brand story to do these accessible coaching opportunities for newer entrepreneurs has been a really interesting learning experience in that.

MAGGIE: Yeah, and I think that all of this, right, all we can do is test and correct. Does this work? Okay. Yeah, that's the thing that stuck. Along with doing your homework around it, but sometimes we don't know until we actually get in the field and throw it out there and see what happens.

MAKENNA: Totally. Exactly, and I've been spending a lot of time practicing that and practicing what works. I think that's why I loved doing the free calls because it was so bizarre to people that it was -- you know, if this doesn't work, then I stop it after a month. People can opt out of my mailing list, and I can apologize to them and tell them it didn't work, and here's your chance to opt out now because the opt-in you picked is not available anymore. I didn't have to do that. Then when I switched to a month, I think I lost one or two people who had kind of, I would say, abused the weekly calls.

MAGGIE: Yep.

MAKENNA: But that's it, and people weren't like, oh, waa-waa, I don't have weekly coaching. They were actually, some of them were happy because they said, oh, good, now I just have to put one thing on my calendar a month instead of weekly.

MAGGIE: Yeah, and I love that. Sometimes you got rid of your people that weren't going to buy from you anyways by going through that exercise, so.

MAKENNA: Totally.

MAGGIE: Well worth it right there.

MAKENNA: Yes, incredibly.

MAGGIE: Makenna, I know you are in the process of launching and rolling out something, so why don't you quickly tell us about that and where we can find you?

MAKENNA: Awesome! Well, I am currently working on the Business Bliss Posse, which is my affordable coaching group, which is actually worth every penny, and you shouldn't be sad because it's affordable. You should be really excited.

MAGGIE: No, we should be happy it's affordable because it's good for our bottom line.

MAKENNA: It is good, and so that's one of the reasons why I created it. It's for people who had either done masterminds in the past and were just looking for like one off rapid fire question opportunities from someone who had a really good handle on marketing and systems because I had worked in so many different capacities, or people who haven't had coaching and know they need it but can't afford a one-on-one situation. I kind of had these two people. It's really about me answering your questions. There's some community element in a forum setting, but it's really more about having access to me for things that you need answers to on a weekly basis.

That's called the Business Bliss Posse, and it includes two calls a month with me, two calls a month with a lifestyle coach, and there's shifting topics. Some months it's about movement and some months it's about beaking down your money blocks and all sorts of things. I really wanted to offer a space where you could get all of that in one place and in a relatively intimate format. It's maxed out at 100 people total, and it's much smaller than that right now. I think we're looking at about 30 people who are in the group.

That's the thing, and that's what I created this solely because of the response I had to the free calls. That's me, and you can find that on my website. It's a great group, and the women in it so far have been really, really thrilled over the moon with what they receive, and it's only week one, so I'll take that as a win.

MAGGIE: That's awesome. Listeners, if you want to hop on over and check out the Business Bliss Posse, I will have that linked up in the show notes for you over on my website, and everything we talked about in this episode will be linked up over there as well. Makenna, thank you so much for your time.

MAKENNA: Yeah, no problem. Thank you, Maggie, for having me.

MAGGIE: There were so many good reminders in that really quick, insightful, and impactful chat I had with Makenna. The things I took away and I want to really pull out as the takeaways for this episode is, number one, your opt-in. Think about how you can get people to take action with your opt-in. Your opt-in has such a great way for you as a first introduction. It's how people get to know you, so feel free to break the rules and change up

how you're going to do things. You definitely can do something different. It doesn't have to be another PDF.

Takeaway number two: One of the reasons that Makenna's coaching really worked and help her book in more coaching clients is because she let her personally come through. Before people spend money with you, they have to like and trust you. Her willingness to get on the phone with groups of people, answer their question, really is a great way to screen people in or out. They get to know, hey, I really like her vibe or, whoa, she's not for me, which I really, really, really like.

And takeaway number three, which wasn't really pertaining to the coaching, but Makenna and I touched a little bit about your brand story and pricing. Really think about your pricing and how it's telling a story about your brand. She had some really rich learning she shared with us about how what she was offering for free then didn't necessarily translate into something that people wanted for cheap.

The pricing lesson is, sometimes affordable is not the thing people are working for. Free might work or more expensive might work, but that lower price point may not be suitable for your business. And, when you have a lower price point, what message are you sending?

You've really got to look at that in-depth and be open to the lessons. I think Makenna was really honest about what did and didn't work. You have to really think about, in the context of your business, what the possibilities are.

If you want to check out the show notes, you can hop on over to www.MaggiePatterson.com/episode30. And I would love to have you talk about the show over in my Facebook playground group. I will also put the link to the group, and it is free. Anyone who listens can join, and we can have the after party for the show. Makenna is in the group, so if you have questions for her, you can hit us up over there. Thank you so much for listening, and I'll catch you soon.

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