Podcast Episode #50 – How to get your product found on the internet, with Ashley Faulkes of Mad Lemmings, Switzerland

RAW TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

Balint: I'm happy to bring you Ashley Faulkes from Mad Lemmings on the show and we are going to talk about you know how products can be found on the Internet by potential customers. Thanks, Ash, for accepting this invitation.

Ashley: Pleasure. Proud to be here.

Balint: Seemingly I took the initiative of calling you, Ash, but actually you know we've known each other for a while now. So we met at Lean Startup Zurich Meetup about a year ago, year and a half ago before I started building my website and started podcasting on Hardware Entrepreneurship and we had an awesome conversation on website design at that time and also about marketing. I learned that you're doing web design and also SEO already back then and we became friends. I know it's so romantic but in addition being you know friends and maintaining these ties I think I learned a lot from you. So I have to thank you for that.

Ashley: Pleasure. Always happy to help.

Balint: As a result, I managed not to screw up too much my initial website which I built with my own hands, so to say. So this is also thanks to your input and this way I didn't get on the wrong track. So it's actually I think it's a great topic to start with website creation since to be found nowadays you need a website. Being in retail, retail stores, is not enough to be found. There is tons of information on setting up websites. The listeners know that I'm pretty sure everyone around me though is saying is that they are confused because of the deluge of information, the huge amount of information. So as we know in marketing you know many times people with deep pockets win as they make sure that everywhere you are you come across their company, their products. And Wix in my eyes has high visibility. It's on many people's minds. I see the supermodel Karlie Kloss on YouTube all the time showing you how to create your own website so easily with Wix.

Putting aside this marketing, this fact that marketing campaigns with big budgets usually win and trying to look at things from a more factual point of view, what kind of wrong information do you think there is out there on website creation including Wix

that I just referred to? So on content management system creation (CMS), so the framework people use to set up their website.

Ashley: I think it really starts with what you want to do with your website and what your long-term goals are. Because some people, some businesses just want their website as a business card which is how it used to be in the very beginning for a lot of small businesses. And if that is all you want and you have no other goals and you can't see any reason in the future to even think about online marketing or Google or any of this stuff, then you could use something simple like Wix or Squarespace. And, actually, even if you're doing Google stuff, you can still use Wix or Squarespace. They're just not as flexible or as easy to customize as some of the other content management systems. So you just have to be a little bit careful about thinking too short term and then kind of holding yourself back in the long run.

So if you're going to design a site and then later on realize that you have nowhere to go and you have to redo it again on WordPress or Joomla or whatever because you have a different goal now, then yeah, you've made the wrong decision in the first place which maybe is not bad. It depends if you can do a quick Squarespace so exciting in a few hours then it doesn't matter, if you really do it in a few years' time or a year's time when you have different priorities. You just need to sit down and try to think about it if possible and if you need to get active on the web, get found on Google, start doing Google adds, Facebook adds, maybe YouTube whatever, then it might be you need to think a bit more seriously about it. Or if it's not your priority, you've got other sales channels and other opportunities, then maybe the website is not the highest priority but it needs to look good and then you can use something like Squarespace and Wix. And yes, Wix is doing inside amount of advertising on YouTube right now. Karlie Kloss is actually being taken off. She was the only one. And now they've got a whole bunch of big names on YouTube obviously. But, yeah, I wouldn't say don't use them. I'll just say be careful, be careful what your goals are and what you do before you make that decision.

Balint: What are the different options people can have for website creation? Because we brought up Squarespace and Wix which could be interesting at certain stages of a business. And what are the other options and when should the other options come into play? Even at the beginning of the business would you recommend those? You said it could be interesting Wix or Squarespace but could you do it you know setting up the website in a couple of hours or on such a scale, time scale with some other tools?

Ashley: Yeah, I mean with Wix and Squarespace it's relatively fast, with WordPress, which is what I always use, that has the balance between flexibility, extendibility, [8:24] marketing tools as well as having potential templating systems like Wix, which you can bring in, you just need to know which tools to use. On WordPress I normally

use Thrive themes or Elementor and you can do really fast websites on WordPress as well. So there is possibility to actually take a bigger step to something like WordPress from the beginning because it gives you the option to extend and get more serious later on.

Yeah, I mean Wix and Squarespace are just really fast, templated drag-and-drop systems are easier to use without design skills. The problem for a growing company is that once you start getting into branding and wanting to really heavily customize and change things specifically by some graphic design or new branding guidelines, then yeah, it gets a little bit more challenging because their templates are designed in certain ways and they are harder to customize very, very specifically. Like you can customize them, no problem, but you'll run into boundaries. So, yeah, I'm not sure if I answered your question correctly or if I misunderstood this.

Balint: Yeah, no. I think it's… I got it. And I agree that at the beginning it might be interesting to set it up and also the migration to WordPress based CMS is relatively smooth, right? Would you say that?

Ashley: Yeah, if you don't have many pages, it's okay. If you're already selling products and you have a big range of products and you need to connect it to some kind of payment system etc. and you're selling online through e-commerce, then yeah, you're getting into a different game. It really depends on what your situation is because if you have a huge marketplace with products that you want to sell talking in the tens or the hundreds, then something like Squarespace or Wix is generally not what you want to do and even WordPress is potentially not good enough. I mean for a few hundred it's probably OK. If you're going beyond that, then you have to look at other systems like Shopify or BigCommerce or something like that.

But WordPress kind of sits in the middle, it can do everything but it's not as specific as Squarespace or Shopify. They are very specific. Squarespace is for very simple fast design looking websites and Shopify is for bigger shops, predominantly designed to sell lots of products online. If you only have a few products or if you're doing a hardware startup and you only just have one specific product even if there's multiple colors or sizes, then something like WordPress could work really well.

Balint: That's great. It sounds encouraging. So to step back a little bit, how did you get into this field, website design? It's a huge field. Because before you were an engineer.

Ashley: Yeah, well I was never technically an engineer. So I have the qualification but I don't have the experience. I graduated back in 1997, I think it was. I can't even remember any more. It's not that important. Yeah, it combined science and engineering, double bachelor, and studied five years in Australia and then when I finished I

was not interested in doing that anymore. Actually, I decided earlier on that I was not interested so I was already thinking about traveling and doing other things. And then when I came back from traveling, I had to sort of figure out what I wanted to do and so I just took whatever job I could find and still made no decision and then eventually I started getting interested in the way it was becoming a bigger thing back then. And I thought I would get into websites.

Of course, I had no experience, no qualifications, I mean mechanical engineering, helped, the logical thinking and I'd done some computer programming at school but not a lot. And so, I was lucky enough to get offered a job here in Switzerland through a friend who had come here as an intern and stayed, and she got me into website programming small applications with websites, things like that, for an engineering company here. And she basically got me a job and so I learned within probably six months how to program again, how to create websites, how to do PHP which is what WordPress is based on, how to do all of the front-end stuff so HTML, CSS, JavaScript, all the elements you need to understand to create a functioning website today.

I mean if you're not a website designer, you don't need to know all of this stuff but there's quite a few pieces that go into building a website. It's actually far more complex than people realize but it's a whole bunch of languages that interact to create the website. So I had to learn all of that and then eventually I got into more hardcore programming Java which is more higher level than what I was doing in my first job here. And then became a team lead in programming and trained people in few countries around the world for the company I was working for.

And then I realized I didn't really want to be doing that either. I actually preferred web design more than that. So when I quit my last job I started playing around with online marketing and website design and SEO and just gradually started finding customers and that was back in 2013, so nearly five years ago. So I have been doing it for a while now but I always had the background. I mean I've been programming since 2001 so for me website design is quite easy. It's just the design and marketing aspects which are more challenging and then more difficult to learn I would say it takes more time than programming for me anyway.

Balint: Yeah. That's great. Now that you mentioned programming and before Thrive themes I think it's maybe it's interesting to briefly discuss this because I'm also using Thrive themes. I believe that you know just setting up a website is one thing but you should always think about the goals. The goals you want to reach with your website. So with a website what are the goals? The goals are doing conversion. So turning a visitor into a potential buyer or first somebody who would just like to connect with you more. So that would be conversion. So from a visitor to somebody who would like to more frequently follow you and check on you and your product and your offers. So to me, Thrive themes is very ideal for that and I've made great experience with that. So

what is your opinion about that? Thrive themes as versus other offers, even similar ones.

Ashley: Yeah, well just so people know what we're talking about because we've kind of skipped a step ahead there I guess, so this is a WordPress system. So WordPress is a very basic framework for creating websites. You install WordPress on a server somewhere and then from that installation you can add a theme which changes the way that the website looks and you can use that to design the website. But the actual content on the website, the pages and the blog posts and things like that you can also style those to look a certain way and be structured a certain way using specific elements and pieces like tables and quotes and things like this. And to do that is often quite time consuming if you're using raw HTML or if even try to do it in WordPress itself.

So there's been a lot of tools created by some of the users in the WordPress community to make this easier. One of them is a bunch of tools from the Thrive themes company and their focus is on building great looking websites but focusing on actually having a business. So not just having a sexy website but having a website that works for you as a business so it makes sales, you get people into your email list and turns people into customers which normally is most people's goal with their website. Maybe not everybody but generally as you say conversion is the goal whether it's to get on your email list or to a click-and-buy button or to get in touch with you to use your services whatever your actual goal is to get people to take that action it's the challenge of the website and these guys focus on that stuff.

So they have the tools for building the pages, testing the pages to see whether they're working in terms of converting people to customers, getting people on your e-mail lists a whole bunch of other little tools like Quiz Builders which are really popular right now. And I'm just trying to think what else I do… I have a ton of tools. Time is on your website which helps make sales like if you have sales offer on for a limited time or a limited time course offerings or product offerings which have a bunch of [17:49] which sounds really simple but actually it's quite difficult to do properly. And yeah, they have…Basically all their tools and offerings are focused on people creating websites that sell which is generally speaking everybody's goal especially anybody listening to this podcast. So Thrive themes and all of their tools are highly recommended and fairly simple to use in comparison to any other tools that I've used.

Balint: Yeah, maybe the listeners could visit your website. I'll put it into the show notes because you have quite a few articles that detail the differences between Thrive themes and also other tools. Maybe that's something a small advertisement that I might drop in.

Ashley: Sure. Sure. I mean I use a lot of different ones for different customers and I sometimes compare them on my blog. I use [18:42] as well for a lot of clients and at the moment I'm using Elementor which is similar but it's not focused on conversion so the tool is very good but it's not as good for selling. So yeah, there's definitely pros and cons to any tool and I do a lot of comparisons and videos so I have a YouTube channel with a lot of that stuff on there so people can see physically what stuff looks like and how easy or difficult it is to use it just to give you an actual realistic sort of idea of whether you could do it or whether you're going to need to pay somebody to do it because it's always a question.

Balint: I'll put that also into the notes so listeners can check it out. I think that the best way to learn about it is you know first-hand checking out your videos, reading about it and also about other tools. Because at that time I had a survey on the market even recently just like a month or two months ago to check again what's out there and I'm still convinced that Thrive themes and the newest one The Architect which is for building actually the website. To me that's like the most appealing one. They have really great educational videos also on their website Thrive themes.

So now that we've established the context for the further topic, the main topic if one might could even say it like that, it would be great to now move on to the SEO or other ways of how people, how visitors can find your website. There are various ways. There's paid search like Google AdWords, typically, that people use or also people can find your website in an organic way by looking for certain things, by putting in short or longer format expressions like long-form, long tail search, right, or short one and they can specifically look for topics on Google. And this is a search engine optimization which builds on this. Or the other one is search engine marketing which would be the paid one. Which one would you recommend startups to use depending on where they are in their development, the company building?

Ashley: It often depends on a whole bunch of factors, to be honest. It's not always a simple answer, it depends on the company, but I'll try and give you some context and ideas that you can make a better-informed decision when you come to this particular point in your development. I mean you have Google AdWords paid search which is very easy to do. It's very easy to spend money. And often if you pick the right keywords as they call each other searches that people do on Google, so it could be one to 10 words, whatever you are type in Google it's called a keyword. That's a phrase. So, people typing that phrase the top results on Google, the top three, are paid and you can get into that top three by creating ads and optimizing them and you pay say maybe from 10 cents to $10 per click.

The problem with that approach is that it costs money and it costs money per click. But you've got to also remember that one click doesn't equal one sale. So it could be that you're only selling to 5 percent of the people who click. So if a click is costing you

a dollar and you're only selling to five of them, then it can cost you a ton of money to get an actual sale, if you are paying $100 for five sales but of course it depends what five sales means to you, what's the profit for five sales. So you need to do those figures and figure out whether you can afford to run profitable ads because AdWords are very easy to turn on and off but once you turn them off your traffic stops. So you also have to remember that you're addicted to Google and if you turn off your ads, then that's it. You'll have no traffic or almost no traffic because it was all coming from paid search. So that's the problem with paid search is that you're completely reliant on handing over that money and you're also restricted by the number of keywords that you can use and find that are relevant to your sales because there will only be so many words that they cannot bring people to buy your products. And depending on what you're selling it may be that your product is so expensive that nobody is going to buy just from a click, then you need to warm your audience up more, you need to go out and visit them maybe, to do demonstrations, webinars.

So you also have to keep that in mind that there might be a longer process to sell if you're costing say 500 to 1000 or more for a product, then normally people won't buy that just from clicking from a Google ad so you have to keep that in mind as well. Sometimes the sales process is very long. So AdWords works, it's simple, it's fast and the same goes for Facebook ads but it all costs money and depending on what you'll run [23:42] is, how much money you've got available as a startup, you need to think about how long you can afford to play that game for and do you have the sales pages set up and the post sort of conversion process that are you ready to sell or are you just playing around. I mean AdWords is a good place to just test stuff and see what works, test your website, test your sales process.

It's not a bad way to do that but if you're going longer term once you've refined that whole process and you know how to sell you can start thinking about maybe going to the SEO side which is creating more pages or blog posts on your website and getting them higher up into Google which brings you free traffic which if you do it correctly can bring you thousands of people to your website every month continuously for years. And it's not a switch that goes on or off. It just continues without you doing anything. So once what you've got it there and it does take some effort to do that, it's not free, it's going to require some effort so that's time or money or paying someone to help you. But unlike AdWords, it doesn't go on or off, it continues for years to come. I have a blog post from 2013 which still brings me, I don't know, a thousand visitors at least a month and has them for five years. So it's entirely possible. It's just a little bit more challenging and a lot more of a long-term play.

Another thing you can do is try social media as well. That's also not simple to do. But if you have a very good audience that's sort of interactive on social media depending on what channel you can get active on, it depends on your product because con-

sumer products often get a lot of traction on places like Instagram, Pinterest could do really well. Facebook is becoming insanely difficult if you don't pay. So that's another place you just kind of have to pay. There's no way around it. And yeah, if you've got Snapchat which isn't really doing much at the moment, [25:44] but that's expensive. So really if you're selling products so it's like Instagram or Pinterest, Pinterest is probably better even if you hadn't thought about it. Pinterest is the SEO of the social media world. So you can get really group pins that can get a lot of traffic and for years to come. But, again, it's a skill you need to learn and investigate.

So I would say just try ads in the beginning and see what's working for you and see if people are actually listening to your message because it's getting your messaging around. That's the most challenging part of marketing in the beginning with your projects and figuring out whether anyone wants to buy your product because that's another question. You might love your idea but does anybody else? What does actually match a [26:30] or a problem in the marketplace? Because this is a huge issue that a lot of startups have and I had when I tried my own startup was I had a product but I didn't have a market and I hadn't checked that which is the whole Lean startup philosophy which we kind of discuss here. So yeah, you should always check that you have a market and that you know who you're selling to and it makes the marketing ten times easier.

Balint: What kind of recommendation would you have for startups that want to play the long game which is creating content and focusing on this organic search that people then find them? So as I learned it from you I took one of your courses, Keyword course, I liked it a lot because there's not so much information about that on the Internet. So considering that course, what recommendation do you have?

Ashley: Yeah, the biggest thing is really I find with getting found on Google is knowing what battles to fight basically, because if you create a whole bunch of pages, I mean in general you're going to create probably 5 to 10 pages when you create your site anyway, you are going to create your Home page and your Product pages or your Service pages depending on what you're selling and maybe your Contact page or About page and maybe a few other pages but not much more than that. That's generally what people create when they create a website. And you've only got so many opportunities within those pages to get found on Google because you can optimize your product pages for the keywords, the searches in Google that throw light to that product but there's going to be so many of those and you can optimize your home page for potentially some similar phrases. Your Home page will offer rank first because it's usually your strongest page. While I get into why that is now but that's usually the case if you're trying to capture some more complicated or difficult terrain keywords, your Home page is better for that.

But once you've done that you kind of get stuck because if you're either not ranking on Google or you've ranked for what you can and you can't get any further so then what you need to do is go and figure out what those keywords are or even the keywords for those pages I was talking about if they figure out which once you can potentially rank for. Because if the competition is too high on the page 1 of Google and that's usually what we're talking about page 1 and not page 5 because no one goes to page 5. We all look on page 1, maybe page 2. So if you can't get onto page 2 or page 1 for a particular phrase on Google, then you might as well not even bother because you can find out there's a thousand searches a month for green tennis racket. But if it's already filled up with all the top tennis companies, then there's no point going for it because you're never going to get there, at least not in first or second year of your business. It could take you five years to get there. So you have to find a more specific phrase or relighted phrase and it's doing that research which is the hardest thing to do in search engine optimization.

But once you've done it and you found the lower competition keywords you can get some really, really amazing results and that's what I focus on for my clients and a lot of people that I train is teaching how to do that, how to figure out whether you have a chance of getting into page 1 and also looking for those easier terrain keywords because without them you're more or less wasting your time. I mean you can get lucky with maybe one page and a hundred but for the rest you have no idea and you're just shooting in the dark. So yeah, the keyword process is the setup of everything else. Without that it's almost wasting your time creating content, creating your website, doing all the other SEO stuff you need to do won't get you anywhere if you don't know what keywords you can use, so basically the research is the key to it all.

Balint: If I may add to it, it's like many people are consumed but they are so much occupied with a certain topic and they want to just get it out of their head and write about it passionately and that's all right of course because we all have passions. But if you constantly produce content that nobody is searching for and you want to make money out of it because you want to start a business based on that, then you will run into problems because you will always just write content but not as many people will come to check out that content as you wish there would be. Right?

Ashley: It's a constant battle of the web. It's you know there is just a gazillion blog posts every day published and everybody's fighting for the same real estate on Google. I mean the real estate is growing gradually as there are more searches coming and more people are getting on the web from different countries. But, basically, it's getting more and more competitive and if all you are doing is just creating pages and posts related to the topics that your particular audience or people who would buy your products would be interested in, so let's say you're selling these green tennis

rackets so you would start talking about tennis, how to win a tennis, how to do the perfect serve and the perfect volley, and all of this stuff.

But if you find out by doing the keyword research that there's no way you are going to even get any traffic from those particular topics or that there is no one even searching for those topics, I mean I can't imagine those two topics aren't searched for but let's take something more specific like how to win tennis with a green tennis racket, no one's probably ever searched for that, so there's no point writing that particular blog post or page to help your potential customers.

Because the other thing to remember when you're creating this content is your long-term plan is to get those people onto your email list and then start selling to them as time goes on but people might come to you to learn how to play tennis but they leave your website earning a tennis racket. That's the process of content marketing so you can only have so many pages selling your products. The other pages or blog posts have to convince people that they need your products or that your products are the best. So that's where all this keyword research and content creation comes in. You're basically expanding your footprint on the Web to capture more potentially interested customers and picking the right battles by doing direct research because as I just said it could write 20 blog posts on tennis and get 20 visitors a month. But I could give you 20 blog posts to write or do research on and I could get you a thousand visitors a month because I pick the right topics that you could potentially get on Google for. So it's picking your battles on Google is the challenge.

Balint: And you can keep your passion glowing but you should pick your battle in terms of writing the right content around your passion.

Ashley: You can also write on your passion once you have an audience, if you've established an audience and you have them on social media, you have them on your email list then you could do it for every second post or every third post on your website could be one that's not intended to rank on Google and that's okay. But if you're starting out and you're not getting any traffic and you're wondering where to get people to your website from and you are trying Google and you are just shooting in the dark, then it's really, really frustrating to see no traffic coming in.

And it does take a few months to build up. I just started a website at Christmas and I've written 20 or 30 pieces of content that will eventually create traffic about a month into the website. I'm only seeing 10 visitors or something and that's okay. It takes a few months to warm up Google. Google doesn't trust brand new websites. But after three or six months you should see those blogposts starting to pick up traction. And I had a website, I did the same thing last year, I started from zero and by the end of the year I had 67000 visitors to this website just by following this process. So in the first few months it looked like nothing was happening and then all of a sudden in May

and June things started going crazy. And I think by June I had 30 000 so it just was a matter of picking the right topics and being a little bit patient as well.

Balint: 30000 per month, right?

Ashley: Yeah, yeah.

Balint: To be exact with that metric.

Ashley: Yeah, by Christmas it was 67. I think it's dropped a little bit since Christmas because December is a peak in the consumer marketplace. But the website's constantly growing and I pick my battles every day for all my websites that I run. I also do stuff for clients but I do my own. I have three websites that are around the moment and I do this stuff constantly picking the best battles on Google and trying to win them. And I regularly get stuff in the top 3 or the top 1 position within a few months just by picking the easiest keywords. It's the simplest way to do it.

Balint: I think it's a powerful example the one that you started some long time ago because the numbers you brought up are out of your experience that after a couple of months things should start moving so you should generate some volume if you pick the right keywords.

Ashley: Yeah, it also ties to get yourself known a little bit in the beginning to get onto social media a little bit and also maybe connect with other blogs and comment on their posts and maybe even do some guest posting. You can look up what that is if you don't know but do some guest posting on some related industry posts, get your name out there, your brand out there, that helps Google trusts you as well. That's something that I always do.

But that stuff won't help a website that's picking too difficult a battle on Google, even all of that stuff won't help if you've picked the tennis racket to try and rank for it or even the green tennis racket. It's just not going to work.

Balint: Yeah. It's a hardware example. Green tennis racket.

Ashley: It depends what you're selling. I mean if you're selling a product, yeah, you should also be careful picking a brand, that's a good message for people as well. A lot of companies come out recently, even in the WordPress spies coming out with brand names which are already strongly associated with other products and then it becomes really difficult for them to get traction because they picked a brand name from another industry or something like that.

Balint: Oh, wow. Yeah. So because that brand name is close to another one in a stronger field where they are very powerfully established they get a lot of traction and they have problems attracting visitors, right?

Ashley: Yeah, if you type in you know a car brand name and even if it's not Porsche or whatever, it's a specific model and somebody has used that for the name of their IT product you just need to be careful not to step too closely into known areas because it becomes really difficult to establish is often even to get a name on a .com name on a website is difficult. You have to try and find something at least a little bit unique. It's very challenging in today's marketplace to not step on somebody else's toes.

Balint: But, yeah, a lot of things to keep in mind about it. But it's like this, one has to start, during building the business one can learn more and more. But even at the beginning I think it's a good idea to check on things before you know starting the business to make sure that you have the right name, the right message and talking to people, mentors or consultants or freelancers who have already been there at least to get the basics right, the building blocks.

Ashley: Yeah, I mean I get a lot of clients who haven't done that and I know it's scary to spend money upfront for things like this but if you're running a business seriously from the beginning and you do have some funding, then yeah, it can seem too easy to do some things yourself to save money.

But the challenging thing is you have to decide what's worth your time and now that we've had this discussion between ourselves many times over about businesses which is, "Oh, I could do my website, I could do my Google ads," and I could do all this stuff myself. But the problem is I am not going to do a great job with it and I am going to have to redo it again three months or six months or it might be a huge mistake or I waste too much time trying to learn this stuff when I should be focusing on my business instead of focusing on my website or my sales process or whatever it might be. And sure, you need to understand some of this stuff to run your business but you don't need to be a specialist with all of this stuff. You need to pick the things that you should be good at. And too many of my clients have done that mistake and [39:30] they come to me and they go, "Oh, I did this myself but it doesn't work or it doesn't get any customers. What am I doing wrong?" And within five minutes I can already see where the problems are because they're just started incorrectly from the beginning and they've shot themselves in the foot basically.

Balint: Yeah. So it would be of course great to discuss these topics because I really like these. They're also of course really, really relevant for growing my podcast. I think it would be great to move on to the next round of questions the next topic, which would be I would ask four questions briefly and it'd be great to get four short answers to these.

Ashley: Okay.

Balint: So one is that if you could go back in time, time travel, you mentioned the word, the concept of travel, that you love traveling but if you could go back in time to the time when you were in your 20s, what notes would you give yourself?

Ashley: Basically, to start doing my own thing instead of going to school that there's a lot of opportunity out there. And we all have this opportunity available and you just need to pick your path and it will work out in the end.

Balint: Yeah, great. I like that. I agree. It's just instead of just learning the conventional way it's better just doing it project based learning which I really like as a topic.

Ashley: Yeah, you can learn a lot just by doing stuff you can learn a lot.

Balint: Yeah, I agree. So, second question. If you had to name a book, one book, which one had the biggest impact on your thinking?

Ashley: Here a little bit cliché but actually what changed my path back in 2013 was *The 4-Hour Work Week* from Tim Ferriss and realizing that all of this stuff was possible to run a business, to scale a business, to do it all by really quick fast changes learning tools using Google AdWords, testing, trying, doing stuff on the Web really fast without a huge team, without a huge budget. I had no idea if any of this stuff was possible and it got me where I am today basically. I'm not doing the 4-hour work week but a lot of his ideas have really pushed me in new directions.

Balint: Yeah. Recently it's been 10 years when his book came out. There's an episode on that on this anniversary what he would update the book with if he updated it but he doesn't want to update it because one of the reasons is that there are so many new tools coming out that if he updates the book, he would have to update it again in a couple of months.

Ashley: Yeah, sure.

Balint: It's a great episode I think. And you know he mentioned it a couple of times that people misunderstand the message of the book. It's not about just working a couple of hours per week which is also an option based on the book. But it's about how to 10x your output. Yeah, I also like that book.

The number three. So, third question. I'm amazed by habits and how these can help us reach our goals or they can affect our life positively. Do you have some routine, morning routine or daily routine that you're proud of?

Ashley: Actually, to be honest I am really bad at that. I am probably one of the worst examples for...I need to do more habitual stuff. I'm in the process of actually trying to increase more fitness into my week because my habit is to just slothly work from when I sit down to when my partner when she gets home in the evening and it's ac-

tually really bad. I'm not a very organized person, I'm not a very habitual person. I find it very difficult to actually get new habits working…Now, I've been working on getting some things going more structured ways of doing things and organizing things. I have a couple of full-time writers that work with me now on my websites and we work in quite a structured way which is quite nice. But, in general, I don't start the day in any special way. I'm not really a morning person. So I just get up, eat at my desk and just warm up. I start reading emails or watching some of my favorite YouTube videos because I do a lot of photography and video as well and just get my brain warmed up until I'm ready to go because yeah, I don't start very fast in the morning so yeah. But get back to me on that one I might be doing something better in six months' time. And I'm not an example for this at all.

Balint: I encourage you to get your bike, to equip it with spikes and used in the snow. Because I know you like biking.

Ashley: Yes. Yeah. Sure.

Balint: So the fourth question. In your work if you had to pick a few cultural differences because you work with freelancers from around the world which ones, which cultural differences would you wish you knew before and how could you overcome those issues?

Ashley: Cultural differences. Yeah, I mean I've worked with quite a lot of people from the east as well. And my problem is I'm very talkative and very loose in the way I do things as an Australian, we are very informal. I even have trouble working with Americans that way because there's a lot more, I don't know if people even realize that but between Australia and America there's a lot more formal structure in just the written emails, using people's names correctly and using Sir and Madam. In Australia we just never do that.

Yes, it's definitely something to be aware of. It's just slowly tone down your personality or try to match the way of working of the people you're working with because in this day and age it is extremely challenging to do that. I mean, one of my writers is in the Philippines, one of my other writers is in Sarajevo and I don't see huge cultural differences there but there's definitely some and it ties to just pay attention to how people work and work more productively. Some people just want answers faster. I don't want any kind of fluff which we tend to do in the English-speaking world. We tend to surround all of our discussions with "Hi. How are you doing?" chit-chat and actually some people don't like that. And even my partner's from a country where they don't do that so much, from Belgium, they are a lot more direct and it can be difficult to get used to that. But you need to be open to the fact that not everything that's written or spoken is intended on the way you might think it. You need to sometimes be careful in reacting badly to things which were never intended to be...Yeah, email is especial-

ly bad for that kind of thing I find. You have to be just open, relaxed, sensitive and just try to get things working [46:33]. It's challenging.

Balint: I agree it's good to be aware of the cultural norms of the people you're talking to.

So, we came to the end of the interview. Before we conclude, before we depart, now what is the best way for listeners to reach you? Do you have email or maybe social media that people can use to reach out to you?

Ashley: Yeah, honestly, my email is probably the best. I am on social but I'm not super, super active. LinkedIn, if you want to connect with me social media LinkedIn is probably the best place. You can put the link in the bottom. I won't spell my name because it's too complicated but otherwise it's ashley@madlemmings.com. I don't mind people writing to me at my business email. I don't get that many e-mails that I don't answer them. If you write to me, I will answer you, so if you have a question even if you think it's a stupid one, please feel free to ask me something. I'm happy to help even if you're thinking of starting your website or getting better at SEO or not sure whether you should even bother or how to start your website, I'm happy to give you some tips. I know what it's like, I've been there and that can be really difficult to understand everything, so feel free to write to me.

Balint: I also encourage the listeners to talk, to discuss this topic more with Ash. So thanks very much, Ash. I really appreciate this interview. This is a really great learning about some more… There are always some gaps to fill in in website design creation, especially the technical parts but also about how your website can be found with paid or non-paid search. So, thanks a lot.

Ashley: Cool. Have a good week.