

Join Julie Livingston, founder and president of WantLeverage Communications and host of PR Patter, a series of talks focusing on relevant topics in marketing and public relations today, in conversation with Anne Popolizio, data professor and Facebook ads professional, who helps businesses reach their target customers, build community, and achieve their marketing goals.

Livingston and Popolizio get into it and talk all about knowing your audience and your client experience, putting your brand on client radar, listening and learning from data, and lots more.

“Your job as a marketer is to put your company and your brand on the client's radar at the very beginning of their experience. The mistake that a lot of companies will make is they think that the journey starts at the point the customer has picked up the phone. The audience needs to see immediately in three seconds or less that you are speaking to them and that you are creating an emotional connection with them to get them to stop scrolling.”

“The client service provider relationship is so grounded in communication and learning that differentiated communication style.”

“Some of the common blind spots marketers have include not knowing their customer inside and out, not understanding the language and how their clients speak, or about how their customer speaks about the experience.”

“It's also important for marketers to look at their data. People tend to think of data and humans as two separate things, and that couldn't be further from the truth. Your data is telling you where there are problems in the human experience of your marketing funnel. It's really important to be looking at your conversion rates at every step of the way, because every time you have a drop off in conversion rate, what that's telling you is you didn't meet that person's need.”

“Talk to your clients. Do client interviews. Dive deep. It's not just about what their experience was with working with you, or buying from you, or using your product or service. That's a little bit of it. You are trying to really understand what the experience was like all the way from the very beginning, and from the very first step.”

“Your marketing strategy is your hypothesis.”

–Anne Popolizio

Edited Transcript:

Julie Livingston:

Hi everyone. It's great to be back. I'm Julie Livingston with WantLeverage communications for another installment of Julie's PR Patter, where I talk to marketers and other experts in my network and bring their expertise to you. How well do you know your target customers? Do you really understand what they are looking for from your brand, from your company? Do you have a customer profile and are you really drilling down on their needs? At my marketing work and in my work as in public relations and LinkedIn marketing, it is critical to know your customer. I do a lot of content creation for my clients, especially senior leaders on LinkedIn and developing their

content strategy, and really getting into the head of their key targets is absolutely paramount so that we can shape and sculpt the content so that it's of interest to them and that it will have traction. I'm really thrilled to have my guest today, Anne Popolizio. Anne is a Facebook ads nerd and a data processor. She helps businesses reach their target customers, build their community, and achieve their marketing goals. She's also an avid sailor and adventurer, and she's participated in sailing races around the world. Anne, I'm so happy to have you here today.

Anne Popolizio:

Thank you for having me.

Julie Livingston:

What can people do to humanize their brand and humanize the connection with their target customers, and why is that so important, especially in what you do with Facebook advertising?

Anne Popolizio:

I'll start with why is it so important to be human and real in your marketing. I would say there's two big reasons. There's a ton of reasons, but I'll start with two big ones. One is that 70% of buying decisions go to a vendor that was on the client's radar at the very beginning of the journey. Your job as a marketer is to put your company— your brand, on the client's radar at the very beginning of their experience. The mistake that a lot of companies will make is they think that the journey starts at the point the customer has picked up the phone. In digital marketing, like traditional marketing, back in the day, the rule of thumb was like seven touches. The rule of thumb today in digital is 13. By the time somebody picks up the phone and is talking to you, they might be on step nine of 13, and your job is to be on their radar at step two. That's one big reason. The other piece is that, especially in the world of social media, there is so much noise that you have to cut through the noise. The way you cut through the noise is by creating what I call relevancy. The audience needs to see immediately in three seconds or less that you are speaking to them and that you are creating an emotional connection with them in those three seconds to get them to stop scrolling. The way that you connect, the way that you create that emotional connection is by identifying something in their situation that's really relevant to them. It can be relevancy, which can be established by words that are like position oriented or self-identifying language, but also the language that they're using to describe their problem. Because that's when you talk about pain points, and hitting the identifying spot, it's really the way you're going to do it is in the language that they're using themselves.

Julie Livingston:

You want your targets to think and to be able to connect with language that positions your brand as authentic and real, right? And so many, so many companies forget about that and they use language that's very stilted, or it's just not using the lexicon that their targets would use.

Anne Popolizio:

Or they use the language that they want to use. They say what they want to say as opposed to what their audience wants and needs to hear. Now I am not saying you should tell them what they want to hear just for the sake of telling them what they want to hear. No. Your service or

product should be serving their needs and solving their problem. I see this mistake with a lot of clients. They just wanna shove at the audience what they're trying to sell to them, which is not where their head space is. You have to hit the problem that's at the end of their nose. A lot of times when you're talking, you'll see this a lot with product-related stuff and people will be talking about features and the feature is not the problem. That's not the problem. They're trying to solve a very human problem, and your software or your product might help them do that, but you have to talk to this problem that's all the way over here to get them in and get them to see. At the end of the day, the features might not even matter. It's just, can you connect this problem if they need to solve it and show that you understand it and you understand how to solve it.

Julie Livingston:

That's right. Can you give us an example of one of your clients, you don't have to name them, who you've solved this problem for?

Anne Popolizio:

We did a series of webinars recently for a client and you know, this was a SaaS company. So like, they're techy SaaS people and they are very focused on the features of the software. That's not, since it's a coaching software for athletes, to be used with coaches and athletes, and it's like the coaches who are ultimately the clients, they're not trying to solve this technical problem. What they're trying to do is solve the human problem of getting their athletes to be accountable and hold themselves accountable and be more driven in their own progression. That's the problem that they're trying to solve. The software does support that. But the coach needs to see how the two connect. And maybe the coach needs to learn different ways of teaching and communicating in order to be able to connect those two dots. But this is the problem. This is the problem that's at the end of the coaches' nose and not the, the technical features of the software.

Julie Livingston:

Right. No, that's great. That's a great example. I know I think a lot of companies want to jump ahead and get to the sales and the selling part, right? But you can't do that. You have to develop that relationship and that trust. You know— help the target or the targets, understand what you do.

Anne Popolizio:

Yeah.

Julie Livingston:

And that they have certain issues that you can help them solve.

Anne Popolizio:

And you really have to understand where they're coming from and what their experience is. We've seen that a lot with B2B clients as well. Especially when you have multiple decision makers. With every new account, we actually start with client interviews and we take the time to interview our clients' clients. Now, we're not doing massive market research here...

Julie Livingston:

But you're getting some basic market intelligence.

Anne Popolizio:

Yes, exactly, to just to set a sense baseline. What I'll often ask clients is if they can send me a range of people where, maybe these people all fit the profile to some degree or another, but that there's some kind of diversity across the list of people. What I will find is, they might all have been very different, but there's a trend that starts to emerge about why, about what their experience was, what their problem was, and why they went with my client. Then they start to see trends around the language that they're using and, and what little motivations are. It's what we look for. There's pain points and there's motivations, and those are just slightly different things. When it comes to motivations we start to see a lot of trends there. We're looking for the patterns and then we, when we do that, we start to really dive into kind of what the experiential is. Some feedback from our B2B clients was that it's really hard for these companies to vet vendors. And it was like, okay, problem solved, our job is to make us as accessible as possible, right? Or to make my client as accessible as possible, and for them to get to know who my client is, for them to be able to hear their voice all the time and understand they're the real deal and they really understand what they're doing and the human problems that these companies are facing. That client had, you know, 50 to 60% growth two years in a row leading into the pandemic. It was pretty impressive.

Julie Livingston:

These are key brand differentiators too. When you start to pull out that data and those insights, what are the nuances? That's when I think you could be most effective in your marketing.

Anne Popolizio:

I've got a friend who does Facebook ads as well. We are completely different people, completely different people. I mean, we have areas of specialty differentiators as well. He's mostly e-commerce. I am mostly service providers, and what I call the high consequence service providers. We used to serve different areas of the market, but we could both run Facebook ads. Yes, I can run an e-commerce ad, and yes, you can run a lead gen campaign. We can do both of those things. Those are technical, but then personality-wise we're so different. I don't bat an eyelash at standing next to him because if that's what you want, you're going to hire him. If I'm what you want, you're going to hire me. We just attract different people. The client service provider relationship is so much bit grounded in communication and that communication style and personality is going to come a lot into play with that.

Julie Livingston:

I've had a similar experience. Absolutely. Every person who does public relations or LinkedIn marketing, again, they have a different style. Their service offerings might be slightly different and their approach for sure. I know my approach is my approach.

Anne Popolizio:

Exactly.

Julie Livingston:

Yeah. It works for me. What are some of the common blind spots or some of the missteps that companies and brands make in Facebook advertising that you've been seeing?

Anne Popolizio:

I think we talked about some of the big ones. Not knowing their customer inside and out, not understanding the language and how their clients speak, or their customer speaks about the experience. Some other big ones that people might not be as aware of, like not looking at your data. People tend to think of data and humans as being two separate things and they couldn't be further from the truth. Your data is telling you where there are problems in the human experience of your marketing funnel. So it's really important to be looking at your conversion rates at every step of the way, because every time you have a drop off in conversion rate, what that's telling you is you didn't meet that person's need. Now there's different reasons for why you didn't meet that person's needs. Maybe that person shouldn't have been in the funnel in the first place, but then that tells you you have a messaging problem at the top of the funnel, right? So that tells you that at the ads level, you need to tweak your messaging because maybe your relevancy is too broad and you need to narrow it down a little bit. Then you're looking at your link click through rate, which, at least at the ads level, is telling you if the offer is relevant enough to them. Then you're getting to the landing page and looking at the landing page conversion rate. Again, is the offer relevant enough to them? A lot of times the problem is in the messaging, it could be in the framing, there could be too much noise, there could be not enough information. There's different reasons. When you're looking at the data that's telling you where your problems are and where you're having a disconnect, and that disconnect is an emotional disconnect. That's a big mistake that I see. I see people do other things without giving enough. I think people are really afraid to overmarket and I don't know about you, but I'm busy and there's a lot going on. Most people are in my life, you know, so if you would like me to show up for something like your... I don't know, webinar maybe you should remind me about 30 times because that's what it's going to take to get me to show up. There's so many people that are afraid to remind people too many times. I'm like, no, I need it. You're doing me a favor. Because if I opened your email and I said, Ooh, I want to attend that, but I was standing in line at the grocery store, so I didn't register at that very moment. Do me a favor and please send me 50 more notifications so that you eventually will hit me on a Sunday evening when I'm sitting on my desktop and I go, oh yes, this now.

Julie Livingston:

Yeah. And if somebody's not interested, they'll just either unsubscribe...

Anne Popolizio:

Ignore it.

Julie Livingston:

Right.

Anne Popolizio:

I won't see you anyway.

Julie Livingston:

I agree— I think companies can be very reticent and gun shy about putting their message out there boldly, but that really is the way to take advantage.

Anne Popolizio:

I think too, don't be shy. I think there's a hesitancy as well sometimes that people have about giving away their secret sauce. Don't worry about it. If I could solve your problem, people are like— oh, you know, you don't want to have coffee with someone, I can talk to you for an hour. That does not mean you can execute on it. I've been doing social media since 2003 or 2004 I've been doing social media for business since 2010. So yeah, I can talk for an hour, but that doesn't mean you're going to do it.

Julie Livingston:

That's right. because you have to talk just the right way and you have to have the right messaging.

Anne Popolizio:

It loses 10 years of experience for me to figure out...

Julie Livingston:

A persuasion...

Anne Popolizio:

That one hour of conversation is 10 years of experience. If I can talk to you for an hour and you can execute on it, you weren't my client anyway.

Julie Livingston:

Right. That's true. What are some tips that you can provide to people watching today to enliven and make their Facebook advertising more human-centric?

Anne Popolizio:

Talk to your clients. Do client interviews and dive deep. It is not just about what their experience was with working with you or buying from you or using your product or service. That's a little bit of it. But you are trying to really understand what the experience was like all the way from the very beginning and from the very first step when they first started to be like, I think there's something bothering me on my nose. Oh, I have an itch on my nose. Oh, I should do something about that itch on my nose. You want to know what the experience was like at that point in time. And then when it was, what was the experience? What were the questions that they were asking? Where were they? Like, I don't know what I, there's a thing on my nose and how many people went, there's a thing on my nose. What do I do about this thing on my nose? And they're

like, it's an itch and you need to scratch me. Like, but how do I scratch it? You can use your fingernail, you could use a screwdriver, you could use one of those wooden finger thingies, I don't know.

Julie Livingston:

Keep drilling down, keep drilling down until you identify what it is.

Anne Popolizio:

All the way to the beginning. You really want to focus in on what the experience was, the qualitative experience of that early process. AWhat the questions were, and what the motivations were.

Julie Livingston:

Does it have to be complicated to do these stakeholder interviews? I know that a lot of companies, you know, my clients included, get very overwhelmed about this sort of early kind of research to understand the market.

Anne Popolizio:

I mean, I say keep it simple, stupid. Same with your marketing. Your marketing strategy is really a hypothesis. Go back to seventh grade science class and use the scientific method. We will typically interview about five people. That gives us enough to give us a foundation around where the trends are because the trends do start emerging. I'll just assume that those five people are representative of a larger group. I don't then lock in what those five people gave me. I will interview those five people. I'll identify that three people said this, two people said this, one person said this. These are three categories of motivation. Then I go into a testing phase and then I say, okay, so these were the three motivations that we identified. We're going to test this now at the ads level, and I use the ad...

Julie Livingston:

You fine tune it some more.

Anne Popolizio:

Yes, exactly. I use ads to do the wider testing, right? I develop a hypothesis around these three motivations, and then I do the testing and that's how I'm able to identify what does or doesn't get people to take action. That's great. Then there are interviews that you can revisit. We've got a client that talks to clients of theirs for their blog monthly. They do the best job of connecting with their audience because they talk to them every single month. Now they don't talk to 40 people every single month. They talk to one to two.

Julie Livingston:

Right. They kind of know who, who of their client base can really give them that, and those nuggets they can expand upon.

Anne Popolizio:

And then they write blogs that are telling this story that these people went through. And you know, if one of their clients went through it, well, probably 15 others did as well. That is a great job of really connecting and creating that human experience.

Julie Livingston:

I couldn't agree more, and that's a practice I use regularly as well in creating effective LinkedIn content for senior leaders. I use some of their real experiences they're having and then recapture that in the content and it gets so much traction because it's so relatable and it's so real.

Anne Popolizio:

I just want to point out all of the examples that I have given on this call are B2B. I think a lot of businesses think that, oh, we are B2B. You can connect with your audience just as much as any B2C brand.

Julie Livingston:

Well, and thank you so much. I can't believe we're at time, thank you so much for being here today. It was great to chat with you. I hope you'll come back again sometime.

Anne Popolizio:

Thank you for having me.

Julie Livingston:

Have a great weekend. Take care.

Anne Popolizio:

Bye-Bye.