

The Underground Marketer Podcast – Episode 44 – Full Transcript

Introduction 00:00:03 Marketing, explosive growth, and revolutionary secrets that can catapult your business to new heights. You're now listening to The Underground Marketer Podcast with your host Tudor Dumitrescu, the one podcast devoted to showing new businesses how to market themselves for high growth.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:00:28 Welcome to the underground marketer. This is the place where we deliver the real truth about marketing and explore big ideas that can help new businesses thrive and grow into big ones. I'm your host Tudor. And today it's my honor and pleasure to welcome Lori Haller. She's one of the best direct response designers in the world. She has worked for companies such as Group Publishing and Boardroom among many others to effectively combine copywriting and design to give the best results in print and online. Welcome Lori.

Lori Haller 00:01:01 Hey there, it's great to be with you today. Thanks for inviting me.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:01:05 That's fantastic. Lori, would you mind sharing a bit about your story with our listeners and basically how you first got started both as a designer and how you moved from regular design work towards the kind of direct response design that you do nowadays?

Lori Haller 00:01:21 Yeah, that's a good question. Um, fortunately I already knew that I wanted to be a designer in high school, so I went on to college and got my first job in a couple of big agencies. I love doing all that fancy design. And then somebody threw me something that involved direct response. It was for a large exposition in Washington, DC called Fauci Federal Office Systems Expo. I believe it was called. I got my taste right then when I got the results back, that what I had created produced these landslide results that they had not seen as far as attendees, that joy of winning like sunk into my heart. And I decided that's the route I wanted to take.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:02:09 That's fantastic. That's super interesting. How did that make you feel the first time you got that big success?

Lori Haller 00:02:15 Yeah, it was such a different feeling. Like I got rave reviews, you know, at the agencies on items that I created, but still seeing the analytics, I guess it was right there in the meeting. We used to have this many attendees. Now we have these and just thinking of what I did copy wise design strategy and how it assisted the company and maximizing profits. It just gave me a really good feeling. And I was like, I got to have a taste of this every single day. So I jumped.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:02:48 That's awesome. How did you go about finding your clients initially? Because in the past, the direct response space used to be quite dominated by copywriters and nowadays with the advent of the internet and new technology design, I think is gaining in importance. And certainly, I mean, from the tests that I've done, design is nowadays very important in actually maximizing results for a funnel. So how did you approach getting clients initially?

Lori Haller 00:03:17 Well, actually for a while I stayed full-time and I went from one big agency. Then I sought out with top creative director that I wanted to learn from. So I try to get a job there on and on. So I guess like still just working on high-end design, I put my heart, my copy, mind my soul, my strategic ideas, and design into things like ads for Kay jewelers, Blackstar, and Froster Metro call, whatever it was. But I just think that as the years passed, I went on to do high-end finance with a company and that involved a lot of direct mail campaigns. And I think that's where it was just like, I have the ability to change things here by my ideas and the things that happen in my mind. I just kept at it. And then of course I was able to jump ship about 22 years ago and just go full force with my own agency, which I still have now.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:04:21 That's a fantastic story. How did you actually get started with the agency the first time? Did you already have clients basically when you started or did you just say my job and I just want to jump doing my own thing now.

Lori Haller 00:04:33 That's a great question. Even in high school, since I was in the commercial art, it was like a college course or class, excuse me, for like two or three years in high school. I got to go to, um, once I got the hang of it, I started just getting little, teeny tiny accounts. And then the whole time I was full time at an agency or whatever I would ask, Hey, is it okay if I supplement my income, as long as it doesn't conflict with what we're doing? Um, I have my own agency, so I always did moonlighting at night on the weekends. Yeah. Um, because I knew I wanted my own agency, so it really made me, I guess that's probably where my deep dive into systems and processes started happening because enabled for me to have a full-time job and do really well there and also be able to work at nights and on the weekends it takes organization. And so, uh, that probably honed my skills and thinking in that area.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:05:35 Can you share a bit about how you used to organize yourself back then? Because I mean, as a business owner myself, that's certainly one of the key areas that we need to get right. When we're doing our own thing, because there's nobody else to provide a system for us to be organized. We have to.

Lori Haller 00:05:53 Yeah. Yeah. You know, and it's funny you say that too, or you're asking me this question because today a lot of what I do is for companies globally. Um, not only do I go in with design, creativity, coaching and training the teams, bringing in my agency to do a website, a sales page, a magalogue, something in print doesn't really matter, but a lot of what I do as well as step inside the agency and see what systems and processes methodologies they're using, the good, the bad, the ugly, and then restructure things, retrain people, set systems and solutions up. Sometimes it's a template because as we all know, time is money and you have to know how to think fast and implement in order to test both online and in print. And so it's funny. I must be using all those skills that I developed. You know what I mean, putting them to action.

Lori Haller 00:06:51 Let's see. Let me give you some ideas for me. I don't know if, uh, this happens to you or is required by you, but for what I am called to the table to perform or do is deep, serious thinking, research, analytics, psychological behavior, coming up with that killer test headline or massaging copy. What's the new format you're going to do Lori, to try to beat the control. So I know for me to perform at my best, and this is just me, but I have to go into deep work mode. And that means blocking off ample time to just sit and think. So you won't see me being scatterbrained and hurried and rushed. And I'll say no a lot to clients, even if I can't fit it in and do the proper level of thinking and design, I don't want to ruin my chances with them in the future. So I just block off time to think effectively. And therefore that forces me to put other

items in place, like maintain my calendar properly, get back to people quickly, have templates created little quick, like tip sheets that are already created one and done. I can change a couple words and winging out to a team or whatever. So is that making sense or does any of those items sound helpful to you?

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:08:15 Absolutely. I mean, I also have implemented all sorts of processes to be able to manage client work. And when things just repeat themselves, those are especially useful. I agree with your idea that, I mean, copywriting, I'm more of an expert on copywriting than design, but on copywriting specifically, you do have to sit and sort of marinate on ideas until you get that one big idea. Basically, as David Ogilvy used to call, it can really make a big difference. And that's actually one of the things that people and I'm speaking now about people who don't have a lot of experience with copy. They don't understand that it's not the actual words that it's the concepts behind the words that really make the difference. And you need to find those right concepts, let's say as a copywriter.

Lori Haller 00:09:08 You're right. You're absolutely right. And you know, it's like the big idea, the hook, and that only comes in my mind or for me like endless research. And you probably see on my website or in my bio or on LinkedIn or whatever. I always note that I'm relentlessly curious and that is true. So even if you just come to me with a project and you're like, I want this, this, this, and I'll say, why are you using that size? Why are you using that color? Um, did this cost really work? Boy, I can't believe the titles of your free reports. They really don't sound that valuable. So I don't want to just take everything. Somebody dumps on me and just be like a robot I'm here and paid a lot of money to think and perform and maximize profits and scale a company. So yeah, you really have to keep distractions at negative numbers. There's a couple of people that I adore working with, but I just can't because they're just all over the place, emails crazy. They get a doctor's appointment. They can't, I'm like, you cannot think on the level I need with all these shenanigans going on in your life and it's not worth it to me. It's ruining my jam. Does that make sense?

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:10:28 Absolutely. I mean, I have a similar feeling to that many times when we have to work with other parties that are involved in the marketing. Generally, I like to take on projects where there's basically a clear hierarchy in terms of who gets to make decisions on the marketing, because ultimately if the client doesn't really give you control, there's only very little that you can do. And I had such clients in the past and it's hard to get results while having to play within the limited boundaries that they allow you to play.

Lori Haller 00:11:06 It's dangerous. I mean, because it just is a reflection on you and I've been very, very fortunate to be able to meet with some interesting clients from all over the world and keeping myself and my agency, my team members in check and on a high elite professional level with good quality leverage and motivation together, and team spirit, positive attitude and stuff. That's very important to me. And I feel like I'm very grateful that people keep coming back and enjoying working with us because that's the other thing I think you and I have talked about this in the past. I really want to spend time during the day with people I trust, trust their knowledge, their choices, people I enjoy working with are positive. They are the same, same level of thinking. And that's important to me. So if I sense that first or second, when you're just dating a client, you're not sure if I sense red flags and stuff. If it just doesn't add up, I don't care how much money they're going to pay me. It's not worth it to me because I love what I do. And I enjoy every day so much. I just have to decline and say, I don't, I don't think this is a good fit for me. It's not going to work.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:12:33 That's a great attitude to have. I think, I mean, in the end, people who work in this field and who work in a field that's creative really do that because they have some passion for the work. If you end up taking. And I always tell these two freelancers and two other people that I speak with, I always tell them that, look, if you don't like working with that client, just stop working with them. Don't torture yourself because then you're going to end up actually hating the thing that used to give you pleasure and that you are so passionate about before. I think that that's very important. I also wanted to ask you, Lori, if you can share with our audience, we have quite a lot of business owners here. So I was wondering if you can share with them some fundamental principles that would help them when they're trying to think about their own design from a direct response perspective now. And how is that thinking different from basically how people normally think about design?

Lori Haller 00:13:31 Yeah, that's a big old question and I probably should just start with just a touch of background. So everybody is clear and we're all on the same page. Even 10 years ago, the copywriters were in one section together, the marketers were in another section and then you had the designers over here and they kind of talk to each other, but not very much. Now copy is king and it always will be. But design these days, I think of every project I approach as the design of copy, you used to just say, you know, make me a pretty designer. Here's the copy, you know, the words. And it's so important these days, I'd say every other day, I'm lucky enough to get an email from somebody. And they either see my work. They heard about me or they listen to a video or a podcast. And they'll say like, I'd really like to talk to you.

Lori Haller 00:14:28 I'm a writer or I'm a CEO or something. And I'm noticing that today design is almost more important than copy or at least knowing how to get on top of it. So your question is extremely important and valid. So when thinking about the design of copy, you just really have to focus on readability, making sure that you're not just using teeny tiny fonts. Does that make sense? Sometimes teeny tiny fonts, uh, look really chic, but if you're speaking to a 65 year old and all they need as a retirement package, they want to be able to read it quickly, trust it, trust your copy, and then click yes. Or call a phone number. So readability is king getting into the shoes deeply of who you're speaking to with your copy. You and I talked a little bit about this in the past as well. A lot of people will say, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Lori Haller 00:15:28 You know, on a call when we're doing a kickoff call. Yeah. Yeah. You know, they're like 40 years old. They're women, they have wrinkles or whatever. I'm like, you just outlined like three little nugget. I'm talking about like, are there people who can only afford like \$49 a month? Like if it's a subscription, are these people on your list? You know, can they afford a \$180 a month? Do they have a lot of kids? So they're on their phone a lot. So when they read our newsletter or our landing page or whatever it is on their phone, are they going to be outside in the sunlight? So we have to stray away from pale yellows that aren't going to be easily things. Do they need a lot of click buttons? Is it going to be short copy? Is it going to be chunks of paragraphs? Are the photos going to have to have trusted seals attached to the side of the product that say something, you know, it's like, do you see how all these little nuances are so important? Right. Absolutely.

Lori Haller 00:16:33 So I guess to wrap that up, just knowing your customer's important colors are important right now, I was just coaching a team yesterday and they kind of were jamming so many things on the page, dark backgrounds and all this stuff. And, um, I had to show them some examples of winners and other companies online, where today, because of what we've all been through the last two or three years, we're using a lot of white, white space. So people can come to the, either the website or the sales page, even a print brochure, more

white space than ever before, because people they're in a conundrum. Every, you know, it's every which way but loose. They have kids running around. Um, they're working at home trying to manage on zoom and this allows them to have ample resting, calm space. Therefore you force that copy there in the center.

Lori Haller 00:17:32 And it's just all eyes on the page. And that's the name of the game is when people call me in, I must like strap them down with duct tape, hold them on tight, build trust, force them by specific techniques and tactics side, choose to keep reading. And then you able to say yes, so that's important. And color is important too. It's easy to just go online and see what are the trending colors in either fashion, um, interior design, you know, design. It doesn't really matter. They kind of flow into each other, but you don't want to be using an old, outdated, tired color. You really want to know, like right now a weird lime is green is hot, like a rich Navy blue, some black that stark next to white with very limited copy. And so there's these little nuances that it's important for you to understand.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:18:32 Absolutely. I mean, to me, I'm fascinated by what you said about the relationship between basically design and copywriting and Gary Vaynerchuk. Actually, he had a saying, he used to say that content is king, but context is God. And I think that they sort of adapt this to what we're doing here, because I mean, we can say that copy is king, but context in this case, it's also God. And by context, I really think about the user experience design as a whole, which really incorporates both elements of actual copy and the actual design on the page, the colors, the fonts, the topography, the whole rest of it. And all of that really plays a factor. And I think that nowadays, I think this is a developing field and with mobile technology and smaller devices, this is becoming more and more important, at least on my side in the agency, we work a hundred percent online. So, um, I've seen a lot of impact from design for sure.

Lori Haller 00:19:38 Yeah, definitely. And you've said the key point right there is I actually had to have a pretty deep discussion yesterday with somebody on this, when you have that copy, you know, in the idea and the tone, the voice, the flare, the essence, and you've written it. So it will speak to your audience. You must back it up with a design that conveys the same message. Every single point from the colors, the fonts, the photos, even the click buttons. So that's where trust can be blown. People blow, trusts so much because they have this idea and the copy feels and sounds like this. And then they just pair it with any old thing. Oh, maybe they use that in the past or that worked last year or whatever. And immediately, I bet that you've had this, I have this feeling. I go online to get something really quick. And in my mind I have an idea of what it's going to feel like. And is it worth that amount? Is it not worth that amount? And boy, I tell you if I get to that website and those two things, don't the value, the trust, maybe it's a fabric. Maybe it's a food, whatever it is, I'm off. I'm like, Nope, I'm just not going to order this. I'm going to think of that. You can ruin your own chance by not aligning copy and design. Definitely.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:21:02 I think it's similar to in-person selling. I mean, if there's not congruency between what the person is saying, how they're saying it, the tonality and their body language, we feel that something is off. And I think that the same thing is happening here in terms of the page, how it looks like the context it's found in the position in the funnel. I mean, this is one of the things that I always obsess about the position in the funnel, because it's really important where different pieces are put and how they actually link together. I found that to be critical mission critical to maximize the results of the entire funnel.

Lori Haller 00:21:40 Absolutely on point in what your, the analogy you gave is perfect, because people can feel way more than you give them credit for. And you're right. It's the experience, the whole experience and people will they'll want me to work with them. So I will just do some research before we get on a call or two, and I will dial their phone number that's on the internet or whatever. And I will look at the copy on the website or on the products and do some research back research on them and then look at some of the reviews testimonials. And then sometimes I'll just pretend like I'm going to order something. I'll see how I'm treated. And nine times out of 10, it's like, wow, I can't believe you're so successful. You know what I mean?

Lori Haller 00:22:31 So, uh, even looking at the scripts, the voice, how people address the possible customers on the phone, how are they at upsells cross sells all of that matters and making sure again, when that box arrives in the mail constantly, I am ordering products. And I do like this 10 step process where I photograph every step of opening it, the copy, I read the copy and I'm taking notes the whole time because people, sometimes they're like, we're just going to do a print campaign. We're going to do a little online stuff. And then I have them send me the box of their product. Unlike what do you treat everybody like this, my box was dirty. There was no thank you. Note, this is the first time I've ordered it. Doesn't have, it's like sometimes it's like just an old crinkled up piece of that brown packing paper. And I'm like, I don't know how, or if I can help you at all, because I can do pull together the best, copy the best hook, the best idea, design, all those fancy things. But at the end of the day, it comes down to how you treat someone just like in a normal relationship. You know, when, like you said, be careful, look at every single thing again. Remember when I just told you earlier, I'm relentlessly curious that if you had to sit in my studio, I would probably drive you insane in a couple of

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:24:01 That would be an interesting experience, but I mean, that's good. It takes that kind of relentless attitude and being curious about everything to discover new ways of improving. What's already there. I mean, if you don't have that attitude, how else are you going to do it?

Lori Haller 00:24:18 Exactly. That kind of pushing forward, begging not giving up, you know, I'm ridiculous relentless, but I think that you must, in order to be able to compete today, kind of hold that as your standard. Sometimes we'll get to the part of an online sales page, for example. And we nailed the, like the idea, the concept, the look that headline the lead and everything. And it's just, I really have to just push forward every step of the way. So I'll start bubbling up with the copywriter and we'll say like, let's make a couple other headlines. And then we fool around with this. We do some research. We come back together just the other day. This happened out of nowhere. I might say three ideas that are absolutely unusable, but the other team member will hear something that'll spark something in their mind. That is exactly what happened.

Lori Haller 00:25:18 And two ideas later, they are the winning idea. Everybody dropped everything on the first idea that we thought was great a month ago. And this is totally unrelated, changed the copy at the top. And, uh, I'm excited to test it pretty soon. Yeah. So try that too. Pushing each other, like some people, you know, I coach a lot of teams, so that'll be like marketing people, copy people, design people on calls and we'll be coming up with a launch and some of that creativity. And if they're really tight and closed and trying to be perfect and they were afraid to speak or share like their little ID or whatever, I always try to shake the team up and like just shout things out because three stupid things I say that will not work. We'll give somebody an idea, but if you're too afraid and you need to be perfection does not exist. Those people are just limiting themselves, their company and their success by doing that. So that is something everybody can try. That's a part of your, uh, your group is just letting go. Don't be

afraid. And I find if there's anybody on the team that can't accept that wide open sharing and creativity, they're probably not a good fit. Does that make sense?

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:26:38 Absolutely. It does. And I mean, I share the same experience with regards to even if one of the ideas that is shared is not a good idea. It can still give birth to something that's great. You know, and that's what's lovely about that kind of, I think you can call it chaos. That's going on when you're brainstorming as a team, because if you have too much structure to start with, it's very hard to come up with those great ideas, in my opinion,

Lori Haller 00:27:04 Too confining. Right too. Strapped up tight. Yeah. Let yourself go a little bit.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:27:12 Well, this conversation is so interesting that I actually have a ton of questions written down is what we speak. You've spoken so far. So let me see where I should start next.

Lori Haller 00:27:22 Well, I'm here all day!

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:27:25 Going back to this idea of the importance of the context and the user experience. One other idea that I find that people don't often take into account are, I think I may have spoken with Rory Sutherland when he came on the podcast about this, because he has his book about alchemy, which is great and discusses a lot of those issues. Basically I call them the invisible factors because they're not really on the page at all. And here's what I mean. So I can send a proposal to a business and I can give my proposal to somebody else and get them to send it, of course, from their own email and their own website. And in my case, I get a result. I get an interview and they get nothing. And the difference is made by other factors that are actually invisible in the moment, which is the brand equity. One of them, what they see when they land on your website and this overarching context of who you are basically as a business and as a person, what's your history, what have you done before and all those factors. And I think that it's very important to think about these things. And I wanted to ask you how you approach this when you start working with a new client and how you approach it, when you go about designing things for them?

Lori Haller 00:28:44 It's kind of that relationship and the building of it. And just you two together. Is that what you're speaking to? Kind of just that whatever that bubbling up that happens, right?

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:28:57 Absolutely. I mean, it's all those factors, which you can't pinpoint on the sales page, on the sales page. You don't find them in the ad. You don't find them, but it's the overarching structure of everything, all the marketing that went out before, basically.

Lori Haller 00:29:12 Right. And what I have found is you might want to look into this is even when people are looking at your website or even the words you choose on LinkedIn, your, your Instagram, they're making decisions. They might not know it yet, but say your website is a big fat, horrible mess. Some people like, or some people will get these fancy websites and they're like, I'm going to buy like 10 or 15 fancy outfits. Get all these kids, CPI, little photos of myself, and then just write some basic copy or whatever. It's like splashy, but people want to know what you're worth and what are you good for? How can you think, where are some of your examples?

What are the words you're saying? How do you feel? How does your voice sound when you're on the phone? What is your proposal look like? Is it 20 pages long?

Lori Haller 00:30:08 Do you have like a system so that it looks simple at the beginning so they can catch on and get back to you? What is your email written? Like? Do you write really long, laborious emails that are hard to figure out or is it straight into the point? You know, the person is busy and you just want to give them the info, get on a call, get to know each other. Do any of those things stack up or make sense to you? Just that whole it's like your whole essence all rolled up into a ball.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:30:39 Exactly. You, you have to consider everything. And in this case, I mean, do you look at the marketing that they've done before when you work on a project usually, and in what way does that influence what you actually do?

Lori Haller 00:30:57 Well, I do, before I go on a call with somebody, even if they're just asking for maybe like print or something, I want a magalogue or a tabloid or something. Um, I will research that particular company. I'll research the person that I'm going to contact, um, say it's Mary Smith. But then when I have that company name, I'll also pull up in LinkedIn or other places on the internet, all the other people that are top notch, the designers, the COO, the CEO, I will Snoop around and investigate because, um, that's the telltale heart. Right? You can really discover. I ask other people, Hey, have you worked with so-and-so? I was kind of noticing some red flags or, Hey, have you worked with so-and-so because they sounded good on the first call. I had a couple of questions, but, and that's helpful. Do you ever do that, like call around and see if somebody had a pleasing relationship in the past, or that's always very important.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:32:00 Sometimes I do. I don't do it all the time. Typically. I only do that. If I get a sense that there is something off from the conversation, sometimes it's not something that I can point my finger to and say, this is it right. But I just get a feeling that something may be off. And then usually I do investigate the client a bit more.

Lori Haller 00:32:21 You do have to really trust your judgment. I think a lot of people know more than they really give themselves credit for. So I do tend to lean on the red flags or that odd little feeling when you're like, well, that interesting or whatever, you should really listen to yourself. A lot. A lot of people, I coach a lot of meetings at least have that topic or discussion involved, but I believe that just listening to your inner voice and what it's saying, but the other thing I wanted to say is now that we don't get to sit side by side next to people, a lot of times I would fly out or the company would fly me out to meet them in person. We'd spend some time together. We don't get to do that as often right now. So having a good background, making yourself appear like you enjoy, hopefully you do, you enjoy your day and you're professionally dressed.

Lori Haller 00:33:23 You have a warm, sincere, thoughtful voice, and you really do care about them. Eye contact, uh, being on point when you're ready for that first phone call. So they know you've done your homework. That means so much. If you come to the table unprepared, I love to come to the table with like, Hey, why the heck is your logo up there? So tiny at the top? And I'm the customer. And I was trying it out before we met. And I'm like, I've never heard of this company. I just got here, you know, my Googling or whatever. And, uh, you know, your logo, you know, your company, what your company is based on. I don't, that's interesting. I'd love to talk to you about that and I'm not being rude or, or ballsy or anything, but I don't think when people are trying to get to know you, they want milk toast or whatever they want to know what

you're worth and what you can bring to the table, how it's going to feel to work with you. Um, does any of that help or make sense?

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:34:25 Of course, of course. I mean, I agree with pretty much everything that you've said there. I think that those factors are really important. I'm curious now, how do you actually go about approaching a project? If you could share your methodology from like beginning to end from onboarding the project from the research phase to later on, what's your process there? Like

Lori Haller 00:34:49 Yeah. Well, it's kind of different for each type of project. I do, but, um, maybe I'll use a sales page as an example. Does that sound helpful?

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:34:59 That would be helpful, for sure.

Lori Haller 00:35:00 So there's obviously similarities, but if I'm coming up with the name of a new product and what the jar looks like and the other four pieces in the line or whatever, that's a little bit different. So for a sales page, for example, you know, I'll meet with a client, say they have fallen in love with my skillset and my designs, and we're a good fit. I have an onboarding set up for invoicing, you know, as well as estimating and I get them set up in the system first. Um, I don't know, um, how you do things, but it's always half upfront sometimes depending on how large the total fee is, I'll do a milestone payment and then the balance, then we get the copy. Let's see the copy is final. I will read copy when it's not final, but I will not begin working on it.

Lori Haller 00:35:54 So, um, I don't like to get copied that hasn't been to legal because that can be a nightmare later. So I kind of have to put my foot down there. I have had instances, but I have like little safety nets in place, but even about four or five months ago, I reached down and I was like, well, I've asked a couple times, you know, I'm just curious. But, um, you know, you've never gotten back to me with her legal eyes have been on this brand new product. It was an ingestible. And they're like, well, well, you know, we haven't had a chance. I'm like, we really shouldn't go much further because you don't want some big kink in the system. Lo and behold, it comes back and like one or two of the words that was the huge basis behind everything couldn't even be used.

Lori Haller 00:36:43 So unfortunately some package or boxing or something had already been printed. Wow. So you really do. I know where everybody's like, yeah, yeah, we do this all the time. Yeah. We'll get it to legal or whatever, but here's the thing. You have me look at 40 or 50 pages of copy. And I use a three-step copy review process. I created like 20 years ago and I spent all that time really investigating and getting my ideas together, my questions. And then we go full force and we design it and implement it. And then at the end it's like, ah, we just got all these notes back. And then that like ruins so many things. It's just, it's just not worth their budget or anybody's time spoiled the soup. You know what I mean? It's like too garlicky or something, but so in any case, after I get the final copy, then I do a three-step copy review process where I read it as just a regular old person just to read it, print it out.

Lori Haller 00:37:47 And I read it out loud using my voice. I don't just look on my phone. Um, it's very serious part of my equation. Then I read it as the reader. I become the audience, the prospect. And then lastly, I read it with my marketing hat on. And so we get a lot of stuff out of the way. Things like redundancy, a lot of A-plus copywriters. They don't realize it. But when you read with your own voice out loud, you hear that same word. They say again and again, and

again, some words that are too large, those will pop up because you don't want to be little anybody make them feel stupid. I don't know value. Have you ever had this happen? I will be dead set on ordering something or kind of be reading it. Then there's a word or two. I don't understand. I'm like I'm too, to even order this mouthwash, you know?

Lori Haller 00:38:38 And I mean, I can, if I'm not going to get in any, there really am such a great effect on you. But, but if somebody was looking for like a rub on joint pain and then in the copy, you're giving them all this like jargon and scientific words, they can't even pronounce no doubt. They're going to be like, I don't even understand what this is about. So it sounded like it might help me, but I'm going to get off of it as a wrap-up in that three-step copy review, we have a kickoff call and uh, we go over the project, the deadline, the copy, we get our ideas out, out and about. Sometimes it will go away on my own. Then after that for a couple of days, I'll come back with some really quick, uh, look, book ideas, and lookbook is just a series of pages.

Lori Haller 00:39:28 It can be colors, fonts, a little vignettes of like, uh, photos and stylistic approaches. I'm thinking of, I will present that, get everybody on the same page. Because as you know, when I say, just in a meeting, I'm going to use a rich velvety red with this gold undertone and the sea foam green. Like I can see it in my mind, but you might not be able to see it. So I to show like maybe headshot styles and levels that I'd like the talking head of maybe the newsletter to be photographed in and things like that. And then I just start flowing in the copy for a sales page. I don't know if you do this, but as we all know, the first, the top we call it the top or the first 12 inches there at the top is the most critical unit in a sales page.

Lori Haller 00:40:23 If you can't get them to scroll down on a phone or iPad or desktop pass, that you're sunk. So maybe you just spent 20 or 30 grand on all this fancy schmancy copy. And you didn't take the time to create a variety of page topper looks for everyone to look at and then really, you know, work hard on that page for readability, getting them engaged, sticking them on the page. You can just lose your shirt in the first four seconds. So some people just put so much time into the whole page before investigating that top. And if you work all the bugs out with your font, your look, then you can apply that to the rest of the sales page because let's face it. If they do like 89 scrolls and they still haven't said yes, because they can't trust you or it's hard to read, or maybe they don't even get that far.

Lori Haller 00:41:19 You blew your own chance for yourself. And that's one thing that I will tell designers is like, you're going to lose the whole thing for the entire team and the company by choosing a teeny tiny pale font, just because you like it. And it looks cute. But that 70 year old woman that wants this particular product, she's not going to think that's funny and she's going to need a large black font, easy to read with. So then we just go back and forth for the entire sales page. We have a lot of quality assurance, checklists and sheets that I've created over the years that the team knows to use. And then just make sure that we tie in the customer, you know, our client the entire time, and then pretty much just zip it up tight and staying on schedule is mandatory. I have no patience whatsoever for excuses. Hymning hauling messing around in that respect because the client really needs something on time. So I demand that everybody's on point. And that just, that is one thing that really does not work for me at all. Does that make any sense?

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:42:32 Of course. I mean, there's really no time for that kind of thing because people want results and you can't get results for them on this. You have some rigorous process, which evidently you do. That's great with regards to what you said, that area above the fold, the top of the hero area, that's for sure. Supremely important. I mean, people sort of decide

if this is for them and if they should read on in that area and if you don't make that first sale as I call it, because you have to sell them the idea that they need to read that and then it's game over. It doesn't even matter what you have below that. So that area for sure is very important. I also really liked what you said about reading it aloud and doing that multiple times and from different perspectives. I also have a similar strategy here, but it involves giving it to somebody who I know and is from the audience. Let's say that you're writing some copy for somebody who wants to get retired, uh, in his planning, his retirement, and this is selling a retirement planning product. Then if I can get somebody in that age group and I know them, I would usually give the sales letter to them with a design and everything. If it's online, I give them the link and I would just ask, what do you think about this? And everybody, I've never had somebody who would say no, so long.

Lori Haller 00:43:56 Hey, let me try some time. I'd love to do that.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:44:01 And that one is very powerful because you actually get direct feedback from a person who would be in the target audience. And it's really powerful because sometimes some things that you never thought about come forth, some things sometimes about the credibility of the seller, about something that seems off to them. And it's very useful. I mean, that's, for me, that's one of my secret weapons when I can use it, always use it,

Lori Haller 00:44:30 Right? Because if I get to page three and I'm like, oh, you know, I'm looking out the window. I want to snack. I want to make a smoothie. I'm bored out of my mind that writer needs to know that because what do you think the prospect is going to feel so brilliant idea of you sending it to a matching person? Exactly, definitely. We're on the same page.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:44:54 I also wanted to ask you, you mentioned before that you sometimes work with multiple departments and obviously you have to help them get along. And we mentioned, I think towards the beginning of the discussion, we were talking about how nowadays copywriters and designers have worked together a lot more. And that has also been my experience. So I wanted to ask you what suggestions do you have for somebody who is managing their own design and copywriting team about bringing the two together to the same table and how should such discussions be approached?

Lori Haller 00:45:30 That is a very, very good question. And I take that very seriously because feelings are involved and also no one teaches people. You can go to the best school and learn copywriting and then take some courses and really hone your skill. But most people don't get the most important skill, which is working with a designer or a marketer, a client when you're that copywriter, which is being able to realize, obviously everybody in the room knows that copy is king, but being able to step aside and be a good listener, being a good team player, patient kind thoughtful, you probably are sick of me saying those words, but just being a, a really good person, a team player, positive attitude, can-do attitude, willing to work with each other, sometimes setting some of your things to the side. So the thing is that designers come to the table with these words that they need to hear, like, do you want it bigger, bolder, darker, a different color.

Lori Haller 00:46:40 You know, they're used to that when we're being trained on design and then copywriters, they might not know what that means. I don't even know as a copywriter if I want it bigger, bolder. So I think establishing with teams, and this is something that I do. I have a click sheet that I use. That's like six pages of some of our most successful designs, just to a ton of different industry. And sometimes I will just give that to a designer. I will have them pick

something that they are kind of leaning towards, like one, that's got a lot of color in it or maybe one that's very bland and scientific. So once they read that copy, and maybe they're having a meeting, sometimes it's helpful just as a tool. I mean, this is a secret edge I'm giving you, but I will have open up a variety of things.

Lori Haller 00:47:31 And I do this too, with my clients. It could be a website, a sales page. It doesn't matter. And just say like, I'm really thinking you see the feeling of this that I'm showing to you. That's already done. I'm really thinking your copy might, it might be effective with this tone, but do you see this other one? This is more flamboyant, brighter colors. So just trying to understand your copywriter and understand your designer and just working back and forth. I even have them like when we weren't in our own little cubicles, like four years ago, um, at Agoura, I would even have this huge white board and the designers would come in and maybe it was the copywriter. And I would stand at the big whiteboard with a big marker. I would have already read the copy, you know, doing my pre-step copy review process.

Lori Haller 00:48:24 I would have already come up with three or four ideas quickly. In two seconds, I would sketch out big, huge eyebrow with a box, you know, rectangle. And this is going to be burgundy, huge describable, scribble, huge headline. These three bullets here, a photo box here, down, down, down, and then I would maybe next to it, sketch a totally different idea. I remember for Rob Bradick top copywriter to Gora, I would do it on pieces of paper on the wall for him while he was thinking and projecting. So all that does is it kind of gets what's in the designer's mind out. It allows the copywriter to kind of see and get a glimpse. And then just working back and forth on, you know, when you show mock-ups or you show a version or a link or whatever, just trying to learn how as a copywriter, I should actually, uh, come up with like hour or two long little training on this for copywriters.

Lori Haller 00:49:22 What words do you want to say to somebody else? Else? I, I remember it. I think it was well press, I forget, but there's a whole bunch of copywriters I worked with for a very long while there we would just work together. Like you don't want to just come at the designers. Like I hate all of this, even though you might not like any of it. It's just like with any relationship, if you're out on a date or something like that, but something like this is a good start. I really like many things. This font is difficult to read. Maybe you could show me another font. That's a little more bold. I was thinking more bold. And instead of I hate this red, or that's a ridiculous color or whatever, it's you just have to be careful. So knowing the right words, and it's like your love language, you know, it's your copy language, your design language. So sometimes just practicing doing that when it's not your project and it's not your baby and your heart and soul and blood, sweat, and tears, aren't involved. That's a good little thing to practice, you know, being with each other. But I should probably do a sheet with little interjections. Like you get more bang out of your buck. If you approach your designer, your copywriter like this. Here's how to say when it's got awful.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:50:50 That'll be awesome for sure. I mean, a lot of this is about managing ego and everybody comes at it.

Lori Haller 00:50:58 I didn't want to say it.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:50:59 Everybody comes with their own, um, projections into the relationship. Sometimes copywriters, from what I've seen, think that they should be the bosses and they should be directing everything and the designers should listen. And then the designers feel that their role is more important than just that. And a lot of conflicts can emerge out of that.

What I found useful for my own team is that I explained to them that basically it doesn't really matter who pulls the trigger so long as the project is successful, because then it's going to be a success for both of you who are involved. But if it fails, then it doesn't matter that one of you took charge and the other one stepped back or whatever, because then you both failed. It's joint responsibility. It's not that the copywriter is alone responsible, both the designer and the copywriter are responsible to deliver the result. And I think that this is the way of the future in terms of working together and sharing in the results.

Lori Haller 00:51:59 Bravo on that. You're absolutely right, but I don't know if other designers come to the table like this, but this is how I treat the copywriter in the copy. The copywriter is king and so is the copy. And they're the ones driving the boat. And I am here to service their amazing ideas and copy with everything that I can pull forward. I'm here for them. Obviously I want us to become a very tight cohesive team, but I will even spend a lot of time if I haven't been paired with them in the past, I just want to get to know them. What do they like doing? Did they have a dog, a family? How did they like to work? How do they like to have me tell them things? But I'm very mindful. And I ask them a lot of questions. What are you thinking?

Lori Haller 00:52:52 What is in your heart? What did you hear? And that's when I, you know, I was leaning on this a little earlier, before I go and do any fancy design, I will just pull together a lot of examples of things. We could go like this and kind of a little explanatory, couple of sentences. We could go like this and we go like, this it'll really play into that one little nugget you came up with. We could do. And I find that just that beautiful back, forth relationship together where they trust me and I trust them and they feel that I'm overly, I am there for them, blood, sweat, and tears. You know, it can, it can get ugly on deadlines if, if you don't have a beautiful relationship together. Yeah. I love that about this business, how you get to meet some wonderful people.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:53:49 That's fantastic. I have two more questions, Lori. I really enjoyed our discussion so far. Number one, I wanted to ask you, do you have any sort of resources, books, articles, anything that people can read to find out more about direct response design? I know there's a lot of books for the copywriting side of things, but do you have any to recommend on the design side,

Lori Haller 00:54:16 I will email it to you and then you can post it. It's like a page of a variety of types of books, you know, from Brian Kurtz's over-delivered to products that David Deutsch sells all kinds of stuff. That's awesome. Edward Tufty I will give that to you in eyes. Switch it up every like six months. So remind me, are we talk anyway, but why me and say, Hey, holler, give me that sheet. I would love to, because I read, I mean, that's the other thing I don't think I brought up along with deep work, self care, proper sleep, proper exercise meditation, and all that. I have to block off at least an hour, a day to study, just to study, read something, um, get freshened up on a new tactic or application. So that's also important.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:55:17 Fantastic. Thank you for sharing. And last question, where can people find you and when should they reach out?

Lori Haller 00:55:26 Oh, you can easily just go to my website. It's just my name, Lori hallar.com. And you can also hit me up. Same thing, Lori, holler on LinkedIn. And there's a lot of videos, podcast information there. And on my website, obviously you can fill in the form and it'll come right to my email and I'll get right back in touch with you. But, um, yeah, hit me up if, uh, gosh, if you have a question or something like that, I love people, like I said, and helping them

and it just makes me smile to have somebody asks something and then I either give them a sample of something for project they're trying to get a client with, or I look at something for them just complimentary or whatever. Um, it's beautiful to just reach out and help each other. Cause, uh, it gives me such pleasure to see people reach their goals. I feel grateful all day, every day for the life I have and to be able to do something that brings me such joy. You know,

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:56:38 That's amazing, Lori, thank you for sharing that. And I'm sure that a lot of our listeners are going to find a ton of value. There I myself loved the interview that you had with John Carlton and definitely recommend that to the listeners to listen in. So that's fantastic. We're going to put all the links down in the show notes. Thank you then Lori for participating.

Lori Haller 00:57:01 Yeah, it was simply my pleasure. And thank you again. I'm so tickled to have spent this time together with you. I really appreciate it.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:57:10 Thank you. And for our listeners stay tuned for the next episode. And until next time, remember to keep growing your businesses and providing massive value to the world. You are the reason why we're all growing richer. Our freedoms are expanding and we're all living in greater prosperity. Thank you.