Laura Casselman Interview

Affiliate Marketing, Digital Products and Building an Online Business



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About This Interview

In this August 2019 conversation, Laura Casselman, then CEO of JVZoo, discusses how affiliate marketing connects digital product creators with marketers who can introduce their offers to new audiences. She also shares perspectives on commitment, planning, asking for help and delegating tasks.

This is a transcript of the original interview, not a new interview conducted by FAQ Marketing Logic. Speaker labels follow the supplied transcript, which identifies the interviewer as "Speaker 1". The wording has been retained, with paragraphs formatted for easier reading.

Full Interview Transcript

Speaker 1:

Well, we're very lucky today because my guest is Laura Casselman, who's the CEO, chief executive officer, of JVZoo. Hello, Laura, and welcome.

Laura Casselman:

Hello. Thank you for having me.

Speaker 1:

Well, actually, you've given up some time in your very busy day to join us and explain about JVZoo and explain about your role there. I've got to ask you what you did before you discovered internet marketing and JVZoo?

Laura Casselman:

Yeah, so I've only been with JVZoo for a little over four years now. Previously, I not only was in New York city dancing professionally with the Radio City Rockettes, but I was also simultaneously building my corporate resume. So I would work three months with the Rockettes each year, and then I would go and work in corporate America the rest of the time.

Speaker 1:

It is a pretty fantastic troop, isn't it?

Laura Casselman:

It is. It is the world's most famous precision dance troupe. It's been around since the 1930s and if we had to relate it to something you may know in Europe, it would be the Tiller Girls.

Speaker 1:

That's such a big contrast from your business world. How do you fit both things in?

Laura Casselman:

Well, I don't sleep a lot, number one. I never have. I truly believe that, as human beings, we don't need to fit into boxes. We can use both sides. I have a very creative and a very analytical side and for me to be fulfilled, I need to exercise both of those, so I was really fortunate to be able to do that. Of course, I worked in the dance world for years to work my way up to the Rockettes. When I made the Rockettes, it is a Christmas show and while you sign a year long contract, you're only required to work the Christmas Spectacular.

So that's what I would do. I would work the Christmas Spectacular and then the rest of the year I would work in corporate America. And what I did was ensure that I was good enough at my job in corporate America that they would let me leave for three months, as opposed to only two to four weeks of vacation each year, and that they would welcome me back. Every time I came back, I got a raise and a promotion as well.

Speaker 1:

Well, you're certainly a very driven person and a very dynamic person. I know that from reading your resume. How did you discover the world of internet marketing or information marketing? How did that knock on the door?

Laura Casselman:

Certainly. So in the early 2000s, during the dot-com bubble, I was married to Chad Casselman, who is of course the original developer and the Chairman currently of JVZoo. But Chad and I had companies together. We worked in this together. So I always knew that I never only wanted to dance and so when I get around people that have information I don't have, I usually want to ask a million questions and absorb it all and study. When Chad was getting his

master's degree in computer science, I never wanted him to not be able to speak to me about it, so I would go to Barnes & Noble, the bookstore, and I would get the books. I'm a speed reader, so I would read them all, making tonnes of notes on Java, JavaBeans, .NET, all the coding he was learning, so that I would understand it as well.

Speaker 1:

Now, the business of JVZoo is kind of the success engine between the internet, or information market, or as somebody who's got a product, or some software. It's the engine in the middle of getting that to the market and really enlisting an army of people to sell your product on your behalf. I've kind of put it in a nutshell, but tell me how you started and what JVZoo actually does in more detail.

Laura Casselman:

Sure. So JVZoo started with our founders who were internet marketers who were having issues with the current platform they were using. It didn't do everything they wanted it to do. They kept requesting new features, and they weren't getting them and so they solved their own problems, which is the great way to start any fabulous product, right? You identify a problem and you provide a solution, which is what most internet marketers are doing. So they identified their own problem in this industry, and they created the solution.

They were very fortunate to have perfect timing, so to speak. They easily recruited people over onto JVZoo because people, on mass, in internet marketing had the same problems. What the platform, in short, does, is it takes product owners, it introduces them to affiliates or internet marketers who have a list of buyers, and then they can together and create a joint venture seamlessly on our platform. All the tracking, everything, is there so no one has to worry about anything. And together, they can build businesses and make money.

Speaker 1:

Now, of course, the one big problem with us internet marketers is we have a little bit of an idea and we start to build a product, or a course, or something we're selling, and quite often, we're overwhelmed with the scale of the work

that we have to do so progress very slowly and almost give up some times. And you mentioned problem solving, and of course, JVZoo does that because of this business of enlisting other people to sell your product for you, for a commission, really makes the world unlimited in terms of marketing.

Laura Casselman:

It does. You know, over the last several years, we've seen more and more major corporations start to utilise affiliates. They're really understanding it. I think it's really great because it's not just our little bubble now who understands affiliate marketing. The whole world, as a whole, is starting to understand the power of affiliates.

Speaker 1:

Of course, for the benefit of the internet marketer who's completely new at this, it does mean you give a little bit of your profit from the sale of your product to JVZoo for your service, for putting it there. And also the people who continue to sell your product in other forms, they take a little share of the profit too. So it's win-win for everyone.

Laura Casselman:

Correct. There are people that when they're brand new, they're super green to the industry, they don't understand the reason of using affiliates and paying. For instance, just last week, we got a support ticket that got escalated to me because they just no longer knew how to respond to the guy. He wanted to give 12% commission and we were like, "First, you can offer any percentage of commission. That is your ability and your right as the product owner when you're listing your product. However, if you want mass support, big supportive affiliates, you're going to want to increase that percentage." So that's what we were trying to explain to him. In which case, he was like, "So give away more of my money?"

If you're an intelligent marketer, you're not giving away more of your money. You're reaching consumers you would have otherwise never known how to reach. And then when you reach out to them and you provide one solution, you can then provide other solutions or upsells without your affiliates, down

the road to customers and use those affiliates for your new products, to bring in new customers.

Speaker 1:

Now, what I think is interesting, Laura, is this business of motivation, the fact that the best sellers on JVZoo are in competition with each other. You know, there are a leader boards and things like this. There's so much kudos and prestige to be gained by selling a product on behalf of someone else. They really work hard at this, don't they?

Laura Casselman:

They really work hard at it. But the great thing about leader boards and these competitions is that human beings, we are wired to compete. It is from way back when, to survival. Now though we're all pretty fortunate at this point in time. We don't have to fight for food or the only deer that we can find. But instead, our egos need it. We're human beings. Our egos need the win. So friendly competition, that's what it is, it's drumming up friendly competition. It's letting everyone know where they stand. It's live, so they get to see, "Five hours ago, I was in third place, but now I'm in second place." It just is a good, friendly competition and creates a great environment.

Speaker 1:

Now, what's fantastic about this is if you are an internet marketer and you have a product on JVZoo, once you've made your product, and loaded it in, and provided all the materials that your affiliates need so they can do their work, it can be for you a passive process. So this army of people is just saying, "Wow, this is a great product. We can promote this to our list, who are already responsive, and we know that people on our list will want to buy this." You, as a product creator, can almost say it's like throwing a stone into a pond where the ripples just spread out. I think that's a fantastic business that the internet has brought us.

Laura Casselman:

Absolutely. You'll see different ways of launching products because that's what our platform is. It's a place to launch a product to get its jumpstart out there in the world so that you have large volume of sales happen very quickly. That

being said, you'll see some people only list their product launch for one week and then they'll take it down. But if you leave it evergreen, if it's a product you're going to support ongoing, you should just let affiliates continue to promote your product you spent so much time building. You keep just supporting that product, just making sure the tech works. Just support the product and let the sales roll in.

Speaker 1:

Now the wonderful thing, Laura, is that there are always new internet marketers getting onboard, and going to seminars, learning a bit about it, and saying, "You know, I could do that with my skills. I have a few skills to put together a product." In this occasion, can you tell me in pretty basic terms, just imagine I'm somebody who's got a really good product or some software, I go to the JVZoo website, how do I get onboard? How do I put my product on there to make this system of JVZoo work for me?

Laura Casselman:

So it's pretty self-explanatory. We tried to create it that way. You go, you set up your account, and then the next thing we're going to ask you to do after you fill out your paperwork, is we need you to attach a payment processor. You can use something like PayPal that's super simple or if you've got a merchant account, you want to tie that in as well. But after that and we collect your tax paperwork, other than that, all you need to do is click the button that says Add A Product, and it walks you through step by step on adding a product on JVZoo.

Speaker 1:

So you upload your artwork, you put your links in, you put the download for your product itself. It might be a zip file or something like that. You put in your funnel, which means to say from a basic level, you can give people the opportunity to buy a more comprehensive product or something else that just fits into the system. All being well, click the button, you get the interest of affiliates, and they say, "Wow, we're going to go with this and promote it to our list." It's a marvellous opportunity to make money and let's not be silly about this, it's a business opportunity that you can really run from a laptop in your back bedroom if you want to.

Laura Casselman:

Absolutely. So many people that we know... And we just recently, this year actually, released the 'Rise of the JVZoo Superheroes' book and those featured in this book were not just people that were full-time internet marketers, but we wanted to show that some people have other passions in life and they just want to supplement their income. We interviewed people that have full-time corporate jobs. We interviewed people that are musicians and artists to show that it is what you want it to be, truly. And then we've had some people that just wanted so badly to get out of the corporate America job or wherever, whatever country they lived in, they hated their corporate job and they did, they built their business in their back bedrooms when they got off from their nine to five, and then they eventually were able to quit that job and they work solely for themselves now.

Speaker 1:

Now, you've almost told my own story here. My wife and myself were tied in corporate jobs and at a certain age in life, we decided we didn't want to go to... My wife's a teacher, didn't want to go to a school every day. And I certainly didn't want to ride the train into central London being the commuter every day running a big radio business. So we made the jump ourselves, so we know exactly what this means to jump ship and be self-sufficient. Laura, in terms of internet marketers, I've got to say, some of us are fatally flawed. We have a great idea, and something impedes our progress. If you can give the benefit of your experience, what are the things that really we should get on with but don't?

Laura Casselman:

So, I think the biggest thing is you need to determine right out the gate when you have an idea, "Is this what I want to commit to or not?" Because we all have great ideas all the time, and then we see them sold for $19.95 on television and we're like, "I thought of that five years ago." We all are like that. But you have to decide, do you want to commit to that idea? Once you make that decision, then you've got to make a plan. You need to write your plan down, and you need to follow the plan every day.

Fail a million times, that's fine. Fail a million times, but you have to commit to the plan. We've all seen the images where you've got the one guy digging a hole, and he finally turns around and goes back. And the other guy busts through the wall of the hole moments after, because he kept going. Failure is only failure if you don't learn from it. I think so many people forget that we can hit roadblocks, we can fail, and it's okay to pivot. It's okay as long as we are still working towards the same goal. It's when we just abandoned the goal and give up that nothing changes.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. You're right that it is so often just on the threshold of success that people say, "Oh, I've tried too hard at this. It's not going to work." Actually, pushing just a little bit further, taking more action is the thing that gives it the tipping point and makes it succeed. That's definitely the case.

Laura Casselman:

We have this interesting dynamic of where we feel like it's not okay to ask for help. It's absolutely okay to ask for help. That's why there are coaches out there. Of course, do your research and don't just get any bloke that says, "Hey, I teach this, and you should pay me $10,000 and learn from me." Do your research. Make sure that they've got a proven track record, speak to their previous students, find out. But there's people that you can ask for help from if there's something you're not good at. So, you've got the idea and you're good at sales or marketing, but you don't know how to develop the product. Partner with someone who is a good at product development.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. I know you're a great champion of women in business, and I'm going to ask you this question. Do you think men are any worse than women in some areas? You know, are we equally gifted at doing these things? To me, you're a very motivated person. You seem as if you get an idea and get on with it straight away, no slacking. But us men tend to have a little more of a casual approach.

Laura Casselman:

I really think it's particular to the person. It doesn't matter their gender, especially with that because we can all be lazy, and sometimes we actually need to hit the pause button and rest and regroup. That's beneficial to all of us. But women, we tend to be really great at multitasking and have a lot of irons in the fire but as a whole, we also are more emotional, which is difficult at times to work with. And I say this managing both men and women.

While with men you can be hard with them and say, "This is where you messed up. This is what you need to do." And there is no emotion. They're just like, "Okay, great. I'm going to go fix that." So we all have our positive and negative traits about us, and I think the biggest thing is to really hone in on what we're good at. If we can fix the things we're bad at, great. If not, just become better at what we're good at.

Speaker 1:

I think you're right. I think we, in general, have to kind of write a list of our skills. The things we're not good at, give to someone else to do, outsource that work. There are so many great people who can write copy, design websites, they can do the whole spectrum of the work needed for internet marketing. You don't have to do it all yourself. I think one of the key things I'll add here is that when it's finished, it doesn't have to be perfect. Sometimes, that's the thing that holds people up. They think it has to be completely perfect before they can do anything with it.

Laura Casselman:

Absolutely. I think too, one of the biggest things, whether you are an executive in a company like myself or you're an entrepreneur and you're building your own products, or even if you are a stay-at-home mom who's trying to earn some extra income, that I have to keep reminding myself, because it's such good information that I sometimes forget. That's what we do with great stuff, right? We sometimes forget about it and we have to remind ourselves. We all need to be firing ourselves. Fire yourself every 90 days from tasks that take up your time and that someone else could do better. I've heard people say this to me when I've told them before, they're like, "Yeah. But, Laura, you're a CEO. You make a lot more money than I do." Or, they're full of excuses as to why.

I can go through with them and find 10 things on their list right now that they could fire themselves from. Even a stay-at-home mom. What can you give your child to do now? Your child is now old enough to pick up their own plate from the table and put it in the dishwasher. You know, there's so many jobs that we can fire ourselves from that give us more time to focus on the business. There's so many jobs someone else could do better than us that are on our teams that we could pass off so that we can focus on what we're good at doing.

Speaker 1:

That's always the way. That's always the difficult challenge is that letting go of things and saying, "Well, you do that and you look after that for me." Laura, I've taken up part of your busy day. You've been extremely generous in sitting with us today in this cross-Atlantic link and telling us your secrets. I can only say for any internet marketer who's getting going now, please go and have a look at JVZoo dot com. Many of those difficult tasks, they take off your shoulders and really catapult your product. One little thing, I'm not naming names, Laura, of hugely successful clients. Tell me though, what, at the very height of internet marketing, somebody could make from a successful product.

Laura Casselman:

Well, we've had from 2005... I mean, 2015 was a different time than where we are now in internet marketing, but we've had people make 5 million in one week.

Speaker 1:

Wow.

Laura Casselman:

Yes. We've had people, moret recently, do $1 million on their launches. You know, we had some people that do a four-day launch that hits six figures. It's really, truly what you're willing to put into it, how much work you're willing to do, and how much incentive you give your affiliates to get behind you and really rally to help you build this business.

Speaker 1:

Well, that's a great starting point for anybody new in the business now to take the word from the expert and somebody who's the heart of JVZoo, the engine for success in this business. Laura, thank you so much for your time today.

Laura Casselman:

Absolutely. Thank you for having me. You know, we are so welcoming at JVZoo. We love having people use our platform. We build it for our users. We're always available, and our community's amazing.

Speaker 1:

Thank you, Laura. Take care.

Laura Casselman:

Thank you.

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