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ARCHIVE AUDIO INTERVIEW

Alicia Lyttle

Guest Interview Transcript



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Alicia Lyttle Interview

Editor: This time, we're chatting with a highly sought-after speaker and coach who is best known for helping people to start their own online business. In fact, she's now trained thousands of people around the world during her 20 years as an online entrepreneur. Alicia Lyttle is also the founder of Pow Social, a digital marketing agency based in Jamaica with clients such as the National Commercial Bank and Hertz. So, it gives me great pleasure to say Alicia, welcome.

Alicia Lyttle: Thank you. Thank you. And I'm excited to be here.

Editor: It's great to have you with us and for those people that maybe haven't come across you before, maybe you could start by telling us a little bit more about your story. What inspired you to venture into online marketing?

Alicia Lyttle: Sure, sure. So this is my 21st year, whoa, 21 years as an online marketer and I've loved every minute of it. So what actually happened was 21 years ago, I met a man who I started dating and he said that he had some knowledge that he wanted to turn into an online course. So, at this point, I was actually working in Washington, DC. I was working at the White House. This is back in the year 2000. It was in the Clinton administration and I was in the environmental section. So it's called the Council on Environmental Quality. And my path was to be an environmentalist. I had gone to Tulane University for my undergrad and my bachelor's is in earth sciences and environmental studies. I know, so totally unrelated to what I do today. And then I have a master's of science in public health with a concentration in environmental science.

So, I went to the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine at Tulane University for my master's. So, I was ready to work on my PhD. The job that I had, we had done some amazing things and I have the opportunity to work at the White House. So anyway, while I was working at the White House, I met someone who did not work at the White House but was an entrepreneur. And he wanted to know how to do this. And he was like, "I bet you could help me figure it out. If you figured out how to work at the White House, you can help

me figure this out." So, I dived into it, but back in the year, 2000, there were very few courses or books or e-books on how to start an online business.

So, I found a teleseminar. So it was at night, this guy named Armand Morin would tell you to dial into his phone number and then he would teach you how to build a website over the phone. I know, crazy when you think about technology and how far we've come. And then he would teach you different strategies. So, I would listen to Armand every time he had a teleseminar and he would send out these emails so that you wouldn't miss it. And we developed a website that was very ugly, but in our first year, we made half a million dollars online.

Editor: Whoa!

Alicia Lyttle: And that was when I said to myself, "Wow, this internet marketing thing, it's crazy. I never knew that you could sell your knowledge online and people would just buy it like this." So, what we did was we actually sold a book and a CD on my... I eventually married him, but the guy that I was dating at the time, he was a trader and he was teaching people how to trade. So the course was on trading, commodity trading. And so it costs me about maybe $7 or $8 to make the book and the CD. And I was printing it in my basement on this huge laser printer. And I had a CD duplicator, making everything in the basement. And then we charged people $297 for the course and $7.99 shipping and handling.

So, the profits that we made on it was about $290 a package. And I was just blown away. I'm like, "This is the highest profit margin ever. I love this internet-based business." So, that was the first year and I've had my ups and downs, but I've definitely been hooked ever since. So, the guy that I was dating at the time, he inspired me to venture into it because he said, "I bet you could figure this out and I'm really wanting to sell my knowledge online." I was like, "Yeah, this is a challenge. Let's do that." And it took me on a completely different path than where I was going professionally. But yeah, that's how I ended up in online marketing.

Editor: I was going to mention that from humble beginnings, it's turned into this big business for you. But it wasn't that humble at the start, by the sounds

of things to get such a result straight out of the gate in your first year. You must have been blown away by the success?

Alicia Lyttle: I was. It was a lot of hard work though, trying to listen to a teleseminar and figure out how to run an internet-based business was definitely hard work. And there were no seminars. In fact, I don't think I ended up going to a seminar until three years later. So, it took up an enormous amount of time and trial and effort, but it was worth it. And I remember at this time when I met him, I had an apartment in Washington, DC. I was young, maybe 24 years old, or 23 years old. I had no furniture. I was sleeping on the floor of a studio apartment. But working in the White House, but still, I had just gotten to Washington, DC. And then now I'm learning about an internet-based business. You see, what my dad had always taught me was that in order to be rich, I had to either be a professor or I had to be a professional athlete.

Editor: Right.

Alicia Lyttle: So, as we were growing up, my dad took us to different lessons to try to see if we could be an athlete. And my sister actually took up golf and she became a professional golfer. She went on the women's LPGA Tour, but there was no money in it. My sister's an internet marketer now. And me, I decided that I was going to be a professor. So, my whole goal in working in Washington, DC was to get a scholarship to go to college because my parents couldn't pay for my college. I had a full scholarship to get my master's degree. I was on scholarship for my bachelor's. I figured out different ways to pay for my education. But I say that in saying that my career path and my internet path intersected when I said, "You know what, to be rich, my daddy said there's only two ways to do it, athlete or professor."

And so after I left Washington, DC, I did get a full scholarship to go to college. I went to the University of Michigan to do my PhD. But while I was at the University of Michigan, I asked my professor how much money does he make a year? And when he told me how much money he made in a year, I was like, "We made that much last month in our business." Of course, I didn't say it out of my mouth, but I asked him again. I said, "That's a year?" And he said, "Yes." And I'm thinking to myself, "My dad lied to me. Professors are not rich."

Editor: And also you proved your father wrong as well, I guess, because you found a third way to become rich.

Alicia Lyttle: I did. And at that point, I did drop out of the PhD program. So I left Washington, DC, University of Michigan PhD program. This is when our business was building. And then, I dropped out of the PhD program and became a full-time online business owner.

Editor: And you mentioned your family, you mentioned your parents and also your sister. How supportive of you were they at this time? Because of course, I guess they just thought that you're stepping away from actually a career to do something online. And that must've been, especially around that time 2000 as you say to do that, must've been quite a risky thing and they probably didn't quite understand why you were doing that.

Alicia Lyttle: They really didn't. My dad was heartbroken when I dropped out of the PhD because he really wanted his daughter to be called Dr. Lyttle. So, he was definitely heartbroken that I dropped out of the PhD program. And my dad is from Jamaica. And his dream was for me to go back to Jamaica as an ambassador, or contribute to Jamaica, which is a country that really needs some economic empowerment and someone that can go and contribute. So, he was saying, "If you get your PhD, it would be so much better. You'd have the doctor behind your name and his credibility. And the government would love you in Jamaica." So, he was heartbroken, but he also saw that the year that I dropped out, I also traveled the world, teaching other people how to start their online business.

I was in China, Japan, India, Malaysia. I went to Australia, New Zealand, and I traveled doing a seminar tour, teaching people how to work online. And it changed so many lives. And I sent these stories and testimonials to my dad. And then both of my parents were just really proud of what I did. My sister, it took her a few years, but she came in and she saw our internet-based business. She was actually working for General Electric at the time for GE. And she was what they call a Six Sigma Black Belt in GE, which just means that she's very good in processes and systems. And she looked at my business and she said, "Why are you duplicating CDs in your basement? Why are you

printing books in your basement? Why are you taking everything to shipping every day?"

And she's telling me, "You need to outsource, you need to have a fulfillment company." These things that I hadn't even been exposed to. And she eventually quit her job at General Electric and came to work with us and took our business to heights that we had never expected. Now we could sell, and we could move products. And we hired people and we had fulfillment companies. And so she took our businesses to the next level and our coaching and our teaching and people to the next level. This was in 2003. And at first, she was like, "Internet-based business. I don't know about this." But when she saw everything and the numbers and what we were doing, and the testimonials, with that package, I was telling you about our first product. The testimonials came in and I would print the testimonials and sent them out, send them out with every new package. And so it's a 10-page testimonial booklet.

So when you bought from us, you got the book, you got the CD and all their testimonials. So, they converted to being supporters. And then my mom ended up working with us in the business and my sister worked with us in the business. So, it definitely became a family business after some convincing.

Editor: And were you surprised by that success? Because as you say that the timeframe is actually quite short, isn't it? To go from 2000 to 2003, and to have that exponential growth? That's crazy, right?

Alicia Lyttle: The timeframe was short, but there was so much focus on the business. And back in the day, we're talking 2000, the internet, what people were curious, they were willing to try new things and buy online. It was what we used to call the good old times in internet-based business. So, when you're one of a few at that time, there were so few people teaching and there were so few people with courses online that when you were found, it was pretty easy to make a sale online. So it was easier than I thought it would be. And then building a brand and reputation and speaking really helped to build a business. Even to this day, the power of speaking and getting your brand out there always leads the way when it comes to building a business for me.

Editor: Sure. The awareness factor.

Alicia Lyttle: Absolutely.

Editor: And obviously since 2000, the internet has changed dramatically. You must have noticed quite a lot of change from how things were back then to what it's like today.

Alicia Lyttle: Absolutely. So, one of the biggest things I was talking to my sister about yesterday was what it took to build a website back then. So we used FrontPage and Dreamweaver. You had to take a course and buy books, and it was hard coding to build websites. Now, I can build a website in under three minutes and you can time me by using these different funnel building drag and drop builders. Things now, because of technology allow us to launch a business in record time. And for those of us who've been around for 21 years and remember building our webpages on Dreamweaver are so appreciative of where technology is today.

And to people who are coming in today, we're like, "Boy, you have it so easy. If you only knew what it took to send out an email back then." Right? I had one of my students come up to me and she was like, "Oh my gosh, it's so hard to build a website. I don't know which block to put where and how to replace the photo." And after she was done, I said, "Okay, well, let's go take a class in Dreamweaver and build it and hard code it from scratch." And she was like, "What?" I'm like, "Exactly. Stop complaining. Take a minute to figure it out, but appreciate the software that you have today." And what I love is that these software companies are just getting better and better with the end goal in mind of making it as easy as possible for their customers to build the pages, the assets that they need in order to support their business.

So, all I can do is every time I see I'm addicted to technology and tools because of this, because I've been in this industry for 21 years. So, what? You have something that can make my life easier, faster, be more efficient in business? Show me, and I will buy it.

Editor: And now I guess it's a good time for me to ask, can you give us some tips as to which tools we should be looking at?

Alicia Lyttle: Sure. So, Whoa. [crosstalk 00:16:04].

Editor: That's a loaded question. Isn't it? It's a big question.

Alicia Lyttle: So, let me talk about tools that I use every day, and then we can talk about different tips for starting an online business. So, first of all, let's talk about the tools that I use or my students would use every day. Definitely, you need a software that is a funnel builder, website builder software. I use both the GrooveFunnels and ClickFunnels. So when I'm going to build or launch any type of campaign, whether it's a landing page, a membership site, sales page, whatever I'm doing, I will use one of those two platforms to build my pages, GrooveFunnels or ClickFunnels. And then you have to have an email autoresponder. So, there's plenty of them out there. So choose one that works for you, but the money is in the list. So, you have to make sure that you're collecting name and email addresses at every opportunity that you can.

So find a good tool that works for your business, ask your friends what they use and get an email tool to work with that. And you have to look at collecting payment and all that kind of stuff. And then the next thing is traffic. So my favorite way to generate traffic is with social media, Face-book, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter. I haven't tried TikTok or Snapchat traffic yet, but you better believe that that's on my to-do list. So, I look at generating traffic with social media as a faucet. When you turn on the faucet, the water that gushes out, that's the people going towards wherever you're pushing them to. You turn off the faucet, which means you're not active on social or promoting anything on social and nothing comes out. So, if you are really looking for a great traffic source, you don't have to be on all the networks, pick one that works for you, but test it.

I'm loving going live right now and doing live selling. And it's working for me. So, you just have to see what works for you, but generate traffic now that you can send to that landing page or sales page or the webinar registration page that you're selling whatever you're going to be selling on. And then, if I could think my top three tips for anyone starting an online business, first, I would say, pick your path. What do you want to do? And where do you want to go? And when I look at paths and I lead my students down paths, there's really four paths that I lead them down. The first one is freelancing and that is taking the skills that you currently have and turning it into a service-based business, for example. So my students who was interviewing me right now is

an amazing interviewer. He would use that skill as... Here is what he does, but just giving you an example.

He would use that skill as his freelancing business. And he could post on his social media and say, "I interview people to help you create your books, your articles, your blog posts. Here's my service. Here's how much I charge." And there'll be people out there that would definitely buy from him. He can also post that service on other sites like fiverr.com, F-I-V-E-R-R.com, which is my favorite place for people to get started or Upwork, U-P-W-O-R-K, upwork.com. And he's taking that service-based business. He's taking his skills, turning it into service-based business, posting online or on those sites. And he will get work coming into him quickly. And then the second pathway is the info-products business, or the courses business.

So taking that knowledge, now Paul knows how to interview like a pro. So now he's going to write an e-book that says, How to Interview Like a Pro: The 10 Strategies That You Need to Know, whatever. And this is his course. It could be an e-book. It could be a course. It could be a mastermind that he's doing, whatever it is, but he takes his knowledge and turns it into a product that he creates once and sells it over and over and over again. The other one I love, the other path I love is affiliate marketing, so selling other people's products and getting paid for it. And then the last path, which is really popular right now is e-commerce. And e-commerce as an umbrella, there's so much that fits under it. Selling on eBay, Etsy, Amazon, Shopify, GrooveKart, Dropshipping, print on demand, retail arbitrage, or retail sales.

There's a lot that fits under that. So, the first thing that I would say would be to pick your path. That's number one. The second tip is, okay, now once you've picked your path, create your plan. So, how are you going to really take this path and run with it? So, create a plan around it. And then number three is your profits. So we have to remember that we're in business to be profitable. So what are you charging? How much are you spending? And really understand your profit so that you can grow and scale your business. So, I hope that helps.

Editor: That's great advice. And I think there's a couple of things that you've touched on here, Alicia, which a real key takeaways from this. One is that you

can use social media as a traffic source. I think that's a great tip. I think a lot of people overlook that as a way of getting traffic to a website or an offer. I think that's a really key point. And also the other thing that you touched on a little bit earlier was that when you got started in 2000, there was less people doing internet marketing. So, it was easier to make the sale. But I guess the counter to that, now is people go, "Well, it was easy back then and times have change and there's way more people doing this now online." But of course, conversely, there's also a lot more people online surfing around the internet than there was back in 2000, 2003, when you first got started. So, there's no excuse not to get started in this business. Would you say that's fair comment?

Alicia Lyttle: No excuse not to get started. Absolutely no excuse not to get started and there's tools, resources, and mentors out there that will guide you on the right path. So I 100% agree, no excuse not to get started.

Editor: Well, you've obviously worked incredibly hard to achieve your level of success. Do you think you've changed at all along the way, maybe good or bad?

Alicia Lyttle: I've learned a lot along the way. And again, in 21 years, I would say that the biggest lesson that I've learned is that knowledge is so powerful. And having the knowledge about how to build an online business has been the one thing that I've been so thankful for. So, when I was with my... I told you about the guy that I was with to start my business, we start a business together. We built it for 10 years, an amazing business. And then on that 10th year, I left him. He was with another woman. And while he was on vacation with her, I left. When he came home, I wasn't there anymore. And I thought we could still work in business together and we'd figure everything out. Because for the past 10 years, I dedicated my life to that business. I dropped out of the PhD program.

That business was everything. We had 400,000 customers. We made $6 million in 2010, but I was so wrong. He locked me out of the business, the bank account, the credit cards, our 12,000 square foot mansion is what I left. I never got back. And again, I ended up sleeping on my sister's sofa and he said if I didn't come back that he would make my life miserable. And he lived up to that. It took me six years to get divorced, $300,000.

Editor: Wow.

Alicia Lyttle: But the one thing that I learned in that is that when I was at my lowest, when I had $0 in my bank account, yet attorney fees, when I had no email database, I was locked out of my personal and business email. My contacts gone. Les Brown called me and Les Brown knew what was going on. I'd been friends with him for about seven years at this point. And he said, "Alicia, you might've fallen on your back, but you can look up. So get up." And then he repeated it three times in that deep Les Brown voice, "Get up. Get up. Get up." So I got up off of the sofa. I was literally on the sofa. I went to my sister and said, "You know what? We know how to build online businesses. We could start over again, right from scratch by taking our knowledge and turning it into another business." And we did.

We found a local business who actually needed our help and needed marketing help and we put them on LivingSocial and Groupon and they crushed it. And then they referred us to another resort down the street, and we generated $200,000 for them using one promotion of LivingSocial. And we got 15% of that. And then it just kept going and people talked about us and all we did was took some knowledge about marketing and an idea and turned it into a business.

And then we took that knowledge and we turned it into a course. And that course generated $1.8 million for us in the year. So, we sold a course saying, How to Help Local Businesses Get on Daily Deal Sites and Get Paid for Doing It. So, we made money with that info-product. And as we reflected on it, we said, "You know what? As long as you know how to be in business for yourself, and you're committed to doing it, you have no excuse, you can do it." But I knew what it felt like at that moment to absolutely lose everything. I knew what it felt like to say, "You know what Lord, why me? Why me?"

Editor: Well, that's incredible though. To go from the White House to having a $6 million business, then to be sleeping on your sister's couch because the relationship for whatever reasons didn't work out. And then to pick yourself back up again, that shows a level of integrity, self-belief, and also just the determination that you have, Alicia. It's an incredible story, a really inspiring story as well. Just touching on the personal aspect of this, I know you've had

many challenges along the way, one of the things that I did want to ask you about is something that you mentioned on your blog, on your website, that you've also suffered with cancer along the way. You've had that to deal with as well. But again, that's not stopped you at all. In many ways, I would say it's inspired you.

Alicia Lyttle: It really has. I was first diagnosed with cancer about a year after my wedding. So almost a year to the date, after my wedding and it's ovarian cancer. So I had stage 2C ovarian cancer. And when I ended up in the hospital, I was in surgery six days later. And then thinking that after I went through that and had surgery, thinking it was over yet only to hear as I would go into my doctor's appointment, only to hear a year later that it had come back again. And then I had to do six months of chemotherapy losing all my hair, had to wear wigs. It was very emotional and still run a business since I was in college at the time, still in college, I was in my PhD program and then getting through chemotherapy and thinking that it was over only to 18 months later, have it reoccur again and go in for a next surgery and all in all, I've had six surgeries related to this, or, well, five surgeries and half a year of chemotherapy.

And what I really attribute to getting me through. And this was at the University of Michigan, and then since I've left Michigan, I've had other doctors, but when somebody looks at my medical records... When a doctor looks at my medical records, they always say, "Wow, I have never met someone who's had so many reoccurrences and is still here today."

Editor: Wow. Wow.

Alicia Lyttle: And that always flatters me, but you know what really helped me was understanding mindset because you see, I had been exposed before the first time I had cancer, I had been exposed to Tony Robbins and Brian Tracy, and really understanding the power of mindset. So, when I would go in for a cancer treatment and the doctor would introduce me to the nurse, for example, "This is our cancer patient." And I would say, "No, no, no, I'm not the cancer patient. I'm the cancer survivor."

Editor: I like it.

Alicia Lyttle: And they would laugh and they would call me the cancer survivor. But I used what I knew about personal development and mindset to always see that the end result of this, that I was going through right now was that I was a thriver, not just a survivor, but even a thriver at the end. So, it was difficult, but here's what also got me out of it. Les Brown again, he taught me about toxic relationships and something he calls relationship illness and he said, "Alicia, do you know how people say, 'Oh, you make me sick. Or that person makes me sick.'" I'm like, "Yeah." He's like, "It's a real thing. So next time..." He did not like the man I was married to. So, he said, "The next time he walks towards you, I want you to tell me how your body feels on the inside." I'm like, "What?" Didn't understand him, but I said, "Okay, yeah, I'll humor you when I will do it."

So the next time my husband at the time walked near me, my body on the inside was boiling and I'd never paid attention to that before. And I called Les back and I'm like, "Les, my body was hot on the inside." And he said, "Get out." And it was a few months after that, that I left. I had an opportunity to get out and I left. And I learned that we have to be careful as well with the relationships that we have. And so, I will not be in a bad relationship and this is not just a personal relationship, but also a professional relationship. If I'm in a partnership that's making me sick, I'm out of that partnership. If I can't resolve the issue, I don't put myself around people who make me feel sick.

Editor: Yeah.

Alicia Lyttle: So I'm always encouraging people, "Look at who's around you, how they make you feel because our bodies do react to that." And it's very important for all of us to take account of the people in our lives and how they contribute, whether it's a positive or a negative experience in our lives.

Editor: Yeah. I think people undervalue the impact that others can have in a good and bad way. In fact, a friend of mine said to me the other day that, "Sometimes with relationships, it's easy to get into relationships, but not so easy to get out of them." And I think a lot of people can relate to that. So, it's a truly inspiring story, Alicia that you have. In terms of your business today, how can people find out more about you and that the courses that you've put together?

Alicia Lyttle: Sure. So you can find me all over social media, Alicia Lyttle. I'm on Clubhouse, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, but connect with me on my website, which is Alicia Lyttle, A-L-I-C-I-A-L-Y-T-T-L-E.com, alicialyttle.com. Fill out my contact us form. And I'd love to chat with you, and if there's anything that I can do to help you in business, it's my honor to do it. So, I'm more than excited if you reach out to me.

Editor: Great. And that website address just one more time.

Alicia Lyttle: Sure. It's alicialyttle.com, A-L-I-C-I-A-L-Y-T-T-L-E.com.

Editor: Alicia, it's been an absolute pleasure chatting with you. Thank you for telling us a little bit about your story, sharing some of your best tips as well. Really can't thank you enough, but thank you so much.

Alicia Lyttle: Thank you. My pleasure.

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