

Amber:

Hey everybody. It's Amber here. I want to talk about marketing and your online presence. I know this is a topic that is sticky for a lot of us. Marketing can feel like a narcissistic activity or we're just trying to shout ourselves out, promote ourselves. It can feel weird to talk about money, all that stuff. But I want to demystify a little bit of stuff about marketing. What you might not know about me is before I started teaching yoga full-time I had over 15 year career in marketing and graphic design. I have worked in corporate situations, startups, at nonprofits, I've freelanced in my own business. I love talking to yoga teachers about this and breaking down some of the myths and maybe disbanding some of the anxiety around marketing because I think it can be really confusing, but it doesn't have to be, so let's jump into it.

Amber:

The first thing I want to convince you is that marketing is not a dirty word. I know it can feel that way, right? But I want to just emphasize that marketing when it's done right, is not about being a sleazy salesman or being a narcissist that only talks about your own work all the time. Marketing at its core is about building trust and relationships through education. The whole purpose of marketing is to let other people know how you can be of service, what you offer, how they can participate, and honestly why they should care, right? You're going to demonstrate your value. What makes you different? Why should they go to your class? Why should they participate in your workshop over all the millions of other things that they could be doing? What we want to do with marketing is really just build this trust and build a relationship with our students, with our customers.

Amber:

I might start using marketing words customers or leads. What I mean is your students, the people that want to participate in the offerings that you're making. Marketing is really about building that trust, that relationship, providing that education, demonstrating that value for free, sometimes. When it's time to make that offer to say, I have this opportunity coming up and you need a hand me money for it, people already trust you as a teacher, they already know that you've taught them things, you've provided a lot of value and they're ready to say yes. Marketing really is just education. And you're always marketing actually, because with time, your best marketing is going to be your reputation and word of mouth, not anything that you might post on the internet. And so I want you to think about this, every step you take, everything you do is a little bit of marketing, right?

Amber:

You're building your personal brand. I don't like to talk about that a lot, but it's probably a word that you've heard in these conversations about marketing and basically personal brand is just like your reputation, right? When you're teaching, when you're creating content, that's marketing, that's an opportunity to build trust and build a relationship with your students. Your classes and your offerings that you make, with clear class descriptions, are marketing pieces in and of themselves. They tell students how they can participate with you, what need you might solve, what problem you might be able to help them with and how to get going. Your network, your social media accounts, your friends, your current students, your email newsletter, whoever is spreading your work and your words, those are marketing assets for you. Your bio and your website or marketing, that's part of your brand, it's part of who you are as being presented online to others.

Amber:

You have your visuals, right? Pictures of you, flyers that you may create, other materials that advertise your work. And then finally your reputation, right? That personal brand kind of thing, that is marketing. Every time you have an interaction with a student, with a teacher, with a customer, you are building that reputation and that in and of itself is your most valuable asset. Because I'll just say that all the time in marketing research we come back to the idea of what makes a person go from being on the fence about joining an experience or saying yes to a workshop or a class or whatever. Every single time in these market research things, the one thing that makes a difference in making that decision is, did I get a recommendation from a trusted friend? Right?

Amber:

That's why influencers, right? On social media. That's why you can make a career out of being an influencer, right? Because when people see somebody who they trust make a recommendation, it's very easy to say yes, if they trust them, then I'm going to like it. Your reputation goes so far in being able to do that for you, work for you, that if you are creating experiences that really help people, if you're creating a safe container for your students to come in and feel safe and explore their bodies and learn how to trust their bodies again, they're going to want to tell their friends, they're going to want to communicate and that reputation is going to be powerful marketing. Let's break down some of these tools one by one and talk about visuals. I know getting photographed is not that fun. Right?

Amber:

I think that a lot of teachers who don't look like yoga Barbie or whatever we think a yoga teacher is supposed to look like, hesitate to share photographs of themselves. Right? Especially if you're not thin, young, hyperflexible, have fancy clothes, whatever. Right? I get it. I was hesitant to take pictures of myself and put myself out there back in 2010 when I first started blogging. There wasn't Instagram, there wasn't lots of pictures of bigger yogis on the internet. It was definitely nerve wracking. I didn't know what kind of reaction I would get. I didn't know if I'd get a million hate comments. I was really nervous. I want to say that I really want to encourage you not to make the mistake of using stock photography or using a picture of some sort of, a bland thing, a pair of hands in prayer position or something, don't use stuff like that to advertise your work. Show up, be yourself, show pictures of you looking how you actually look.

Amber:

I think, something that a lot of people think is the thing that makes me different, the thing that, I can't be in a picture because I'm too fat. I'm too old. I'm too disabled. I'm too, whatever. Right? No one would take me seriously as a yoga teacher. They're not going to want to learn from somebody that is, whatever that thing is you're insecure about. But I'm going to tell you from my experience, from the experience of all the people I've worked with, that, decide to show up in this way authentically, even though they're not, quote unquote, perfect. I'm going to tell you right now, your difference is your super power. It's just a fact. That thing that you're insecure about, that you think no one would ever want to learn from me because X, Y, Z, I guarantee you, you are going to have students that come to you because you show up imperfect with that thing, whatever that thing is.

Amber:

I've had lots of students that have come to me and said, you changed my life because I saw your photo online. I started saying I can do yoga in the body that I have because she does it. I started practicing and that practice has changed my life. And now I'm becoming a yoga teacher and now I'm going to carry that

on. Right? That one thing that I was like, nobody's going to want to learn from this fat yoga teacher actually inspired so many people and has created new yoga teachers and this ripple impact just by the fact that I was brave enough to say, yeah, I'm going to show pictures of myself, in the body that I have, not try to hide and be authentic to who I am. You're not going to be the teacher for everybody, but you're going to be somebodies teacher.

Amber:

You're going to be that person that shows up and demonstrates that there's a different way to be, that you don't have to show up in a body that looks like a Barbie doll, to be a good yoga teacher, or to be a yoga practitioner. You don't have to show up looking like the cover of yoga magazines in order to have a beautiful, strong and resilient practice. I just want to give you that little pep talk and say that I really encourage you to hire a photographer or have a friend who's really good with photos, take some photos of you. You need at least one face shot and one full body shot, but I encourage you to get several photos, several dozen photos taken, if you can, because it's good to mix it up and you're not going to get a good photo with one shot. You need to take a lot of pictures. You might've noticed this when you try to take a selfie and then there's 30 selfies in your phone, but there's only one good one.

Amber:

A picture can not capture the magnificence that is you. It is only one second, right? In a million moments of who you are, a picture does not define you. It's not a life sentence. I know from experience having been in dozens of photo shoots, that you don't get a good shot just from one picture. It takes a while. You need to be able to relax and be there for a while to get some photos that you're like, that captures me. Right? Hire a photographer, have a friend take some photos of you, pick a location that feels like you, right? And has the vibe that you want your classes to have, right?

Amber:

If you're peaceful minimalist vibe, maybe you want to take it in the yoga studio with the gleaming floors and the orchids in the background. I don't know. A lot of my photos are like this in front of a graffiti mural because I love the color. I usually like to take a picture somewhere in the city that I'm living in and I love graffiti and I love street art. And so I feel when I can be my most relaxed self in front of the camera, I want to be somewhere that I really think is fun, that I know is going to look the way that I want it to look on the photos. Right? And you want to wear something that makes you feel yourself, have a couple of different options for outfits, make sure that the clothing is comfortable, right?

Amber:

You don't want to be wearing something that restricts your breathing or your movement, especially if you're going to be taking any yoga posture photos, you need to be comfortable, you need to feel like yourself. I really like to warm up before the shoot. Meaning I might go through a couple of sun salutations or just dance around with headphones on for a little bit, put on music during the shoot, tell stories or jokes, laugh a lot. Your energy comes across on the camera. It really helps if you have a photographer that you trust and that you've built some rapport with. Y'all can just chat like your friends and they can give you instructions on, tilt your chin up, blah, blah, blah, and it won't be so high stakes like, okay, I need to be perfectly still and try to be a professional model. You're not a model. Just have some fun with it. Your energy is going to come across on camera. And so it's important to be relaxed.

Amber:

Do what you need to do to get your energy in a place that feels good to you so that when you get photo taken, you can be relaxed. We're going to talk in a moment about how to get your mind right for the photo shoot. But I just want to say this stuff to set yourself up for success. If you do choose to use stock photos, which there's nothing wrong with that, if you want to, let's say make a brochure about a retreat, but you have a photo of yourself in there, but you also need some photos of a group, you don't have them yet, that's fine. Check the resources below this video. There's going to be some links down there of places that you can find diverse stock photography. I wanted to encourage you to check those out. And then you need to get your mind right before the shoot. This is something that I practice for a very long time until now I really don't have to practice it anymore. I just automatically think and feel this way when it comes to photos.

Amber:

You need to decide ahead of time, what the purpose of the photos is and what you're going to practice thinking in two situations. Number one, when you're being photographed, and number two, the thought that you're going to think when you see the photos for the first time. We're not just going to let any random thought that occurs to us, pop into our head, because guess what your brain is going to do, it's going to be mean. You're going to be standing there getting your picture taken and your brain is going to be like, you're ugly, you're fat, you shouldn't be here, you're not a model. What are you doing? Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Right? We're not going to let that happen. We're going to pick a thought to choose, to think on purpose, because we're in charge of our brains and the things that we think.

Amber:

I'm going to offer you some thoughts that I have, that really, really work for me. But you may have a different reason or a different why. The first thing to figure out is, what is the thing you want to think when you're being photographed, when you're actually in front of the lens and it's going click, click, click, and you're like, oh my gosh, what's going into the camera? Right? This is really important to get connected to your why? Why are you taking these photos? Yeah, you need them for a flyer or a website or whatever, but deeper than that, why are you here? Why are you showing up? Why is it important for you to be visible? Why is it important to show representation of people who look like you practicing and teaching yoga? Really get in touch with that. Right? For me, it's something like this, being in front of this lens, in this body, showing what a yoga teacher looks like in this body is revolutionary in a society that wants me as a fat person to hide or not to exist at all. Right?

Amber:

I can think things like that and that makes me feel powerful, right? That I'm showing up anyway, that I'm helping to be part of a revolution in representation and in who this yoga practice belongs to and who it's for. Right? I start thinking about that. I connect to my purpose. I connect to my why, and that makes me feel much more relaxed, much more purposeful, I'm ready to go. I'm not feeling insecure, I'm feeling strong and resolute and excited to show up in that way. That might not be the thought for you, but I want you to really get connected to what's your why, why are you here? And figure out what can you tell yourself in that moment where you're having thoughts about insecurity or whether or not you belong here. What is it that you could tell yourself in that moment to help you feel the way you want to feel? Whether that's confident or beautiful or strong or whatever it is.

Amber:

The second thing to figure out is, what are you going to practice thinking when you get the photos for the first time, when your friend sends them to you, when the photographer sends you the link and you open it? Right? Because if you let your brain just run away with you, it's going to be, oh no, look there, you've got a fat roll. Your clothing's wrinkled, your alignment's off. There's going to be all these thoughts that pop into your head. So instead we get to decide what we think, we're going to pick the thought on purpose. Why do you take the photos? Get back connected to your why. Right? For me, the reason I show up in photos is there's not enough representation of fat folks practicing and teaching yoga. And so here I am showing up in the body that I have today. It's all about representation. It's about helping other people see pictures like this, so that they can sense that possibility for themselves.

Amber:

And so for me, when I open the photos, I'm thinking something like, okay, remember, before you click this link, the point of these pictures isn't to look hot or for me to even like them, right? These photos exist to make other people feel less alone because seeing a body like mine representing yoga is something that we as a society are starved for and representation matters. Stay focused when you open this link. Okay, here we go. That I think, doing this mental preparation makes 100% of a difference when it comes to how your experience is going to go with the photo shoot and what you do with the photos afterwards. I really recommend that you take the time to get connected with your purpose and decide on purpose, what are you going to think and feel in that moment? Write it down on a post it, take it with you, have it posted somewhere that you can see it during the photo shoot, have it posted on your computer when you know you're going to get that link and you're going to open and look at the photos or whatever. Do this work ahead of time and it will set you up for success.

Amber:

Okay. Let's talk about printed materials. A couple of things you might want to think about getting, business cards, that's a pretty common item. I really like moo.com or Vistaprint, they're both really great solutions. I like moo.com because you can take photos and make business cards with photos on the back. You can order a hundred of them and get up to 20 designs. Within that pack, you can get different photos or images on the back. I really like that feature. I like to put an offer on the card itself, maybe that's for a free class, maybe that's to download something, if you're able to. I also like being creative, does it have to be a business card? I don't have business cards. Well, I see one here that Yoga International made for me, but for myself, for Body Positive Yoga, I don't have business cards. I have stickers. And so when I go to workshops or whatever, I will hand out the stickers and then folks can find me that way. If you Google Body Positive Yoga, I come up.

Amber:

With flyers, I like to suggest that folks, don't get intimidated about being a graphic designer, it's not something you need to know how to do in order to be a yoga teacher. You can source that out, right? Trade with the graphic designers, see who in your community is a designer that would be willing to maybe make you some materials in exchange for coming to some classes or doing a few private sessions. You can also go to canva.com, which is one of my favorite things. I made all these slides in Canva, and I am a trained graphic designer. It's so fast. It's so easy. There's templates that are going to be great. You can change up the colors, drop your photos in and be done with it. Let it be easy. Don't sit there pouring over flyers, trying to figure out fonts, why doesn't this look good? Just go to Canva, just have someone else help you and be done with it.

Amber:

And then my suggestions, take flyers to spots where your potential students hang out. Don't just rely on social media to do all your promotion. I think it's a big mistake that a lot of people make. And so I want to take you back to back in the day, when I first started to learn how to build community in the punk rock and hardcore scene, I used to book a lot of shows for bands and when everything went online and social media was invented, people stopped making flyers for shows, and I thought that was the silliest thing. Because not everyone is online and not everyone is in your network. You need to get the flyers where the eyeballs are. I like to take them to spots where your students are going to hang out, right? Take them to coffee shops, community centers, health food stores, alternative healing centers, churches, bookstores. That can be a great place to start.

Amber:

I would start right in your neighborhood if you're teaching a class in-person, if you're trying to get something local going, post them close to the studio, post them where people could walk or take public transit to get to the place that you're teaching. I really recommend that if you're going to do this, you bring your own stapler, tape and thumbtacks, just have that in a bag with your flyers so that anywhere you go, you're not having to steal thumbtacks from another flyer, ask the people behind the counter for tape. Don't do that, just be prepared and have it with you. I also think that you should visit all the businesses in the area you'll be teaching and ask if you can leave a stack of business cards or printed cards with the offer of a free class. See if you can leave some materials behind.

Amber:

A lot of times, businesses will have a counter or a community board or something like that, where you can leave them. Even better if you can get that done by offering the office manager a free class to the people in the office in case they might want to use your services, right? This is a chance for you to not only leave some materials behind, but build some relationships with the other business owners in the area, so they know about you. So they know that you specialize in a yoga for all. So they know that you're able to teach yoga as a great service that they can offer to their customers to say, oh yeah, I do know somebody about that. Don't just post things on free bulletin boards. I just said this, introduce yourself, talk with staff about your class. Why is it new, why is it different. Maybe offer a free class to the person who might be the one to talk you up.

Amber:

When I was teaching at this yoga studio that was beside a coffee shop, all the baristas knew me. All the baristas had come to my class and I had really made them feel special. And they used to send me students all the time. All the time I would get somebody being like, oh yeah, next door, they told me to come try out your class because it's good for beginners or whatever. And so think about that marketing, that reputation building that we're talking about, right? It's not just leaving a flyer behind, it's making the impression when you do so. All right, let's talk about your website. Do you need a website? That's a good question. You may not need a website. But if you plan to teach consistently, it is helpful to have a single destination where people can learn about you, find your events and sign up for your email list. It's also a place where you can establish yourself as an expert, if you want to post videos or writing about your teaching. Right? And all of that is marketing.

Amber:

Remember every piece of content helps improve your visibility, both in regards to your reputation as a teacher, right? That you're a teacher who's out here actively teaching, publishing things, posting tips, interacting with your students and also to search engines, right? If you have a website, updating it on a consistent basis is important, so Google assigns you a better rank. If you're updating consistently it would rank you above a site that wasn't updated in the last year for instance. There are four website builders that I'm recommending here, Offering Tree, which creates websites, especially for yoga teachers, and they also have scheduling and payments built in as well. I think it's a really good service for people that want to get up and running quickly. They've also done some really cool things. They've sponsored a lot of stuff with accessible yoga.

Amber:

I know they're very interested in contributing to the yoga community. I've been really happy with what they've offered to the teachers I know that have used it. Wix, Squarespace and Weebly, those are some other website builders. These are all drag and drop website builders. You don't have to know code, you don't have to be a designer, you can literally pick a template, throw your photos in there, change some colors if you want and be done with it. You don't have to hire someone to do it, but maybe you want to, it might be worth it to outsource the stuff that you're not strong at. If you don't want to have this big learning curve, even with a drag and drop builder, you're going to have to figure out some things, get a web savvy friend to build your site in exchange for some private lessons or maybe a little yoga party for their friends or a class package or whatever.

Amber:

I love trading for stuff like this. I love trading for stuff that I don't know how to do, that's going to take me a long time, that I feel there's a big learning curve. This is a perfect opportunity for that. The website can be really simple. It should include a list of classes or events and how they can participate in those and about page where you share your story and your bio, and a way for folks to opt in and hear from you. Maybe you're going to have a blog, maybe you'll have other things on there, but that at the bare minimum is what you need. Whether or not you decided to have a website, that's your business, but I really encourage everybody to have an email list. Even if you don't have a website. You need to be the one that is in charge of when your students get to hear from you, not Mark Zuckerberg. Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook and Instagram, yeah, we're all on there. Right? But Facebook and Instagram have an algorithm. You've probably heard about this.

Amber:

I want to just talk about that for a second and introduce you to this concept of organic reach maybe. Organic reach is of all the people who have liked your page on Facebook or Instagram, all the people that have followed you, what percentage is Facebook going to allow to see your content? The last time I looked up this statistic, organic reach is about 6%. Let's say you work really hard to get a thousand likes on your Facebook page, that's a lot, a lot of people, a thousand people, they're only going to show your content to about 60 of those people. Now, the reason they do that is because of course they want you to pay to boost your content or run ads or whatever. But that's a bummer, right? You work so hard on this content, you put it up there and then barely anybody sees it or interacts with it. And it's like, nobody likes my class, what a waste of time. Right? When actually this is just how Facebook and Instagram work and how they pay for themselves.

Amber:

You need to have your own email list. That is a way that you can directly communicate with your students. They've opted in, they've given you permission to market to them. And so that is where I would concentrate. If you're like, I don't know how I'm going to have time to post on social media, write a newsletter, do all this stuff, just do the email list. That's my recommendation. This is the top thing to do. Mailchimp and TinyLetter are two email providers that really good and inexpensive. I think they both have free options. There are tutorials on creating a list, creating a sign up form, putting the form on your website. There's lots of good information from Mailchimp and TinyLetter and also tutorials on YouTube about how to do all that stuff. Make sure that you set up that confirmation email. It's the final email that they get when they sign up. That's going to link back to your website or your about page or your social media accounts, because you want to go ahead and get them coming back to you right away.

Amber:

Even if you don't have a website, I really encourage you to create an email list and tell people about it through social media, at your classes, through your printing materials, you can set up a bit.ly link, especially for your up form. That'll be like bit.ly slash Amber's email list or whatever it is. And that way people can go and be the first to know when you create an offering or have news or whatever. If you're not sure what tool you want to use yet, whether that's Mailchimp or something else, just get a Google form going that's free to do and collect those emails, right? You could still create a bit.ly link for that Google form, just go to bit.ly if you're not sure what I'm talking about, but it's very easy to do. You paste in the link to the Google form, it spits out a link for you. And so you can take that shorter link and put it on your social media or a flyer or tell your students about it in class or whatever.

Amber:

Collect those emails, really just start with your friends and your students. Don't worry about building up an email list of thousands of people or whatever. Don't discount a personal invitation, be like, hey, I'm starting up this email list. I might send some teachings out. I'm definitely going to be announcing my new stuff there, you'll be the first to know, do you want to be signed up? People are going to want to hear from you if they are your students. And so start with what you have, start with your dedicated students and friends and encourage them to invite people too. I think it's much more important than having a high number of people on your email list. Who's in there? Right? You want qualified leads. That's how we would speak about it in marketing, not just email addresses to random people. We want email addresses to people who are interested in yoga, who are interested in you teaching yoga, who are local to you, right?

Amber:

There's people who are more qualified leads. That's who we want. We want to make sure that the right people are landing on your email list so that when you send it out, the content is going to be really relevant. It's no good to have 10,000 people if only 50 of them are actually interested or able to attend your class. You know what I mean? And then finally, you could provide an incentive to sign up for the email list. You've probably seen this on a lot of websites, right? Drop your email here and get my five best tips on revamping your teaching practice or whatever. If you can offer an incentive like that, think about the type of content you'd to create. What would you like your first impression to be? Right? If a customer signs up, if a new student signs up and they don't know you as a teacher, what three things, what three videos would you make that tell them who you are as a teacher? What one thing would you send them to make the first impression that you want to have?



Amber:

Now, you don't have to have this incentive to sign up, again, it's fine to just build your email list slowly and organically by inviting people. But if you have people landing on a website, this can be really helpful to generate some new leads. All right. Let's talk about social media. For social media, I know a lot of people get wound up about how am I ever going to be on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, I don't even know what all networks people are using. Clubhouse. There's all these new things, right? I barely have time to clean my house, take care of my kids and show up to work. Yeah, I get it. Right? We're not going to be creating content on every single network. I think that that's really good for the social media companies. They really want people to stay on the website, and so it's good for you to co create content for them.

Amber:

But what I really want you to think about is, where do your strengths lie? Let that determine the medium, right? Here's what I mean by that. Let's say you're somebody who writing comes really easy to, right? Maybe you have a journaling practice. Maybe you really like writing blog posts, whatever, you sit down, you get your thoughts out. You edit it a little bit, it's fine. For some people, that's how it is, and great, you should have a blog. For others when they sit down to write, it's just like, there's a blank page. It takes forever. But you ask them a question and they're talkers. They can talk and talk and talk for hours on end and no problem. Maybe they should have a podcast, right? Don't force it. If you're somebody who the written word doesn't come easily to, but you're a gifted speaker or talker, get talking. Get a YouTube channel or get a podcast going.

Amber:

Maybe you like to talk but you're not comfortable on camera yet. Cool. Podcasting is for you. Maybe you want to branch out into video. That's great. Think about where do your strengths lie and let that determine the medium. Show your personality, I think this is part of attracting the students that are going to really want to be with you, be authentic to who you are. Don't try to copy someone else's social media or make it sound like marketing or whatever you think you need to do, really show your own personality. Consistency is key. It's better to post once a month consistently than to post 10 times in one week and then go three months without posting. Both the algorithm and just generally your students expecting to hear from you, I think it's to try to stick to some regular schedule, and that being said, I haven't done so for the past 18 months and it's fine.

Amber:

I still have a business. I still have students that are coming to me. It doesn't always make or break, but it can help in being consistent. I'd rather see somebody that posts a really good newsletter and maybe accompanying social media post once a month than somebody that does two weeks of intense content and then I don't hear from them for a year. Right? We want to provide value, so do a little bit of teaching, do a little bit of sharing. What's something that you could teach or share in the post that you're making, even if you're sharing something personal? Right? How could you consistently provide value? Because remember the point of this marketing that we're doing is to build reputation and trust with our students so that when it's time for them to hand us the money in exchange for the teaching we've done, we've already built up that rapport and that trust and demonstrated that value.

Amber:

I like to talk about this three to one ratio that if you're going to be using social media to promote your offerings or whatever, don't make it all promotional posts. People won't interact with them, which makes the algorithm show you less content of yours. But also we don't want to just be talking about ourselves, right? For every one post that you make an offer or promote something, you need to have three that demonstrate value, that teach, that share someone else's work. I think sharing someone else's work is a great way to both build your network, build trust with your students and be able to share content, but not have to always generate it yourself. If someone else has said it and said it better than you could, and it already exists, cool, share that and add your own thoughts, right? That can be part of this three to one ratio as well.

Amber:

And then social listening is something that I want to encourage you to do. This can be asking a question and seeing how your community comes through, right? Like, what's one thing you're struggling with in your teaching practice right now? What's something that's keeping you up at night? How's anxiety manifesting in your life right now. Right? It could be any kind of question like that, and then see what people say. That's going to give you a gold mine of ideas for content, right? The questions that come in, take a look at the threads that you're interacting with, whether or not that's your comment threads or a group you're in, observe and see, what are the questions that keep coming up over and over again? What are people confused about? What are people asking me over and over again? Those are the things that I would go to, to figure out what kind of content to make.

Amber:

All right. When you're creating content, also known as teaching, right? It's all marketing, it's all teaching. If marketing is education that helps build trust and relationships, that means that when it's done well, content teaching, sharing, right? Teaching is the same thing as marketing, right? People have a problem and you have a solution. So content marketing, right? There's content marketing, then there's traditional marketing, which would be like advertising and things like that. Content marketing is simply education that lets folks get to know you, your teaching and build trust that you can help them solve their problems. We create these free offerings, the content, the stuff we're sharing, the stuff we're posting, the things we write, so that when it's time to ask for money, we've already built that trust and rapport. What kind of content should you create? Here's some ideas.

Amber:

Think about creating a course or a curriculum or a learning journey as a template. Right? So you can zoom in and out. What I mean by that is, okay, if you were going to create a course about some aspect of yoga philosophy, right? You could zoom in all the way, you could be okay, I'm going to talk about Ahimsa, right? And you can build a whole course around that. Or you could zoom out and do a course on yoga philosophy, right? I'm not suggesting you have to create a course, but this helps me to organize my thoughts around what type of content I want to create. Let's think, for the next six weeks, I want to talk about yoga philosophy on my social media accounts. I'm going to sit down and write out a bunch of topics around yoga philosophy. How would I take students through a curriculum? How would I think about a learning journey that I want to take them to?

Amber:

Maybe if people don't have any idea that philosophy is even part of yoga, they just think yoga is stretching. Okay. What's the introduction to yoga philosophy that I would create for my students? Let

that inform the way that you roll out your content and how you create it. It can help to generate ideas just by thinking through, how would I take somebody from being a brand new beginner to actually knowing this stuff forwards and backwards. Let that inspire the way your content rolls out. We already talked about social listening, but I'll just re-emphasize this, listen to your audience by asking questions, right? What do they think their problem is? I think this is a very powerful question, because oftentimes it's not what the problem actually is. I'll give you an example. When I talk to people about body acceptance, right?

Amber:

Let's say I'm advertising a retreat around self-acceptance or a course about making peace with your body. Most people or a lot of people that come to a class that that wants to make peace with their bodies, they think their problem is their body, right? They think if I wasn't overweight, if I didn't have this scar, if I wasn't so old, whatever the insecurity is that they have about their body, then I would be happy. Then I would never think a negative thought about myself. To me, I need to listen to the problem that they think they have. They think their problem is that they're too big, right? No, that's not the problem. The problem is that you have all this conditioning from society that tells you these things about your body and you have thoughts about your body. The thoughts can be changed. I know that the problem is a little different. But I want to speak to them in the words that they understand.

Amber:

They don't know that body image is something that can be fixed in their brain. They think body image has to do with their body. And so when I talk to them about that, I'm going to talk about that issue. I'm going to say, something like, do you believe that if you just lost weight that you'd finally be happy? Right? I might use words like that to get their attention and say, hey, I have a course that's going to help you. Now, I'm not going to promise that I'm going to help them lose weight, but I am going to solve that problem of helping them to feel better about their bodies. And so sometimes you got to drill down and figure out, what is your audience really think that their problem is? Right? And how can you solve that problem? How can you communicate?

Amber:

Another thing that helps generate ideas for what content to create is what questions come up over and over again? What are the frequently asked questions that you get from your students at the end of class? Maybe you're getting those types of, am I doing this right? Sort of questions when you teach different poses and stuff like that. That's a goldmine for you to create content, to answer those questions, any question that comes up, make a video, make a blog post, write a little post about it, address it in your teaching. What objections or I can't, do you hear from your students? These are great things to address when you're teaching. Right? Maybe, it can be as simple as, well, I want to try yoga, but I need to lose some weight first. Right? I can debunk that right away. People of all shapes and sizes can do yoga, and here I can write a little Instagram post about that.

Amber:

Think about, what are the objections? What are the things that are going to keep your students away from the experience that you're having and how can you address some of that in your content? Maybe for a retreat, if I'm going to advertise a retreat, that's a significant investment for a lot of people. It's an investment of time. It's an investment of money. And for most of us who were raised and socialized as women, we're trained to not spend time and money on ourselves in these selfish pursuits, like self care.

Right? I'm going to address that in the writing that I do about the retreat, I'm going to address that maybe in a post leading up to opening enrollment for the retreat and say that self care is not selfish, you can't pour from an empty vessel and all of those types of lessons, right? We can address those objections and do a little bit of teaching at the same time.

Amber:

Share from your lived experiences, your struggles, your dreams. When I'm advertising something, I always like to say what my personal connection is to it, right? When I talk about this is a course I'm creating to address your body image through the practice of yoga, I talk about my own struggles with body image and disorder eating. I talk about, I remember when I hated my body and now I feel this way and I can help you get there too. Right? Think about how can you make a personal connection with the person who's reading, what you're writing and share your lived experience appropriately in order to bolster that expertise that you have. The biggest question that I always come back to is, what is my purpose? Why am I here? How can I be of service in this moment? Right? Maybe now, during a pandemic where so many people are burnt out and stressed is not the time to create my yoga shred, get your best body type of course, right?

Amber:

Maybe the thing that can serve my students best at this time is lessons on how to self-regulate, how to manage stress, how to work with their minds, right? How can I best be of service in this moment? What do I say when I'm writing content, when I'm trying to write a flyer, when I'm advertising, how do I talk? How do I get their attention and get them to make a decision? I want to give you a few copywriting tips. Before you sit down and write something, talk to your students, or even better talk to the people who you wish were attending your class, but they're not yet, and use their actual words in your copy. Right? I might talk to one of my students in here that they're saying things like, I want to try this other yoga class, but I'm not strong enough yet. Right? And so I might in the advertising for my new build strength for your yoga class series or whatever I'm creating, say things like, do you want to attend a different sort of yoga class, but you feel you're not strong enough yet?

Amber:

I might actually use their actual words. It's really amazing when you do this, when you talk to customers, usually if you talk to one, 10 of them have the same fear and then you write this way, it feels like you're reading their mind. Maybe you've read marketing copy that landed this way on you before, and you're like, oh my gosh, I've had that exact thought. Yeah. Use those exact thoughts. Use those exact words in your copy. Tell a story that your student can identify with, especially if you can share something personal like we just talked about a moment ago. Use before and after, and we'll go into that in detail in just a moment. Describe benefits, not features. What I mean by that is, rather than saying something like, I have this class series coming up, it's going to be four classes, they're 90 minutes each and inside each class, you're going to learn five things, don't say what your curriculum is. No one actually cares about, how the program is set up. Yeah, have it in the FAQ.

Amber:

But instead describe the benefits, right? Rather than it's a six class series for beginners, say something like, after these six classes, you'll be confident enough to walk into any yoga class and know how to adjust the postures to fit your body. Right? Describe the benefit, describe the real, tangible result that they'll get from attending the offering that you have. And then finally make sure every piece of content

has a clear, concise call to action. Maybe that's, sign up now and here's the link. Maybe that's, leave a comment. Maybe that's, submit your question, right? We want to ask them to take action. Even if it's just a sharing post, you have the opportunity to ask them to join your email list or like, comment, share, right? Ask them to take action. I want to go back to this point about before and after.

Amber:

Before and after is something that's used constantly in marketing and you'll probably notice it now that I'm naming it. You want to show your customer a clear before and after state that they can really identify with and that shows a tangible result that they'll be able to get from your offering that you're giving. Right? Show the before state. Name the feelings, frustrations, or desires or problems before they take your class. Right? And you want to empathize with their pain, frustration or desire. Right? A lot of times in marketing, we always go toward fears or pain points you might hear it described that way. But you can also use positive motivation as well. I'll give an example, let's say I'm advertising a retreat that I have coming up, right? Maybe a before state would sound like, have you ever wanted to practice yoga in a supportive group of people who look and think you, but you've been a little too intimidated to attend? Right?

Amber:

Something like that where people are like, oh yeah, I have wanted to go to that class and it looked really fun, but I didn't want to go. Right? Something like that. The after, we want to state the results or the outcomes they can expect, right? Make them as tangible or real as possible using language that sounds familiar. Maybe this complete before and after might sound something like, maybe in the past, you've wanted to attend a retreat, but you were too intimidated to go, because you're a beginner at yoga. After you attend Body Positive Yoga summer camp, you'll confidently have the tools you need to walk into any yoga class and take your own personalized variations for your body, and you'll know what it's to practice in a supportive community of like-minded people who look like you, right? Those are tangible before and after things that I can deliver on, right? You don't want to just make promises you can't keep.

Amber:

But also that people would be able to see themselves in that scenario, right? They can already identify with the before, they want that after result that is a more comfortable place than the before, they can see themselves there in their mind, that helps them to be even more prepared to say yes to the offering that you're making. Be intentional with language when you're writing. It's important to use the appropriate level of specificity. So not being specific would be using things like, man, to represent humanity, specific would be to use more inclusive language like folks, people, everyone, human beings. Non-specific would be like, this program is for at-risk children. Okay. At risk of what? Right? Children at risk for early school dropout. Right? Get specific with your language.

Amber:

If you want to hold a class for a specific population, name that, right? Don't just be like, people who feel like they don't fit in. Well, that could be very specific or very general, right? If you want only fat, queer, people of color to show up to your class, you need to say that. Right? Use neutral pronouns, if gender doesn't need to be there, don't include it and maintain simplistic language. Be sensitive to labels or avoid labeling people whenever possible, and if you have to use a label, remember to call people what they prefer to be called, keeping in mind that language shifts, right? Rather than native American or

American Indian, which were both the correct things to say in the past, now many groups prefer to be referred to by their tribal name, for instance, members of the Cherokee tribes.

Amber:

I give that as an example of language that has shifted. But maybe you don't need to be that specific with your labeling, right? Think about what you need to do in order to attract the folks that are appropriate to come to your class. And then put the person first. Now person first language, not all marginalized groups prefer this, but it is a good practice to have, right? Instead of diabetics, people with diabetes, instead of wheelchair bound people, folks who use wheelchairs to get around, right? That puts the person first. Not all marginalized communities want this, right? I like to say, fat people. But also sometimes I say folks with larger bodies. It depends on the audience. It depends on what the appropriate use of the language is. And that's really an individual thing in and so sometimes it takes a little practice to get there.

Amber:

Okay. What happens if you're not reaching the right people? Remember what I said about Facebook and Instagram and all social networks, right? That organic reach is only going to take you so far. You really need to be able to have your own email list and your own website, places that you can control the content a little bit better. Only emailing the yoga studios lists, that's a big mistake that I see people make a lot of times is they rely on the yoga studio to do all the advertising for them. What I'll say is that if you're a yoga for all teacher, if you're creating classes that are accessible, if you're creating a class for a specific population that's not centered in yoga land, you're not going to be hitting their email boxes if you're only emailing people that already attend the yoga studio. I made this mistake one time when I was teaching out of town. I didn't know a lot of people in the city. I had one teacher that was excited to bring me and I really didn't have a street team that helped me promote there.

Amber:

And when I showed up, there was only five or six people that came. I asked her after the thing, what type of marketing did you guys do? She said, well, we just emailed our list. Okay. There were five or six people that they got, so that's great. But if I had someone that could put up flyers locally, if I had thought about putting out a call on social media and saying, hey, who on here lives in Atlanta? Or whatever the thing was, then I would've probably had a lot better results. Just remember you can't rely on the studio to do all your promotion, you need to do a little bit of that yourself too. Relying on digital marketing only, I mentioned this before, when I was talking about flyers, don't make the mistake of just posting on your social media, make sure that you're talking to people, make sure that you're leaving printed materials places. Think about the other venues of marketing that you have available to you.

Amber:

Maybe you're advertising in the wrong place. Right? Think about where are the eyeballs of the people who need to come to this class? Right? If you're only posting flyers in yoga studios, but you're trying to target folks who don't feel comfortable in yoga studios, maybe that's not the right place to post them. Right? Really think deeply about, where's my audience hanging out? That's where I need to get this information. Where do they live? Where do they work? How can I get in front of their eyeballs? How can I build a relationship with this audience to foster trust and interest? Let's talk a little bit about that here at the end. Relationship marketing Relationship marketing, I think talking to people, right? Relationship

marketing is the best way to build community. That if you can build relationships with your students and build community in your classes, your students will bring their friends.

Amber:

Remember referral from a trusted friend or somebody that you trust their opinion, is way more effective in the long run than any ad or social media post to put up. That word of mouth is really what we want. I like to really have a special place that my students can hang out and hear from me. So maybe you want to create a Facebook group, a Marco Polo group, Discord, whatever app we're using these days, a special email list or a group text that folks can opt into. That way you can communicate directly with your students and send little reminders about the class that's coming up or the deadline for registration closing or things like that. Maybe there's a place where your students can ask questions and you can interact with them, right? All those little things that go toward building the relationship and the trust that you want, so students can say yes to the offers you're making.

Amber:

Hosting a yoga party is great to get your students excited about a new offering. What I mean by is throw a free class, throw an intro class, throw outdoor yoga party that we're going to gather people together, socially distanced during the pandemic, right? What opportunity could you have to gather your students? By the way, this is a great time for a photo shoot. I love doing this to be able to get group photos or photos of me teaching, is to let folks know that, hey, I'm going to throw this class and also part of the reason we're doing it is a photo shoot, I'd love to have you be one of the students that represents me and my work. I really am trying to get a diverse crowd together for this photo shoot. I really want you to be there, right? Extend a genuine invitation. I find that that is really easy to get a group of people together that want to help you out and want to support you as a teacher.

Amber:

And then finally, create incentives for referrals. Have a refer a friend program. Maybe if you bring a friend to class, then there's little punch card you have. And after you bring five friends, you get a free private session. Right? Think about what an incentive is that you could give to your students, so that they'll bring their friends. And then some stuff to keep in mind if you get stuck. I know I've said a lot. I know this is a lot to think about. I don't want you to take it all and be like, okay, now I have this huge checklist. Just take one thing. What's one thing you can take away from this presentation that you can go start to implement and take some baby steps on right away? Maybe it's scheduling that yoga party for a photo shoot. Maybe it's texting a few of your friends who have had their yoga photos taken and say, who's your photographer? I'm looking for one, right? What's that little baby step that you can take? Don't get overwhelmed.

Amber:

Post in the Facebook group. If you need some help with this, there's plenty of people that have been through this too and that are currently working through this that want to support you, so come over and talk to us and we'll get you the support you need. I just want to give you this little pep talk at the end here. Okay? Number one, consistency is more important than quantity. Remember a really good high quality update once a month is going to be way more effective in building your relationship than a big blast of posts and then disappearing for a year. Right? Qualified leads are more important than big follower counts. I mentioned this when we're talking about building the email list, right? Who's on the

list matters about more than how many people are on it. Right? We want people that are ready to say yes, not just random people so we can get our numbers up.

Amber:

Experiment, learn something, iterate. This is a big thing that I like to talk about with marketing. Don't wait until it's perfect to launch it. If you wait until it's perfect, you probably waited too long. Just start experimenting. Think about this as a beta test, right? I'm going to run this course, I know it's not perfect, I know I'm going to make mistakes, I'm going to try to learn something. You run the course, you observe, you get feedback, you try to figure out, how could I make it better next time? And then you iterate. You actually make it better next time. Right? And each time you do it, you learn more and more. Diane and I have been running this course since 2015, and every single time we learn something, we get feedback. We hear from students about what's working and what's not, and we make little changes each time we launch the course. Treat each little marketing offer, each piece of content, each time you run a class as an experiment, what can you learn? Right. Try to learn something when you solicit feedback.

Amber:

Observe what others do, find the lessons for yourself and don't worry about the rest. I think it can be very intimidating to watch what other people are doing on social media. When I'm recording this video. Reels are fairly new on Instagram and basically Instagram wants to be like TikTok, so they've added this Reels thing. And if you don't use the Reels, you're not as good in the algorithm. I refuse. I'm not going to get all up in Reels and be recording and editing content on my phone all day. It's just not something that I want to do. What I'm doing, is I'm observing. I'm observing the people that I think do really good, effective, skillful teaching. And then maybe I'm going to borrow some ideas. Maybe I'm going to say, oh yeah, well, these types where, maybe a TikTok dance is not for me, but maybe I need the ones that have some little bullet points in our little bite-size teaching things. Okay. That's the type of video I want to make. Right?

Amber:

Don't just simply think that you need to do everything that others do, observe what they're doing, find the lessons for yourself and don't worry about the rest. What other people do is not a referendum on what you should be doing. Try to learn something when you solicit feedback, not just, how did you like the class? But ask a specific question. If you could add one thing, what was missing. What worked for you? What didn't work for you? Right? Try to get specific feedback so that it can help you to learn something and iterate next time. And then finally, thinking about failure. I think that failure is something that we think about a lot. We put out an offering, nobody shows up. Now we think I'm a failure, the class failed. No one wants to come to my classes.

Amber:

And then your thoughts and feelings about that, affect the actions that you'll take in the future and affect the results that you'll get. Right? If you think, well, I put up the offer, no one said yes, I'm worthless as a teacher, nobody wants to take my class. You're probably not going to turn right back around and make a different offer and try to get students. Right? What I want to say about failure is, failure as a concept in and of itself implies finality, right? If you failed, that means you're done. You're done trying, right? If you're not done, if you're not giving up as a teacher, if you're not walking away, that means you haven't failed, you've done an experiment, you've learned something, or maybe you need to figure out, what is the lesson there?



Amber:

Okay. I put up this offering and nobody said, yes, I need to ask some questions. I need to think about, was the messaging off? Did I post it in the wrong place? Did I only rely on Facebook to show people my message? Was the picture not the right picture? Did I make a clear connection between what I've been teaching and the offer that I'm making? Right? There's a lot of reasons why somebody might have not signed up for your class and that doesn't always have to do with you're a failure as a teacher. If you're not done, you haven't failed and you need to keep going. You need to experiment. You need to learn something and you need to iterate.

Amber:

One final point here, if you need help with platforms or tech tools, there are some resources below. There's some great marketing courses and some tips that I think will help you out. Also you can post in the Facebook group. We'd love to share our experiences with you about marketing, marketing efforts that have worked ways to advertise our stuff that has worked. Let people in the group share their experiences with you and help you troubleshoot, please come for that support. I want to leave you with this. Y'all need to focus. Don't worry about all the noise online. Don't get too caught up in what other people are doing. It's not a referendum on what you should be doing. You don't need to make TikTok dances if that's not relevant to your work. Stay focused.

Amber:

All I want you to think about is, what is this little experiment that I'm going to do when I make this piece of content, when I create this course, this class, this offering, when I throw this party, whatever it is? We're going to try to learn something, right? What can we do differently next time to make it easier on ourselves, to make it better, to support our students more? And then we're going to iterate. We're going to make a different version of it. We're going to implement some of the stuff that we learned, and then we're going to continue to experiment, learn something and iterate. I hope this helped debunk a little bit of myths around marketing, maybe give you some things to think about. I encourage your questions in the Facebook group. We are here for you. We'll see you next time.