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Nicole Dean's Online Success Talk Radio:

Susanne Myers Hillbilly Housewife & Online Success Story



Episode # 18: Transcripts

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About the Author:

Nicole Dean is the Mostly-Sane Marketer. (Ask anyone who knows her and they'll say that the "mostly" part is up for debate!)

Nicole is an expert in Affiliate Management, Affiliate Marketing, and Marketing with Content. But, she's got a secret... she uses a LOT of shortcuts, including hiring brilliant helpers who make her look a lot smarter than she really is. ;)

Nicole juggles a lot of things, but she does it all without owning a Blackberry or giving out her cell phone number. The reason she works from home is to have the freedom when and where she wishes to work.

She enjoys work very much, but lives to spend time with her much-adored husband, her two silly children – and also her two slightly neurotic puppies, Eddy (short for Edison) & Einstein.

People are talking about Nicole Dean:

If you're looking for THE go-to gal who knows her stuff and gets things done, then you NEED Nicole.

I've worked with her as a JV partner as well as her customer and friend, and I can honestly say: Nicole is the real deal. She's incredibly friendly, hysterical, and one of the best internet marketers around.

Without doubt, I wholeheartedly recommend everything she does!

- Ronnie Nijmeh, PLR.me ([click here for a freebie from Ronnie](#))

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Nicole Dean: Hi. This is Nicole Dean. Welcome to the Nicole on the Net Online Success Podcast where we feature people that have started online businesses and have taken them to profit and are doing fantastic things with them.

We find these online successes and showcase them, and I have a great time having my friends on. I also get to invite people that I've admired for a long time and who I think are brilliant. Then I get to corner them on the phone and pick their brains.



Today I get to have one of my long time friends, oh my goodness I've know her for 5 years or more. The person that's on the phone today is Susanne Myers from [HillbillyHousewife.com](#).

We are going to talk about her type of business, how it started, why she chose it, what are some of the tools that she relies on every day for her business, who has been a mentor to her, some mistakes she's made, and we're going to just start to pick her brain and see how she has gotten here from where she started just a few short years ago.

Susanne is one of my dearest friends and I've had the pleasure of spending some time with her. We've had a lot of laughs over the years and a lot of struggles too, haven't we Susanne?

Susanne Myers: We sure have.

Nicole Dean: On that note I would like to welcome my friend Susanne Myers from HillbillyHousewife.com. Hi, Susanne.

Susanne Myers: Hi, Nicole. Thanks so much for having me.

Nicole Dean: You're welcome. I obviously don't write down these intros in advance. It's like, "Hey, I've got somebody here and she's really great."

Seriously, Susanne is one of my best friends. I admire her so much. She's one of the most brilliant marketers I ever met, even though you may never have heard of her in marketing circles yet. She is one of the people that I run to anytime I have a question about marketing. When we brainstorm together and she blows my mind on a regular basis.

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So, Susanne I can't wait for this.

Susanne Myers: You've got me blushing here now. Just to keep it fair, I do the exact thing with Nicole. She's an amazing marketer as well. I think the sparks just fly when we start to put our heads together and try to work out some ideas or some strategies. There's a lot of bouncing back and forth going on.

Nicole Dean: Yes, definitely. We work together in projects and have partnered on projects too. So, I know Susanne has been a great person, I trust her implicitly, I'd leave my children with her if I needed to go somewhere.

So, Susanne, I've known you for so long and I just love your story, because you've had so many twists and turns along the way that it really makes it interesting. If you would, just tell us about you and your business and how it started.

Susanne Myers: Sure. Basically my main business right now is [HillbillyHousewife.com](#). It's a website all about frugal home cooking from scratch. I have lots of recipes, frugal tips, articles, that kind of thing. It's monetized through ads, affiliate products, [my own ebooks](#), and [the Hillbilly club](#), which is a membership site.

I guess the most interesting part is how I sort of fell into this business. One of the questions you asked me awhile ago was how did I choose this type of business, and I always answer that with it sort of chose me.

I also run a website called [Menu Planning Central](#) with another good friend of ours, Christine Steendahl. I was doing some marketing and some research for it. I do all the SEO for that site. It kind of irked me that this Hillbilly Housewife website was constantly outranking for meal planning, which is one of our main keywords. So, I kind of looked into it.

At first I was thinking, "How can I talk this lady into giving us a link to Menu Planning Central?" But, then I looked more into the site and Christine and I had been thinking and talking about branching out a little bit and needing a little more of a pure content website to sort of extend our reach a little bit.

The more I looked into the website, the more I fell in love with it. I also noticed that it hadn't been updated in close to a year by then. You could just sort of tell that there was a lot of awesome

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content on there, but that the owner, I wouldn't say lost interest, but you know how you work on a project for a few years and it just kind of gets to be too much or a little boring after awhile.

So, I contacted her and we got to talking. We really got along well and I mentioned that I was thinking of doing something similar in the cooking and homemaking related field, because it was pretty easy to tell that there was a big need for that type of information. I ended up buying the website from her.

The more I got into it, the more I fell in love with it, and fell in love with the community that had grown around this static website, which still blows my mind. There was no newsletter, no list, no way to leave comments, but there was this whole huge group of people that were fans of the site and would email on a regular basis.

I just sort of built it up from there and added a lot of the community social elements to it. I did a lot of work optimizing the site for the search engines, and did a lot of link building to specific interior pages. I think we talked about this earlier today. I think quadrupled the amount of links coming into the site, and it's somewhere at like 69,000, which is mind boggling.

Nicole Dean: How long did it take to do that?

Susanne Myers: I've had the site for two years. It was sitting right at, I don't remember the exact figure, but I think it was between 15,000 and 20,000 incoming links.

Nicole Dean: Now it's at 69,000?

Susanne Myers: Yes.

Nicole Dean: I want to be you when I grow up. Wow. I find it funny when we're together in real life at events and you introduce yourself, and you have a German accent. You grew up in Germany. "I'm Susanne Myers, I'm the Hillbilly Housewife," and people go, "Yeah, right, funny." Definitely not what people envision initially, but the Hillbilly Housewife adopted you and now you are she.

Susanne Myers: Yes, it did.

Nicole Dean: I love the vision that you had. When you're going to this website going, "Ugh, they still outrank me in the search engines," and you're going, "they still are getting number one for menu planning for the search engines." Then your next thought was, "How can I get a link on that

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site?” Then your next question is, “I wonder if I can work with this person somehow,” and you start looking and then you go, “or maybe I’ll just buy it.”

That’s fantastic. I love how that happened. That didn’t just fall on you. You had to take the steps to make that happen, which is what I think is just brilliant. It’s incredibly insightful that you did contact this person. You did realize that she lost her momentum, but yet there’s all this content. You’re probably thinking, “Oh no, what if she just lets the site go and the hosting shuts down and all off this is gone forever?”

Susanne Myers: Right. I could see so much potential outside of what she’d already done already. You know how sometimes you just grab a site and all these ideas just start flying off?

Nicole Dean: Yes, definitely. Especially with all of your marketing background too. I say marketing background, I mean as far as since you’ve been online and have been studying, you didn’t go to college for marketing or anything.

Susanne Myers: No.

Nicole Dean: I would say we kind of earned our PhD in internet marketing.

Susanne Myers: We sure did.

Nicole Dean: Ever since we got online it’s just been our goals to absorb everything we can get our hands on and our eyes on, and then apply it too.

Susanne Myers: Yes. I still do that. I try to learn something new every single week.

Nicole Dean: Right. And you’re reading my [Blog Tour Guide](#) and you’re talking about putting together a link building course. I’m like, “Okay. I’ll be your first customer. Send it to me, I’ll review it.”

So, isn’t that funny that it’s just a constant thing? I just feed that constant desire of learning more and getting the best information, and tweaking things that are already working to make them work even better with the information that you do uncover.

Susanne Myers: Yes. The hardest part for me is then actually finding the time to sit down and do it.

Nicole Dean: Definitely, and the organization to know what to do when.

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Susanne Myers: Right.

Nicole Dean: That's a constant battle for both of us. All right. Well, you've already answered that question, about why you chose this type of business. Unless you want to go back in time and talk about Menu Planning Central a bit.

Susanne Myers: Sure. I started [Menu Planning Central](#) with Christine Steendahl. She actually had a family meal planning site and we had a healthy oriented meal planning site together, and we were kind of looking at how we could expand this and make it into a little bigger ticket item, because sometimes it's easier to grow your income just by having a higher ticket.

Nicole Dean: Right, a higher priced item.

Susanne Myers: Exactly. So, we were kind of brainstorming about that and came up with a couple of different meal planning ideas and some cool interactive stuff. We had some custom software built for it, and set up Menu Planning Central and kind of ran with it.

Nicole Dean: Very cool. That's a membership site, so people pay month after month for that, so that also gave you a more steady stream of income as well.

Susanne Myers: Yes, it did. I think without it I never would have jumped in and bought a website like Hillbilly Housewife.

Nicole Dean: It also goes to show too that you had your success with Menu Planning Central and rather than jumping to a new niche or a new target market you stuck with exactly the same thing. That's also allowed you to play the two sites off of each other and grow them simultaneously, rather than the person that starts a menu planning site or a housekeeping site like you did, or frugal housekeeping, and then runs off and starts a "how to coach football" site.

Then you can't possibly grow those simultaneously from each other. I mean, you can grow them at the same time, but you're pushing two different cars, rather than just focusing on the one. You've really been a master at that, and that's one thing that I've learned from you too is by keeping your focus you've been really able to grow quickly.

Susanne Myers: That took me a long time to learn too. I used to jump from niche to niche and that didn't work out, or that didn't grow as much as I thought it would, or that sounds a lot more interesting.

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You're absolutely right, once you just focus in on that one expanded niche you can sort of take all your different little sites and play them off of each other. It can help you in so many different ways. You can do cross promotions, which we do all the time between the two sites. It helps you SEO wise, you can link back and forth on thematically related sites. It just works out well for us.

Nicole Dean: It really does, because you're reaching the same people. You keep throwing out the term SEO, and the people that are listening that aren't as familiar with SEO as you are, which is 99 percent of the population, that stands for search engine optimization. It's what you do to try to show Google what your site is about so Google can send you traffic when people type in terms that are related to your website.

How would you explain it? Is that about right. I mean, I do it too, but I don't know how to explain it in one sentence.

Susanne Myers: SEO is basically what you do to get free traffic from the big search engines. Mostly I focus on Google. Basically, what I do is I do some keyword research, which just means I think about how people would search for what I have to offer.

Let's go back to the menu planning example. Somebody is looking for help planning their meals, they're going to search for menu planning, meal planning, menu plan, meal plan, those types of terms. Then I use a piece of software that helps me take a look at the actual numbers. Basically, the search engines keep track of who types what into, let's say the Google search box.

I can see what the most common ways somebody searches for something meal planning related. Then I go in and optimize my site, or my page I should say, for those particular terms. There's something called on page optimization where you basically go in and you want to make sure that you're using that term in your title of your page, you want to use it throughout the page, in your headlines if you can.

Then there's something called off page optimization, which is actually, I don't want to say the more important part, but probably one of the most important aspects outside of adding the keyword to your title page. That means that you want to get lots of links from other related quality pages and websites that have their term in the anchor text of your link. The anchor text is basically the little piece of text that you then highlight and add your link to.

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Nicole Dean: Perfect. That's a great explanation. Actually, I believe that off site optimization, the getting the links, is incredibly important. I always thought it was like 90 percent of the equation. Am I wrong on that?

Susanne Myers: Pretty close. I think if you have the term in the title tag of the page that you're optimizing for and you have the links, that's probably 90 percent of it right there.

Nicole Dean: That's kind of what I figured, because you can rank for just about anything if you have enough links coming in from related, relevant, high quality sites, as you've done time and time again.

I keep going off on tangents here. What are the top three things that you've done to grow your online business, Susanne?

Susanne Myers: Optimize each page for the search engines. That was one thing. When I took over Hillbilly Housewife it was not optimized at all, so I went through there and did just what I outlined. I put the title tags in there, put the meta data in there, that kind of thing.

The other thing I did that really helped me grow it is moved the entire site, which was a static HTML site, to Wordpress, which is a free blogging software. The reason I did that is it makes it very easy for search engine spiders to crawl the website, and it also pings the search engines. Every time you add new content to your site it basically sends out a little signal letting them know there's new stuff and they should re-crawl your site.

The third thing I did was just to build lots of incoming links and to build those links to deep pages in my website. In my case that would be all my article pages and all my recipe pages instead of just sending links to my home page.

Nicole Dean: Fantastic. I know this question isn't on here, but I'm just curious if you'd humor me as to answer it. How do you make money from your site?

Susanne Myers: I started out with just slapping some Google AdSense on there, and fine tuned and optimized that over the years. I always joke around that it still pays my mortgage, but really my main income at this point comes from affiliate products that I promote. Mostly to my list or recommending products at the end of an article or in a blog post.

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Then I also have my own products, which I would say my own products are probably the main source of income at this point, closely followed by affiliate commissions and then Google AdSense type money which is just a much smaller percentage.

Nicole Dean: When you say your own products are you counting your Hillbilly Housewife Club?

Susanne Myers: Yes. I'm counting the [Hillbilly Housewife Club](#) and the various little ebooks.

Nicole Dean: Like your [Freezer Cooking ebook](#).

Susanne Myers: Exactly.

Nicole Dean: That's a great ebook. You know I'm a big fan of freezer cooking. Love it.

Susanne Myers: It's actually working out pretty well, because the actual freezer guide is just a front end product. Then in the back end I have several collections of freezer recipes, and I continually add more to that.

You and I both know that it's much easier to sell an existing customer than to find somebody new to sell to. So, that works out really well for me, because I get these repeat purchases over and over again. Plus, then if I need some extra cash I can run a sale and bundle a bunch of them up and offer them and make some fast cash.

Nicole Dean: Definitely. It's always easier to sell if you have happy customers, as you do. It's always easier to your customers than it is to sell to even if you did an ezine trade with somebody else and they have 10 times the people on their list, you'll still get more sales usually from sending to your own list of happy customers than to sending to someone else's list of leads.

Susanne Myers: Yes. That's a very good point. It's all about the relationship you're building with these people. I throw terms like list and customer list around, but really what it boils down to is those are people that we're talking to.

Just instead of talking to them face to face we're talking to them online. We're building relationships and nobody is going to spend any money with you if they're not comfortable with the relationship they're having with you.

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Nicole Dean: That's one thing that you've really excelled at. Your customers are not just customers, they're fanatic all about you, and about the Hillbilly Housewife, and about saving money, and just the overall community. It's crazy. They're completely mad over you. It's awesome.

It was so funny, because as soon as you'd took over the site you would be like, "Oh my gosh. I can't believe the response." Everything you did it was like these people they were a community already waiting, you didn't have to start from scratch to build it.

It existed and you just took that to a whole new level, which I think is fantastic, because people watch what you do and they're waiting for your next product. So, you better keep them going out there, because you know that they want more of you and what you've got to offer.

Susanne Myers: They do, but I think the big reason why is because I listen to them. I come out with products that customers suggest that they want. So, if I hear a few people mention that they want to learn about Crock Pot Cooking, like they have, you bet I'm working on a [Crockpot Cooking Guide](#) right now.

Nicole Dean: Right. You listen to them and you let them give you the feedback and guide you in your decisions. You don't go out and do keyword research and say, "The keywords say that these people want this," and then send it out to them. What would you feel like to create a guide and send it out and have them go, "Not so much, we don't want that"?

Susanne Myers: The keyword research comes later when I'm trying to drive additional traffic to it. But, yes, first I go back to my community. Buying an existing website like that is just a nice little shortcut to get into a market and to build a business.

Nicole Dean: You think? I remember when you told me you bought it. I was like, "How did you? Wait, back up, give me the backstory what's going on here?" That was fantastic. What a smart decision on your part, and what a smart decision on the previous owner's part too, to give it to somebody who is taking such good care of her community.

She didn't just sell it to some corporate sponsor that was going to go in there and not treat them right. She made sure that you were the next best person to take over this community and to lead them and guide them. I think that's fantastic, because she so could have easily just put the site up for sale on Site Sell and said, "Bye everybody," and had some company buy it that didn't care about anybody but themselves.

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Susanne Myers: Right. I don't think she ever would have done that. She actually didn't really consider selling it until we got to talking about it.

Nicole Dean: Right. That is also a great indication of you buying a good business, the fact that she kind of had to be talked into selling it, because she did care for it and loved it.

So, here we are at the tool time. I know that you use a lot of tools, and we use a lot of the same tools. Do you have at least three free and at least three paid tools that you could tell our listeners about?

Susanne Myers: Sure. Which ones do you want to me to start with?

Nicole Dean: Go ahead and do the paid ones first.

Susanne Myers: Okay. My biggest one is probably [Aweber](#), which is an autoresponder that we both use. It's just a nice way that helps me to bring people back to my website.

The other one I'm using a lot recently here is [SEO Elite](#). I've always been pretty interested in search engine optimization, as you can tell since we spent half the call talking about it. It really helps me stay organized and keep track of what I'm ranking for certain keywords and what I need to do to move up in those rankings.

Then the third one I've been using a lot lately is not really a tool, but it's a paid product. It's [Studio Press Wordpress Templates](#). I've just really fallen in love with the design and I've been using them on quite a few of my websites here recently.

Nicole Dean: Cool. You just kind of talked me into buying [SEO Elite](#), I think. I may have to ask you for your affiliate link later to buy it since you recommended it.

So, those are your paid ones. What are some free tools that you can't live without in your business?

Susanne Myers: Wordpress, just from Wordpress.org. I've gotten to where I think 99.9 percent of all my websites are either on Wordpress or about to be transferred over to Wordpress. It just makes it so easy for me.

I work a lot off laptops, I have a little netbook that I carry around with me when we travel. It's just nice not to have to worry about all this web design software and whether or not I have the latest

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version of everything on each website. I can just go in and add content as needed. I don't have to try to remember to get all my navigation straight. It seems to help with search engine rankings and getting sites spidered quickly as well.

Nicole Dean: I'm in the process of moving the bulk of my remaining sites over to Wordpress too.

Susanne Myers: It's easier when you're at the point where you're [outsourcing](#) some of the things like posting articles and that kind of thing. It's so much easier to find people that know their way around Wordpress than it is to find somebody that knows Dreamweaver or Microsoft Expression Web, or anything like that.

Nicole Dean: Plus the additional functionality. All the plugins are just so powerful, they're extremely powerful compared to what we started with, Front Page, which had no functionality other than to you'd put your words in there and it would stick them on the screen. That's pretty much all it did.

Now you've got Wordpress and you have it automatically notify people that have signed up to receive updates about your blog, which I love seeing those signups every day. I know those are people that are interested in my content and want it immediately, so that's fantastic.

Then it automatically [Twitters](#) every new blog post I put up. It's got so much capability. It can email people when they comment for the first time on your blog. We could do a whole call just about the power of the plugins for Wordpress, they're phenomenal.

Susanne Myers: They are. I have yet to come up with an idea for my site and then not find a plugin that already does what I need it to do.

Nicole Dean: Exactly. If you can conceive of it, there's a plugin out there for it.

Susanne Myers: Right.

Nicole Dean: Love it. What else do you use that's free?

Susanne Myers: The other two things I use every single day is the Google Keyword Tool. If you just Google free keyword tool, you'll see two things pop up. One is the [Google External Adwords Tool](#), and I think we put a link to that on the page for this podcast as well.

Nicole Dean: Okay.

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Susanne Myers: You'll also see the [free Wordtracker tool](#). I like both of them, but recently I've been using the Google Keyword Tool a little bit more.

Then the third free one I use is [Google Analytics](#). I don't think I could function without it anymore at this point. It tells me everything. It tells me what I'm ranking for, how people are finding my website, what stuff gets looked at, what people buy, where people sign up, where they leave the site, everything.

Nicole Dean: That's great. I've recently fallen in love with [Google Optimizer](#), which is their testing portion of their analytics. Have you tried that yet or not?

Susanne Myers: Yes. I used it awhile back and I've kind of gotten away from testing a little bit. It's one thing I definitely need to pick up again, because I know my sales pages could greatly be improved. That's something that's actually on my never ending to do list.

Nicole Dean: Pretty much all sales pages can greatly be improved with testing, but it's not just you. Some of the greatest marketers out there don't test. It's like if you're converting your page at that, without testing, just imagine how much you could improve that.

Right now I'm finding the funniest thing. I set up testing on one of my sites that's food related, and I have two graphics that are being tested along with the headlines. One type of food is out pulling the other one completely. I'm not going to give the details yet, but I have pictures of food and I have two pictures. One is pulling really well and the other one has gotten no sales at all.

Susanne Myers: That's amazing. Did you have a feeling?

Nicole Dean: No, because they're just two different fruits. One is a picture of one kind of fruit, and one is a picture of another kind of fruit. I'm going to write a report about this, so I don't want to spill the beans yet, but that's making more of a difference than the headline is.

Susanne Myers: Excellent.

Nicole Dean: The headline is still kind of figuring out which is which, but I've gotten no sales on the one fruit, whether it's on the right or left side of the page, doesn't matter. But, the other one has gotten all of the sales.

Susanne Myers: I think I'm going to set up some testing this afternoon.

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Nicole Dean: I mean it's just fruit. Both of pictures looked yummy to me, so I didn't think anything of it. But, I'm going to be pulling it soon if the other fruit doesn't start making sales. I've never had to fire a fruit before.

Okay, so, yes the fruit is fired.

The next question is who has been a mentor to you online?

Susanne Myers: There have been so many, so let me just talk about a couple of them or recent ones. We met at Mom Masterminds and kind of grew from there and followed different people along the way. Some of the big names I really learned a lot from John Reese and Frank Kern.

Recently you introduced me to [Lynn Terry](#), just two or three months ago. I just really love everything she puts out there. Both her [paid membership site](#), her free content on her [Clicknewz](#) blog. I've just been picking up lots of great hands on tips for things that I can implement right away from her.

Then we already mentioned that I love studying SEO, and my big mentors there are [Dan Thies and Leslie Rohde](#).

Nicole Dean: We've met both of them.

Susanne Myers: Yes. We met them in Atlanta at a Stompernet conference, I believe.

Nicole Dean: Yes. Actually, I have Dan Thies scheduled to be on the show soon too ([Free Interview with Dan Thies](#) ← click to listen.)

Susanne Myers: Excellent.

Nicole Dean: [Lynn Terry](#) has been on the show in the past. I recently talked with Leslie Rohde too, back when I was at Stomper 7 or 8, whatever it was a few months ago and I had to chance to talk to him more than just a passing by at the conference. He's quite incredible and quite brilliant.

Susanne Myers: They both are. They actually recently put their heads together and launched [SEOBraintrust.com](#), I believe. It's a membership site for just about anything and everything SEO. I signed up a few days ago, and so far I'm pretty impressed with what they're sharing there.

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Nicole Dean: That's great. Do they talk a lot about the link building?

Susanne Myers: Yes, they do. We're just a week into the course, but yes, I think we're going to go over a little bit of the on page stuff in the beginning, then the vast majority of it is going to be link building and a lot of SEM, search engine marketing, as well. It makes a big difference what your results in Google look like, what exactly the title says, what the description says, and how actually somebody is going to be to click on your listing.

Nicole Dean: That is absolutely huge, because if you're trying to rank for *scuba equipment*, and all your tag says is, "scuba equipment, scuba equipments, get scuba equipment," and that's what shows up in the search engine, then you're going to look at it and go, "Okay."

Then the next one says, "Best value scuba equipment for professionals, get it here," or something where it actually has good copy, then you're so much more likely to click on that than the one that looks like it was written by a robot.

Susanne Myers: Exactly.

Nicole Dean: So, that is huge, because in the end people have the wallets, not search engines.

Susanne Myers: Yes. You've got to talk to the people, not the search engines.

Nicole Dean: Exactly. Was it then for the mentors?

Susanne Myers: Yes, other than there's this lady called Nicole Dean that I learned an incredibly huge amount from. I don't know if you've heard of her.

Nicole Dean: You're so funny. I really wasn't fishing there, but thank you.

Susanne Myers: I absolutely love your [Blog Tour Guide](#). I just had to tell you. You got me a little early sneak copy and I'm already implementing it. I took the Hillbilly Housewife on the road. It's really an excellent report and I can already see the results, and I think I'm a week into my little blog tour here.

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Nicole Dean: That's wonderful. I can't wait to add you as a case study. So, keep good data so I know exactly what your results are and we can add you as a case study.

Susanne Myers: Will do.

Nicole Dean: That will be fun. All right. Next we have is one mistake that you've made that you've learned from?

Susanne Myers: We already started to talk about this a little bit, but it was really the incoming links thing. I think it took me a good 2 to 2 and half years of being online and having a website, trying to get some traffic to it and make a little bit of money from it, and I just didn't get the whole links thing.

I thought that you did all of your SEO on your website and I would put my keywords in there and do my keyword research and all that. Back then I thought my time would be better spent to add more and more content instead of working on incoming links.

Once that clicked and I realized that it's really in the link getting I kind of shifted my focus where it was a little more balanced. I'm still adding content on a regular basis, but I'm also spending at least half my time working on incoming links. My traffic and my income just skyrocketed.

Nicole Dean: That's great, that's fantastic. So many people make that same mistake, because they can visualize the keyword research and adding it on their own blog or on their own website. But, then when it comes to getting incoming links, first of all it can be overwhelming, and secondly there's so many options, and thirdly a lot of them involve working with other people and actually putting yourself out there.

So, I think it does get put off a lot more than just working on your own site, which is great. You can't put your keyword up there and go, "Okay, Google, I got my keyword up there," they don't hear you.

Susanne Myers: Exactly. I think there's still a big misconception about this whole build it and they will come. That's just not the way it works. Just like with any offline business, if you don't go out there and advertise it, nobody is going to come find you.

Nicole Dean: You can work on your sign all day on the front of the building, but it's not going to do you any good if nobody is driving by, nobody is walking in, and nobody knows that you're there but you. So, that makes a lot of sense.

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Tips from Nicole ...

10 Easy Ways to Get Links to your Website:

1. Article Marketing. Learn more at www.EasyArticleMarketing.com
2. Press Releases.
3. Guest Blogging. Learn more here [How to Guest Blog](#)
4. Blog Commenting. Learn more here [Internet Marketing Blogs to Comment On for Traffic](#)
5. Twitter. Post links on Twitter alongside your helpful Tweets. Be sure to follow me: [Nicole Dean on Twitter](#).
6. Forums. Find popular message boards and chat on them. Be sure to have a link to your website in your signature.
7. Video Marketing. You can check out how I do it here: [Nicole Dean on YouTube](#).
8. Squidoo Marketing. Here's a peek into one of my lenses. [PLR on Squidoo Lens](#).
9. Stumble Upon and Other Social Media. I love StumbleUpon.
10. Be Buzz-worthy. If you take the time to really create cool, long blog posts that become extremely valuable information, you'll get people linking to you without having to do a thing. It's called "Link bait". Try it. :)

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Nicole Dean: Along the same lines, can you tell our listeners one time when you've fallen down and had to get back up? A set back that you've had or something that just totally threw you on your face and you didn't think you were going to be able to recover from it, but you did?

Susanne Myers: Sure. Just one? I call or instant message Nicole on, what would you say, at least once a month telling you that I'm ready to just throw in the towel and go get a real job? Not so bad lately.

Nicole Dean: Initially.

Susanne Myers: There's a lot of ups and downs, especially in the beginning. You're putting so much work into stuff and it just doesn't take off the way you want it to.

Probably for me the biggest one and the one where I really seriously thought about just calling it quits was with Menu Planning Central. I remember waking up one Saturday morning and the first thing I do is grab some coffee and check my email. There was just email after email coming in saying that our meal planning site was hacked.

I went to it and sure enough there was some sort of funky script and it just had a big rolling message on there saying that a group of people had hijacked the website, it had a bunch of foreign writing on there along with some contact information if we wanted the site back.

So, of course I wasn't going to be blackmailed into buying my website back, so I went to our web host, which was Scott over at [Mom Webs](#) who is excellent. He went in and he said, "No big deal. We're just going to restore it from backup and take it back to where it was last night. We'll be good to go in about 15 minutes."

Then he emails me back and as it turned out the backup script hadn't been working right or it got destroyed, I'm not sure exactly. What ended up happening was we lost our entire customer list, we lost about 6 months worth of content, and were basically back to square one. We had our meal plans, but we didn't have any customers, because we ended up having to just completely wipe out the database.

We were starting back from square one and we thought long and hard about whether or not to even try to get it back up and running. Finally said there's a lot of people relying on us and people that enjoy the service, so we're going to go back in there and do the work. Basically we built it to where it was within a matter of 2 weeks.

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Nicole Dean: Oh, I remember that. I was actually, as you know, but for the listeners, I was involved in the repair of that.

Susanne Myers: You were.

Nicole Dean: I was on the team at that point as the affiliate manager. That was not good.

Susanne Myers: No. Christine and I were so close to it, it just felt like such a personal blow. So, having you there - off course you were effected by it as well, but you had a little bit more distance and you were our cheerleader and the person that could put it in perspective and say, "It's bad, but it's really not that huge of a disaster and you can rebuild it much quicker than you did the first time."

Nicole Dean: I was going to say, "We were very fortunate," but fortunately we had each other, because I think that if that had been any of us alone that would have been unbearable. That was very difficult, because it was a large chunk of your income and of Christine's income. So, that made it very emotional too.

Plus it wasn't just an accident, it was an intentional sabotage, so that was not a good point in time for us at all. Thankfully we're resilient and perseverance is what gets us to profit sometimes, isn't it?

Susanne Myers: It sure is.

Nicole Dean: Don't have to be perfect to profit, but you do have to persevere.

Susanne Myers: Try and try again until it works.

Nicole Dean: Exactly. Dust off your britches, right?

Susanne Myers: Right.

Nicole Dean: Throw some bandaids on for that one. That was a tough spill.

Susanne Myers: It really helps to have some people around you that get what you're doing. Have some online friends that are there and have a shoulder for you to cry on, but that will also shake you then after you've cried for 10 minutes and tell you to get back to work.

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Nicole Dean: Yes. The hard part about that situation was it was so time sensitive. It wasn't like, "Oh, it broke but we can take our time figuring out a solution." It was, "Holy gotta figure this out and fast." That was ugly. We didn't want people trying to login and then getting more customer support, so it was a matter of crisis resolution and fast. But, we did it.

Susanne Myers: Yes, we did it. I think it was a good thing too, because we really had that gun held to our head and it made us sit down and not feel sorry ourselves and really think stuff through. We just sat down and got the work done.

Nicole Dean: Exactly. All right. Was there a tipping point that you got you to success, and if so what was it?

Susanne Myers: It was buying HillbillyHousewife.com. I had smaller success points along the way, but that's really when things started taking off. Around the same time a lot of things that I'd be studying sort of clicked together. You know, you learn so much little stuff here and there, it works but it doesn't really work that well until you get all the right pieces in place.

Nicole Dean: Right.

Susanne Myers: So, a lot of that clicked for me. I had this website that was already getting some okay traffic, and it really helped me both leverage Menu Planning Central, but then also take Hillbilly Housewife back home and build it into it what it is today.

Nicole Dean: I think there are a few things at play there too. One is you got to see what was working on a large scale. You know what I mean, as far as traffic? Then you could apply what you already knew was working from your other experiences to that. But, you could see on the back end you could see the stats and because you're so analytical you're able to start connecting things quicker.

Also, when we look at our own websites we don't see all the things that are broken and wrong with them. We see them, but we don't see what another person that comes in would see. But, you were able to come in as an outsider into Hillbilly Housewife and not see what was wrong, but as far as you were able to see places where you wanted to improve it without it being emotional for you.

Susanne Myers: Absolutely. I've done things to Hillbilly Housewife that I never even considered doing for any of my other websites, as far as the aggressive link building and the hard SEO stuff.

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Nicole Dean: Not only that, but because there was traffic to Hillbilly Housewife already, you could see the results immediately when you started to make those changes, which I think is really cool. I think it was a great opportunity for you, and like I said, really incredibly insightful of you to buy that site.

Like you said, what a huge shortcut. Rather than trying to build something from scratch. It's the difference between hiring someone to build a house for you or buying a house. It's a big difference.

Susanne Myers: I think it goes even further than that. I don't know, I'm trying to think of a good example. Maybe take it back to the offline business again. It's the difference between opening a new bakery or buying an existing one that already has a customer base and people that know where the bakery is, that kind of thing.

Nicole Dean: Contracts and maybe baking for the local school fundraisers, all that stuff in place already. Makes a lot of sense.

What advice would you give to your own mother, sister, or best friend to help them succeed online?

Susanne Myers: I would tell them to do something every single day, even if it's just a little something. Keep doing what you can and move forward. Write some blog posts, write some articles, add some content to your website, write a few follow up messages, add something new to your site every single day.

Then also do some marketing every single day as well to get your website in front of more eyeballs. Get some [articles submitted to article directories](#), do some [guest blog posts](#), submit to some directories, do some social networking, do what you can to basically build links to your website on a daily basis.

Nicole Dean: Great. That's pretty much my advice too. The only other thing I would say is make sure you're monetizing all of that, because those two things are both for traffic and for exposure, and for building content on your site. But, the third thing, of course, would be making sure that you're actually making money from all that effort too.

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It's interesting, because that seems to be where people struggle a lot. Do you have any advice for that if somebody has a blog or a website and they're starting to get traffic to it, but they're not making any money from that? Do you have any input for that?

Susanne Myers: I would say try different things. One of the easiest, but least effective things is to just put some Google AdSense or some other ad network type stuff on there. It's a nice easy thing you can do today and at it can at least pay for your hosting, pay for your cable bill, and that kind of thing.

But, don't stop there. Really look into [affiliate marketing](#). Find some products that your target market, the people that you're writing your website for, that they would buy. Which brings up another good point that we haven't really talked about much, but you really need to define who you're building this website for.

Who is your target market? That will make it so much easier to monetize your website to sell them things down the road. Find some products that pay a decent commission and try a few different things. Really build up relationships so that your recommendation goes a long way when you make it.

Once you get your feet wet with that, consider adding your own products into the mix. Your profit is going to be so much higher, but you can also greatly increase your leverage once you have your own products, because you can then get other people to promote them and become your affiliates, send you more traffic, and that kind of thing.

I think you're probably more qualified to talk about the affiliate management part of it than I am, but it's a great way to leverage what you're already doing when you get to that point.

Nicole Dean: Right. I just like to ask you, because you are here not as someone who is selling internet marketing stuff, as opposed to pretty much everyone else I've had on who their market is marketing and helping business people to make money online.

So, from your angle of actually having a website like HillbillyHousewife.com I wanted to hear you say exactly the same things as what they're saying. So, it's kind of to point out to people that it's not just the people that are selling the stuff that are saying it, it's the people that are doing it, it works.

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Susanne Myers: Just one quick note on that. When you're looking for a new mentor or something to learn from on anything internet marketing related, one thing I do is I look at their track record and what they have done outside of internet marketing just to show me that they really know what they're talking about.

I think you have no business teaching how to make money online if you haven't already made a fair amount of money online. You don't have any business teaching SEO unless you can show that you worked hard and you got certain rankings on a totally unrelated niche site.

I think a lot of the people we've both learned from and listened to definitely fit that bill. They've been out there and actually made a lot more money in their various niche markets than they have in internet marketing.

Nicole Dean: That's one of the reasons I respect [Lynn Terry](#) so much too, because she sells bobble heads and has all these affiliate sites. If the woman can make money selling Elvis bobble heads, then she's the real thing, she's not just feeding off people's hopes and dreams. She's delivering, bobble heads of all things, as an affiliate. So, she's not even having to ship the bobble heads.

That's one of the reasons we both respect Lynn, and that's one of the reasons I respect you as well, Susanne. You made it in a niche outside of the internet marketing niche, but yet you're so skilled and like I said, you're brilliant in search engine optimization and marketing in general.

Yet that's not why I wanted to have you on here today as much as to showcase the fact that you've done it in a field outside of internet marketing. You also hopefully will teach what you know on your new blog, which you've started at

Susanne Myers: [AffiliateTreasureChest.com](#).

Nicole Dean: At AffiliateTreasureChest.com. So, now that you're established and you've been making a full time income in these other fields and doing well I'm very glad and thankful that you're going to be featuring some of your skills in the internet marketing make money field. Very cool.

All right. The big question is if you had to rebuild your business from scratch with no list, no contacts, nothing, how would you rebuild it tomorrow if you had less than 100 dollars to do it?

Susanne Myers: I would sit down and spend some time researching and finding a niche that I'm comfortable writing for. For me, that's a big thing.

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I need to be able to write content on a regular basis, write follow up email messages, write articles to get out there. So, I like something that I'm fairly comfortable with that I know something about and I can write for. For me, most likely it would be something cooking or health and fitness related.

Then to have a little bit of a shortcut I would buy an expired domain. I would look at some of the expired domain marketplaces, do a backlink profile, which basically what I do is take a look at who is still pointing to that domain. I'm looking for a lot of links to the homepage, to the main domain, because I'm not going to have all these little backlinks, and I'm looking for a good variety of high quality links.

So, I would buy the domain, get some hosting, get Wordpress installed with a nice little free theme. Then I would sit down and do some keyword research and would basically map the main categories or the main areas of my website around those, Dan Thies calls these the keyword clusters.

The one thing I keep going back to personally to learn more about SEO is Dan Thies' free ebook called SEO Fast Start, it's at www.SEOfastStart.com. That will explain that whole process of doing your keyword research and really mapping your site around it.

Then I'd probably spend a day or so just adding a decent amount of content to the site, to build it up to where it's probably at least 30 pages or so, I'd say. Then I'd spend the next day writing and submitting 10 articles to various high PR article directories, and also submit my site to a few directories just to get the spiders crawling and get that content indexed.

I'd probably also for the same reason set up some social networking sites, like a Twitter account, Facebook account. Squidoo, and add the link to my new site to the resource box there. Then other than domain and hosting, probably the only thing I'd spend money on would be an [Aweber](#) account. I'd probably add a sign up box into the sidebar of every page on the website too.

I'd write a short report to use as a little bribe to get people to join my list. Then I would really spend a lot of time the first month or two focused on both building links and adding more content to the site to get that free search engine traffic trickling in.

Once I'm at that point, I would probably split up my workload into thirds. One third of the time I'd spend on adding more content regularly. One third I would spend on getting incoming links to the website. One third I would spend monetizing the site, finding affiliate offers to promote, developing my own products to sell through the site.

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That's pretty much what I'm doing now, the thirds approach.

Nicole Dean: I love it. Susanne Myers from [HillbillyHousewife.com](#), do you have anything else you'd like to say?

Susanne Myers: Nicole Dean is awesome and she rocks.

Nicole Dean: Well, I was just going to say that about you. All right, guys. You need to go check out HillbillyHousewife.com. It's full of tips that can help you save money, help you to eat more frugally. [Freezer Cooking](#), which I love, helps you to throw stuff in the freezer and then pull it out and throw it into the oven.

What's your saying for that? Out of the freezer, into the oven, dinner is done.

Susanne Myers: Yes.

Nicole Dean: I love that. Also, check out Menu Planning Central at [MenuPlanningCentral.com](#). Susanne has affiliate programs for both sites at HillbillyHousewife.com. You can promote her Hillbilly Housewife Club, you can promote her Freezer Cooking Guide, and at MenuPlanningCentral.com she has an affiliate program as well that you can promote that menu planning program.

If you've got a blog or a website, something you want to add a little bit more affiliate promotion and that's type of target and the type of targets that your market is interested in, then go sign up for her affiliate programs right away.

Sign up for the [Hillbilly Housewife Affiliate Program](#)

Link is: <http://www.hillbillyhousewife.com/affiliatesignup.htm>

And, be SURE to check out Susanne's Niche Research Packs here:

<http://www.nicheresearchpacks.com>

Did I catch everything?

Susanne Myers: You sure did.

Nicole Dean: [AffiliateTreasureChest.com](#) is where you can find more of Susanne's teachings about search engine optimization, link building, affiliate marketing, some of the things that she's done. I'm sure she'll get into product creation and everything else on there too.

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Of course, you can go to NicoleontheNet.com and click on my podcast. You can listen to other successful business people that have created online businesses and brought them to profit talk about these same issues and these same things.

Again, this is Nicole Dean from NicoleontheNet.com and I'm here with Susanne Myers from HillbillyHousewife.com. Susanne, you are a rock star and I'm so thankful that you were on today.

Susanne Myers: Thank you so much for having me. I've had a blast.

Nicole Dean: Me too. All right, listener, you are a rock star too. Thanks for listening. Come back soon. Bye.

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