



EPISODE 007 – With Special Guest Denise Wakeman

You're listening to Episode 7 of the Fun and Profit for the Active Entrepreneur Podcast. Today my special guest is Denise Wakeman, an online visibility expert, and one of my online heroes I've been following for a long time and have been blessed to get to know a little bit better over the last few years. We have an exciting conversation for you ranging with adventures and business and just being really alive in your life. Let's get to it.

Welcome to the Fun & Profit for the Active Entrepreneur podcast. I'm your host, Paula G. Join me as we explore what it takes to get you out from behind your desk and endless to-do's so you're feeling more vibrant, alive, and engaged in your business and in your life.

Paula: Welcome, Denise. Thanks for coming on the podcast.

Denise: I am honored to be speaking with you today, Paula. Thank you for inviting me.

Paula: For those of you who don't yet know Denise, she is an online marketing and visibility expert. I have been following her around, at least online, for over a decade, back when I was still hiding in a cubicle. She is the real deal. I've gotten to know her a little bit more over the last few years, meeting in person and learning about her

adventures and such, which is why she fascinates me so much, and I thought she would be great to have on today's podcast.

Denise: Wow, a decade.

Paula: I know. I don't know if it dates me more.

Denise: Well, I don't have a problem with how long I've been working online.

Paula: You've been online a long time, which I think is the best part. With that, tell people a little bit about what you mean by online visibility. It can be a nebulous term. Tell us a little bit about what you do there.

Denise: Online visibility is a bit of a nebulous topic. For what it means to me and how I define it and look at it when I am working with clients and when I'm writing about it is that it's really about how you show up on the web. How can people find you? Can they find you? If you don't have a strong presence on the web and you could call that a platform, a tribe, an audience, a community then it is as if you're invisible and you don't exist. When I am talking about online visibility, what I mean is that people can find you, people know who you are, they know what you do, they know what problems you solve for them, and that your overall brand and look is consistent as well. You may be visible, but if you don't have consistency in your look and feel and tone, then that can be a detraction to visibility.

Paula: Sure. We worry about people who are seem shifty or something is off.

Denise: Or they're not paying attention. When you have a business, it's really important to be consistent in all things, consistent in how you're showing up, consistent in how you look, consistent in your message, and that all contributes to having a visible presence on the web.

Paula: And what I love is the holistic view of what visibility takes, your take on visibility versus just one particular, tiny thing, like one particular social media platform or blogging. It's the holistic view.

Denise: That's a really important point to make, so thank you for that. Being on Facebook isn't necessarily creating a highly visible presence for you. It does take more than that. While I'm not saying that you have to be on every social network in order to have visible presence, you do have to be seen and found in more than one place in order to start creating that presence on the web.

Paula: Your tagline is "Your Guide to Better Visibility on the Web." I know that's a newer tagline with the Adventures in Visibility and how you fuel adventure into that. Can you tell us a little bit about how that came about?

Denise: Yes. It was about roughly three years ago. I've been working online since 1996. I've gone through quite a few iterations in my business, at least that I can think of off the top of my head. I think that's normal for business to grow and evolve. It just has to happen, especially when you're in a business that's around for marketing and working online.

Paula: It's constantly changing, a constantly changing thing, yeah.

Denise: Every day. Back in the early 2000's, I was working -- my branding was more around blogging because I was one of the early adopters of blogging for business. I had a business partner and we were The Blog Squad. People really came to know me as that. As things changed and evolved, my partner and I went our separate ways. Even before that, we were starting to look at: What is the bigger picture? Blogging is one tool to build a presence on the web. There's so much more. It's really about creating that presence on multiple platforms with a consistent look and feel. I was

working around that idea for a long time. To me you could call it online marketing. Really what I was focusing on was the visibility part. Fast forward to a few years ago and this is going to sound incongruous and I went on a trek to Peru. It was a seven-day trek to Machu Picchu through the Andes. It was the hardest thing. It was so challenging. You were hiking at 12,000 to 15,000 feet. I live in southern California, so that's sea level.

Paula: Sea level, dry, and hot. It's kind of humid in Peru, right?

Denise: Well, we had every kind of weather you could imagine on that seven days. Hiking in those kind of conditions, which were spectacular and challenging, meant that you didn't do a lot of talking. Even though I was with a group, I was in my own head most of the time. I was really blown away by the environment and scenery and mountains and sky and everything. It sounds kind of trite, but I kept thinking about how much like this trek was to be like an entrepreneur or business owner. It's like mountains and valleys. Sometimes it was easy and sometimes it was hard. Sometimes it was frustrating. Then you could turn around and look back down at where you came from and it was so gratifying and exhilarating and spectacular. It just really stuck in my head that it was the perfect metaphor for the life and work of a self-employed person. I also realized that every day, every morning I woke up in joy. I was excited to get started. I wanted to be out there on the trail, even though it was really hard. I know it can be hard. I had experienced hard the day before. It was muddy. It was snowy. It was sleet. It was hot. It was sunny. Everything you can imagine. Yet every day I was like: All right, let's go!

That really put the seed in my mind. I hadn't quite gotten to the next stage, which is what happened when I went back to Peru three months later. You can see I was totally taken with the country. I had become friends with the lead guide. He was doing a lot of really cool things with small villages in the Andes, helping them create homestay programs where you could hike or walk to a village and stay with the villagers and eat

with them and learn what they do all day long and participate. That I really wanted to experience. I went back and did that. I spent more time in the Andes, spent some time down in the Amazon. Before I went, I realized that I was traveling alone. I wasn't with my friends this time. I was going with this guide who I didn't really know.

Paula: You hoped he wasn't an axe murderer. You only knew him for seven days.

Denise: Right. I knew him for seven days and he was leading a whole group. It wasn't like I knew him that well. I just had a good feeling about it. I decided that before I went, I would just keep a really open mind and that my mantra would be "Just say yes," so that no matter what came my way, if it wasn't mortally dangerous, I would say yes to the experience. I can get a little fearful at times, especially when I'm by myself. I did that and had some great experiences that I probably would have been hesitant to say yes to previously. I returned from that trip and was like: This has got to be part of my business and my life, the joyfulness every day, the "just say yes" attitude, and just continually trying new things.

That's when I realized that's already what I was doing in my business. Because I'm an active experimenter and I love trying new things, love the internet, love that it changes all the time, love teaching people how to embrace the internet and the Web and tools to help grow their business, I realized they're just two sides of exactly the same thing. I'm already an adventurer in my business. I had always been an adventurer in my life. I've been traveling since I was a child, because it was part of our family. That's how we lived as a family, traveling a lot. I said: How can I put this together? That's where Adventures in Visibility came from. I wasn't going to give up the online marketing piece and the visibility piece, but how could I make it more interesting and more congruent with who I am as a person and what I love to do when I'm not at work.

Paula: I was going to say, there's also that feeling of aliveness to what you do. You've always given really quality -- I've taken classes for years through several of the brands

that you had. There's always been that integrity and really intelligent, great content and teaching and understanding. The latest version, which feels like the most congruent version, just feels so much more alive. You get to experience a little bit more of you and a little bit more of that experiment factor. It's fun.

Denise: Right. Thank you for saying that and for noticing that. I've always been a very reserved person, too. That's also part of who I am. I'm an introvert. I have a certain reserve. When I was growing up in business, you were more formal and didn't share everything and all that stuff. I still don't share everything because I am a private person. When I let myself be more who I am when I'm with my friends, for example, that really changed the energy in what I was doing online and with my clients as well. So that was very liberating.

Paula: We would never want to share everything. That's the scary stuff right there. What amazed me was because you're an introvert and I'm also an introvert, was when you say: I got to know the leader of the Machu Picchu trip so then I hooked up and learned all this and went back three months later. I often wonder: How do people do that? I've, up till now, discounted that as a very extroverted thing. Now you've busted some of my beliefs.

Denise: It was a small group. There were twelve of us and two guides. We were together for seven days, staying in small lodges as a group. Every day, well, let me put it this way, I was always at the back of the pack.

Paula: He was riding sweep, right?

Denise: Well, no. The other guy was riding sweep. I have him to thank for, "One step at a time. It's not a competition. One step at a time. It's not a race." That is in my head a lot when I'm doing stuff. Silver, the lead guide, he was pretty much always at the front. Somebody who had been talking to him said: You really need to talk to Silver

because he's got all these ideas and he's starting these homestays. I think he could benefit from what you do. We had lunch together one day and on a downhill day--

Paula: Although they really hurt the knees, just saying.

Denise: What goes up comes down. On downhill day, we hiked together. We just never shut up. I knew we had a good connection. Then we stayed in touch by Skype and stuff afterwards. One day: I really want to go back. He's like: Anytime. I was like: Okay, how about next week? It was more like: How about next month?

Paula: That's really cool. How do you keep that spirit or adventure in what you do day to day? I would ask that question in two parts. How do you keep that spirit of adventure in what you do from what the rest of us perhaps see and experience, as well as for yourself when you're sitting in your apartment working by yourself, talking to the cat, that sort of thing?

Denise: A lot of it is a mindset shift. Rather than being grumpy about stuff, I try to look at it as: Where's the opportunity here? How can I not only motivate myself but the people who are following me around? I have a very large social network. One of the things that I started doing once I really keyed into the whole adventure thing is I started finding quotes that related to adventure, to me. It can be the internal adventure. I think everything is an adventure really. When I started really going deep into this, I was like: Yeah, well, my business is an adventure. Running with my friends is always an adventure. Eating is an adventure. I'm a foodie. I love to try new restaurants. When I started reframing things, that made it a lot easier to look at things that way.

This is kind of, I don't know if it's silly or not, but I started looking for quotes that related that feeling to me. I have a huge collection now. I started creating image quotes with my pictures. I took a lot of pictures in Peru. Then I went to India last year and took a lot of pictures in India. I travel all over the United States. I run lots of places with my

running friends. I take pictures everywhere I go. I can always find a picture that kind of tells the story or illustrates the quote I want. That's one way that I try to keep that message front and center, not only for myself but for other people.

Paula: For a lot of people, I know for me personally, part of the challenge is with the online visibility piece and serving clients when I'm doing sit-down kind of work by myself, is the feeling of I'm tethered to my desk. Like it or not, there are a lot of things that involve being in front of your computer in this day and age. I'm always curious of people that manage to keep that upbeat, adventure, active beat to things without becoming a slave to the to-do's, if you will.

Denise: I guess I look at it that whatever I'm doing in my business is an experiment anyway. As we've said, things change all the time. Whether I'm writing an email, there's an experiment to see if I can get it to convert better. Whether I'm creating a sales page, can I make it better than the last time? When I'm developing a program, how can I make this interesting for the people who are participating? While it's not always how I can make it an adventure, I look at experimentation as part of adventure. I do like to try new things. I always have and I just hadn't really tapped into that as a thing in the last few years.

Paula: You're probably right on top of the new things and trying them on for size, which is great.

Denise: Well, I figure that's my job.

Paula: It seems like you enjoy it and you also separate the wheat from the chaff. While you're everywhere, I know you're not just staring at your desk all day long.

Denise: Right. I am not just staring at my desk all day long. I do spend a lot of time in front of my computer. I think it's important, as you know, that you've got to also activate

your body. I can get in a rut. When that happens, I will often just go take a walk. There's a park that's not too far from me. It's about a mile and a half to walk from my house, around the park, and back. That's a good exercise to just clear my brain. I also run a couple times a week with my running pals. That also helps activate me. As an entrepreneur working at home, by myself, in front of my computer, I can be here and never leave the house. I'm an introvert. I'm happy being at home. I also know it's important to get out. I really pay attention to scheduling being out every few days, meeting up with somebody or doing something.

Paula: Making it intentional, I find, is really important. Otherwise, I know for me personally, I could just become a hermit and isolated. What I've noticed about myself is, if I do too much of that, I almost cave in on myself like a bad sinkhole or something, both in terms of my thinking and attitude.

Denise: The thing is, I don't make a habit of going to networking events and stuff like that. Actually, that makes me want to cringe and go hide under my covers. I do go to in-person events every now and then. I'm always happy that I did. I might dread it at first, but if I put on the "Hey, just say yes, Denise. You never know what's going to happen," then often something good will happen.

Paula: Definitely, in terms of connecting with others. I know when I'm out and about, I try to just adopt that feeling. Introverted or not, you can find your ways to being comfortable with other people as long as you schedule and intentionally put that quiet recharge time, whether that's at home or in your hotel room or going for a room or whatever that looks like.

Denise: Exactly.

Paula: Tell us about your recent Denver trip. Other than those of us who watched the video of you driving that really hot, sexy car through beautiful scenery, and we had to

wipe the drool off our chin, tell us more about what that was all about and if there are some other cool trips coming up. That's definitely adventure.

Denise: Yeah, I had to wipe the drool off the steering wheel. The trip

Paula: That's a new offering coming in 2017.

Denise: That's right. The Denver adventure was one of those ideas that morphed into many different things before it settled on what it ended up being. My friend Mia Voss, who lives in Denver, and my sister-in-law, who lives outside of Toronto, we were talking about doing something together. We were thinking about a workshop. Then Lynn has a treehouse that she rents out, has a bed and breakfast kind of space, in the Toronto area.

Paula: I've seen those pictures. Yummy.

Denise: It's amazing. We were just getting all crazy and excited about: What can we do? We can start in Denver and have a workshop. Then we could road trip up to Toronto and do a workshop in Toronto. We didn't really give ourselves enough time to do that. We'd already bought our tickets to Denver. It came down to let's meet up in Denver and do some stuff there. That's what happened. We did some stuff. Mia is really skilled, and so is Lynn for that matter, at putting together brand-sponsored events. She's a brand ambassador. She put together a number of events, including this Rocky Mountain Driving Experience that you're referring to where I drove that gorgeous Mercedes up in the Rocky Mountains. That was one event.

The backdrop to this is that we were invited to do these things as a group because we have social media clout. All three of us have large social media followings in different areas and blogs. We did video and we always gave shout outs to our sponsors. We stayed at the Renaissance Denver downtown hotel, which is a phenomenal historic

building that was absolutely amazing. That was sponsored by the hotel. We had a couple meals. There were chef's tastings that we also did livestream video shows, talking to the chefs, talking to the general managers of the restaurants, tasting the food, of course, and taking lots of pictures. There was a lot of buzz going around each event we did. We also did a meet-up at a nightclub that had a rooftop lounge. That was really fun, really fun. I didn't realize how many people I knew in the Denver area. A lot of them showed up, otherwise I never get to meet them in person.

That was so fun. There were a lot of opportunities to buzz about brands and businesses in the Denver area. Not only does that help the brands, but also increases visibility for Mia and Lynn and myself. We got to meet up with people that we never met in person before, at least I did, and connect with new people. As a matter of fact, yesterday I did a podcast interview with somebody I met at that event. He invited me to be on his podcast. Stuff like that, those are the kinds of opportunities that can happen when you let yourself say yes to them. It was exhausting for an introvert like me, but I also knew that that's what I was in for for five days, that that's what I was going to be doing. It was a fantastic trip.

Paula: I like how it bridges really the online and offline worlds. Sometimes it can feel like: Why am I doing any of this stuff anyway? For people who want opportunities and adventure, there may be things that can unfold that you can't even imagine from where you are now.

Denise: That is absolutely right. One of the things I always say is that visibility equals opportunity. If nobody can find you, they don't know what you're capable of doing. They don't know if you're the right JV partner or person to invite to be on their podcast. When you really embrace the idea of stepping out and letting yourself be seen -- you get to choose what people see and know about you for sure. When it's who you truly are and you're stepping out and letting people experience that, then you do attract

opportunities. You don't know what they're going to be. I think that's pretty special when something comes up that you didn't even know existed before.

Paula: The important part there is just being authentic with yourself and genuine and real in everything that you do. When you get that next opportunity, you don't have to pretend to be someone that you're not.

Denise: Exactly. I think most people are pretty authentic about who they are. Sometimes we do put on a little bit of a veneer to make us look bigger, better, brighter than we might feel.

Paula: What's next in some of your adventures, whether they're online or off?

Denise: I don't have any big adventure, travel adventures planned right now. I would like to eventually take a group and do some visibility work in other exotic places, like Peru. I really want to get back to Peru. I think taking yourself out of your familiar, comfortable environment can really shift the way you think and see things. Why not deal with your online marketing and visibility in Machu Picchu? Why not?

Paula: I'm with you there. All the adventures I've taken, like canyoneering and rafting and all those things, and things I never thought I would do, are always transformative and restorative, even when they're frightening.

Denise: Absolutely. I didn't know that going to Peru was going to shift my business.

Paula: That wasn't what you had in mind when you signed up, right?

Denise: The thing is, I knew before I left that something would happen. I didn't know what, but I kind of just knew that there was this opening for me to have some kind of experience. I didn't really know what it was. I'm not really a metaphysical, spiritual,

woo-woo kind of person. I don't say that derogatorily. I'm very pragmatic. I just had this sense that there was something waiting for me, or some way that something was going to change me, and it did. And maybe because I was open to it.

Paula: Was Machu Picchu somewhere that you always wanted to go?

Denise: Yeah. I'd been wanting to go to Machu Picchu since the '80s. In the 1980s, it was very dangerous. There was a domestic terrorist group called the Shining Path that was very active and they liked to kidnap Americans and kill them and stuff. I didn't go then.

Paula: Especially the last one in the hiking group.

Denise: Exactly, the laggard. I went to Italy instead. It's always stayed with me that I wanted to go there. For me, the reason I wanted to go there was for the cultural reasons, the historic reasons, the architecture. I wanted to know more about the whole Inca culture. The group that I run with, we're always talking about traveling and eating and all kinds of stuff, talking about where we want to go. Machu Picchu was a place that I kept saying I wanted to go, was still on my bucket list. One woman in our group had already been there. Just one thing led to another and we started investigating. We found this amazing trekking company and decided to go for it. It's the best thing I ever did.

Paula: I'm inspired. I want to do something really fun like that. Any new adventures that are planned that are not like traveling to the ends of the earth you want to tell us about? Or are they top secret and in the works?

Denise: I have this sort of latent adventure in writing a book that hasn't really manifested yet. It's there. It's got some bits and pieces that I'm working on. It's not going to be a marketing book. There's enough of those out there already. I'm working

on creating a message around this theme of adventure and how it serves your business. It's not like a how-to marketing book. I am embracing my recent success with a program that I did this year that you're familiar with, the Online Visibility Challenge. After doing a series of 30-day challenges, I decided to step it up a notch or two or six and making it a six-month program. I saw such amazing transformation with a lot of people. That's a big one. That's a big adventure.

Paula: And a worthy one. I can vouch for how wonderful those have been.

Denise: Thank you. It's fun. That's the thing, it's fun. It's not complicated. That's what I think we're all looking for, the simple things we can do to make a difference.

Paula: One question I always ask everyone: What does being an active entrepreneur mean to you?

Denise: What comes to mind for me, just off the top of my head, is it's about really making sure that I am always doing something. Whether it's always doing something to grow my business, connect with my audience, to build a new income stream, that's one level. The other level is really where it intersects with the adventure part for me. Making sure I am stimulated in terms of new ideas and new sights and sounds and tastes and places. Making sure that I get out and about, even if it's just 300 miles up the coast to go run in a town I've never been in, or going to Denver. I'd never been to Denver before. I loved the city. It doesn't have to be Machu Picchu, but making sure I can continue that stimulation activity and cultivate that stimulation to keep me and my brain active.

Paula: Tell people how they can connect with you and a little about -- the one thing I was remiss in asking earlier was, obviously you help people with visibility on the web. You might even want to talk a little bit about how you do that, if you work in groups or individually, etc.

Denise: First of all, if you Google “Denise Wakeman,” you’ll find every way you can connect with me.

Paula: One million results or more I’m sure.

Denise: My site is DeniseWakeman.com. That’s my handle on all the social networks. Whichever you prefer, that’s where you’ll find me most likely. I love Instagram because I love sharing pictures. I’m on Twitter and Facebook and Google+, Pinterest. I can be found there. In terms of how I work with people, I typically work with consultants, coaches, authors, small business owners and either work in a group, like with the Online Visibility Challenge, that’s a group program, but I also work one on one with people to help them determine a strategy to create their visibility if they’re starting from scratch, and some people are. I love it when they give me enough time to actually achieve something.

Paula: You mean versus I’m launching my book next week. What can you do for me?

Denise: Exactly. You probably wouldn’t be surprised how many times I hear that. It’s like: My book is being published next week. How can I sell more copies? Do you have a website? No. Are you on Facebook? No. I hate Facebook. Oh no, okay. Let me just put it out here right now, if you are launching anything, a new business, a book, a product, a service, give yourself a minimum of six months to be building and buzzing an audience before you launch it. That would be perfect, at least six months. That being said, that’s where I focus my expertise, helping people do that. How do they hone in on where their audience is hanging out? What can you do to develop that audience? Without an audience, it’s really hard to sell anything. The audience can be an audience of readers, an audience of clients, an audience of podcast listeners. All of that needs to be developed and nurtured. I work to help clients create the strategy and then the tactics. I hold their hand and do that all the way through.

Paula: I'll have the link to your website, DeniseWakeman.com, in the show notes, as well as a link to that sexy car video if I can find the direct link. Everyone should drool for that.

Denise: I think it's only on Facebook right now.

Paula: That's one more reason to connect with Denise on Facebook. I just want to say thank you so much for taking time out of your schedule to come and hang out and be one of the early guests on the Active Entrepreneur Podcast, which I would never have kicked my butt into gear to actually finish if I weren't in some of your groups.

Denise: Thank you. I am honored to be on your podcast. I love talking about these ideas. I like that you're taking a different tact than many people on their podcasts.

Paula: Thanks so much, Denise.

Denise: You're welcome.