

How To Build a Platform From Scratch

Notes from Courtney DeFeo Breakout
She Speaks 2014

I have clinged to this verse during the ups and many downs of platform building:

“But we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” – Romans 5:1-5

Encouragement:

- If He gave it to you, He will help you build it. And, you will be a stronger woman on the other side.
- BUILDING ANYTHING... especially something so very personal and vulnerable - it requires PERSEVERANCE.
- During those times you want to quit, be encouraged when you tried something that didn’t work or when someone else appears to be doing it faster – that He is still working and you haven’t failed.
- Platform is like exercising and eating right – or work/life balance. It isn’t a one-time battle that you conquer. It’s an ongoing battle if you choose this as your career or ministry. It comes with the territory. You can let it eat you up or make you stronger. Keep it in proper perspective.

PLATFORM is a *part* of your world, but cannot be your *entire* world.

It’s all how you see it!

- FACES with stories
over FOLLOWERS with money
- His FAME
over your FAME
- Few faithful FANS
over many fleeting FOLLOWERS
- Your own FAITH
over someone’s else FORMULA

Which side of the equation are you aiming for? It will always be a part of your world if you are going to write or speak, but it cannot dictate and control your decisions.

THREE WAYS TO BUILD PLATFORM:

1. be FOCUSED.
2. be ACTIVE.
3. beLIEVE.

1. be FOCUSED

Focus is critically important to building your platform – if you aren't sure SPECIFICALLY what you're about – guaranteed your audience is confused as well.

This could launch into an entire different discussion on branding, but it's so important that your readers and followers know what to expect. They follow and come back – because a brand is a promise. You know what you're going to get from Lysa TerKeurst. You know what you're going to get from Chick-fil-A.

Are you focused in your writing? Do you know your audience? Are you trying everything all at once all of the time? Or with limited time – are you focusing some of your energy to gain traction on one area of social media are do you feel scattered in everything?

Just because everything is Godly or good doesn't mean it is His will. A lot of good, noble, Godly things pull me really far from God's original to do list for me.

TO THINK ON ...

- Your message, your audience and your efforts – do you know your focus?
- Focus on *Better Not Bigger* (lesson I learned watching Chick-fil-A grow)
- QUESTIONS: Why are you writing? What is your dream? What moves you?

TO ACT ON ...

- Create a Mission Statement – use as a filter for everything
- Try a Mom Panel or Focus Group – Your customer will help you focus
- Watching Customer vs Watching Competition
- Check Pinterest For Clues – what gets pinned the most, pay attention to that
- Use a Fresh Lens to Check Your Messages

Watch Ruth Soukup of Living Well Spending Less – she is incredibly talented in the consistency of her brand. Especially in her visuals on Pinterest. You know it's her content every time.

2. be ACTIVE

It's important to realize that platform isn't a sprint, it's a marathon. Some folks hit it big quick but those followers are often fleeting, not very loyal. So, just be active. Do a little something every day or be active each week. Make a plan – a doable plan and get out there. Even if it feels uncomfortable. Unfortunately there isn't a formula. What works for one writer doesn't work for another. I have found that being true to your mission, sharing from your struggles and using visuals definitely draws in a crowd quicker than the opposite. Just be you and share from a place of authenticity.

TO THINK ON...

- There is no formula – every writer and speaker has a different approach.
- Comparison is not helpful (Don't compare yourself to other authors, writers or speakers – some have giant staffs and are paying major advertising budgets – that's apples to oranges)
- Diversify yet focus (you do need to be involved in a variety of social media but can focus on Pinterest or Instagram during a season)

- Put yourself out there bravely (Send an email and ask to guest write and if you don't get a response – try again to someone else. Chin up!)
- Place best foot forward (relatable, personable, pinnable and true to your mission)
- Build for the future (Much of the relationship building is now – before you even have a book come out. Reach out – spur others on for the right reasons.)

TO ACT ON...

- Create an editorial calendar – mix of expected but leave room for God to move
- Giveaways – you might have to buy things at first – but people love to win things
- Get creative with help – look for high school kids or college kids that can help you for FREE
- Do What's Bugging: Comment, Link, Tweet – go encourage someone else, it'll come back
- Give *More Than You Sell* – Customers can tell if you are just out there to get, give so much
- Try try again – Keep reaching out to others and don't get discouraged, they don't hate you – they are just busy
- Lighten up and have fun – Don't forget to mix in some fun with the business
- Design Tools – Rhonna Designs, Pic Monkey, PowerPoint and hired help (visuals!!!)
- Other sites: Rafflecopter, Random.org. Linky Tools, Google Analytics

Watch Ashley Brooke Designs – she is extremely creative with her brand. She is active and reaches her customer in some really fun ways.

3. beLIEVE

At the end of the day, do you believe in your mission? Do you believe in your calling? Do you believe God is capable of getting your message out there with or without something going viral? The platform game is a giant game of trust. You can do your part – but you also must be grounded in your beliefs.

TO THINK ON...

- No one will believe in this calling more than you.
- Even if you have an agent, publisher, agency and publicist one day – you are ultimately the person that lights the fire. You keep it going.
- What happens if you HOLD BACK? Your message might miss a weary mom that needs it.
- What happens when the BAD DAYS come? You need to press on.
- Remember it's not personal. The “no comments” or lack of response often isn't a bad thing – it just means others are super busy in their own calling.

TO ACT ON...

- Make a resolution today about this platform tension. Commit to it, for the hours you have.
- Reach out in confidence to others and don't apologize for it.
- Find a friend in the same stage.
- Write something and submit it to a site you admire.
- Take a blogging break and live life.

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