



Episode 610: Mom of 7 Becomes Successful Online Entrepreneur

Guest: Sara Young

WOODS: I love your story. Is your website MarketingWithSara.com?

YOUNG: Yes, it is.

WOODS: Okay, because I've been there several times, and I never thought I'd have you on the show, and then I found out a little bit more about your backstory, and it turns out you're a mom of seven who has become an online entrepreneur, so I thought, okay, that's a definite. That's an absolute definite for the show, so I'd like to talk to you, even though I told you that my audience is lopsidedly male, but a lot of those males are married to females, and a lot of them do have children and would be interested in your story. Now, you've been doing this for — and by "this" I mean earning money online — for quite some time, but at what point did you go on your own and say, on my own, not working for anybody else, but on my own I can actually earn an income and help to support the family? When was that, and what was it specifically that you were doing?

YOUNG: Okay, so my story actually begins in 1994. I was on my last day of college, and I was taking my final exam, and as soon as my final exam ended I went straight from there to the hospital to have my first baby. And my first baby was born on the day of my final exam.

WOODS: (laughing) Oh my gosh, okay.

YOUNG: Yes, this really happened. And before the baby was born, as I was finishing the last semester, I was interviewing for jobs, because I wanted to work a full-time job, what I thought was a normal thing to do. But then that day that my baby was born, my first child, I looked at him, and I just turned to my husband and said, I'm not taking a job; I want to stay home with this kid. Now, at the time, this was in 1994, so people didn't really have access to the Internet unless you were part of a university, and I was still a student at a university, and I could still use the computers even after this baby was born. And I just went on to the university computer, and I found somebody who wanted to sell some software. He was a statistics professor, and he wanted to sell software to other statistics professors, and that is how I got my first income online. I just was working for somebody else online from home, and that is how I was able to stay home with my kid and some of the kids after that.

After a while, I decided that I really didn't have a lot of time to work. I had Disk Line, and I had a few more clients at that time, and I didn't have so much to work for those clients, because I already had a few more kids. I think at that time when I realized I couldn't do this anymore, I had five kids. One of them was a newborn, one of them was a toddler, the rest were older, and I was staying home with them. The older kids were going to school, but the toddler and the baby were home with me, and I would have to get the work in during their naps and after they went to sleep at night, and I decided this isn't working anymore; I need a way to earn an income online without having to put in the hours. And that is when I discovered something called affiliate marketing.

WOODS: I love it, yeah.

YOUNG: Yeah, so affiliate marketing, the reason why I chose that was because I knew I could set up a website, and I could put some information on that website, and I could have special links. At the time I was linking to Amazon. I could have special links to Amazon, and if people would click on my links and go to Amazon and buy something, I would get a commission. And I started doing that, and that was when I started being able to earn an income online without having to get paid by the hour –

WOODS: What year was this?

YOUNG: Um, this was around 2005.

WOODS: Okay.

YOUNG: Around 2005. I mentioned to you before that one of my first sites was selling strollers, and I had different sites and different categories of products; one of them was strollers. I tried to choose products that I knew something about, and since I had a lot of kids, I knew something about strollers. So I would set up this information site about strollers. I would review strollers, and people would find my site. Let's say they wanted to get information about a specific stroller. They would find my site, they would read the information, and then if they were interested in buying the stroller they would click over to Amazon and buy that stroller, and I would get a commission.

WOODS: And you know, what's interesting of course with strollers, most people, in the back of their minds they know Amazon sells everything, but they don't think to go to Amazon for strollers. Maybe for books they go to Amazon, but for strollers they're going to type something into Google and see what comes up. And you may wind up directing them to Amazon, but for something like strollers they don't typically go immediately to Amazon, and that's where an affiliate marketer can really do well.

YOUNG: Yeah, I tell you what, it's not only that, that people don't necessarily go directly to Amazon, it's also that people go to Amazon when they know exactly, specifically what they want to buy. But if they have a question about it –

WOODS: Ah, yeah.

YOUNG: Like which stroller is the best stroller, or I want a jogging stroller, is this jogging stroller going to work for me, or what kind of double stroller is going to work, or is it easy to fold. All these things, people don't go to Amazon to find them out; they go to Google to find them out.

WOODS: Right.

YOUNG: They would look for that information, and they would find my site, and my site would answer their questions, and then they'd say, okay, I'm ready to buy and then click on the link.

WOODS: I do want to ask you one quick thing about it. Do you think over the past 11 years with the explosion in the number of websites out there that the strategy for an affiliate marketer creating an Amazon site like that has changed, because there are probably a million stroller review sites now?

YOUNG: Yes, it has changed. Things are not the same as they were then. Still have this kind of site, but then you didn't really have to have so much information on your site. If you wanted to, at the time you could just write like a few sentences about the stroller, have a picture of the stroller, and that was it, and it would rank on Google, and people would click and buy. If you wanted to answer a question, like is this easy to fold, you could again just write a few sentences on that, put it in a blog post, and people would again find it and buy. Today it's different. Today it's very important when you're creating a site to provide good, quality information, and so when you're writing about a product, you actually want to answer all the questions that you can about that product and write something that includes information that people really want to read in a way that they will really read it. So I would say that today's sites have better content on them than the sites in 2005.

WOODS: So you started off with Amazon doing affiliate work there, and then presumably you moved onto other outlets that had, let's say, a larger percentage commissions?

YOUNG: Okay, so I started by linking to Amazon, but then I realized that there were other stores people were buying at, and I found out that people don't only buy strollers on Amazon, they buy strollers in other places as well. Then I started looking and linking to the store that was offering the best deal. A lot of times there were sales and things like that. And I also found out that in certain places, if I was linking to a specific store, if I was selling a lot of strollers for them, I could negotiate the commission. This is something that people don't really know that you can do. You could actually go to them and say, hey, I sold such and such amount of strollers last month, can you give me a higher commission. And they actually will do that. So that is the first thing that I did to increase my income.

But you know, I'm thinking about what you asked me, and I know there are products that you can sell where you can get 50% commission and even more than that, but if you sell a product like a stroller, even if the commission rate is lower, because, first

of all, certain strollers can cost a lot, then even if the percentage is smaller you still earn a good income, and second, the amount of strollers or many other products being sold online every day is just unbelievable. It's just incredible how – I don't think people really grasp the volume of sales that are being made online, and you can sell a lot of strollers every day, and it definitely adds up. So that is what I was doing. I was doing that for a very long time. Until about 2009, just physical products, the kind that you can sell on Amazon. I was doing very little of the kind of affiliate products that you may be talking about, where you can earn 50% commission and more.

Now, what happened in 2009 was that I decided that I wanted to teach other people how to do it, so I moved away a little bit from physical products and I thought about information: how can I sell information? And my main goal here was to teach other how to earn an income online, because people around me kept asking me. They knew I didn't have a job, they knew that I was earning an income, and they kept saying, can you teach me how to do that, or there was one person who kept saying to me, I'll get together a group of 10 women, and we'll come to you and you just teach us how to do it. And I really didn't want to, because I didn't have the time for it, because remember, I had little kids at home. So I decided that I would teach people online. And then I had a list of parents just from my stroller site and was selling other baby product sites, and I decided to start teaching people how to do what I'm doing. That is how I started selling my own courses and selling my own training, and I've been doing that ever since.

Now, since 2009, I have also started selling products that have a much, much higher commission, like 50%, even 100% commissions in some cases, and that's also really, really great. But I have this special place in my mind and in my heart for those physical products, because that is how I got started, and I was able to help support my family and do pretty well with just those, so I don't want to minimize that, because it's definitely possible to earn an income online with just the physical products. I know that some people say the commission on Amazon is low, but just the amount of sales that you can make with Amazon is incredible and really, really good.

WOODS: Right, and of course as you say, you can be selling some of the higher ticket items, so the dollar amount that you get is still substantial, even if the rate is low. So that is true, and I'm glad you said that, because that's a corrective to some of what I say on the show sometimes. I'm always talking about digital products, because I basically produce – I mean, I write books, but I produce mostly digital products. What I like about them – I mean, you know all the benefits of them. They're infinitely reproducible; you don't have to have any physical inventory. Of course, when you're an affiliate you don't ever have to have any inventory. Somebody else does the fulfillment. But it's easier, and the commissions are big. But you're right, you can do very well with physical products, especially when Amazon has done the heavy lifting for you. You just have to bring the traffic.

I also like your point – I'm glad you mentioned it, because a lot of people wouldn't think of it, that you can ask, if you get to be a good affiliate, you can ask for an increase in the commission rate. And a lot of shy people like me wouldn't think to try

that, but I have tried that twice, and one time they said yes, and one time they said no. So, you know, 50% is pretty good, and in fact, the company that said yes wound up increasing my — I did so well for them, they increased my affiliate commission by 50% from where it was before.

YOUNG: Wow.

WOODS: So the lesson here to draw from our conversation first is it can't hurt to ask. Now, when we were talking before we went on, you said initially you were interested in spreading the word about what you were doing as a way for moms to be able to stay home with their children, because that's exactly what you were doing.

YOUNG: Right, any parent, actually. But it's interesting. My husband saw what I was doing, and he said, hey, I want to do this too, and he does it also now.

WOODS: Oh, really?

YOUNG: Yeah, so you don't have to be a mom; you can also be a dad.

WOODS: I see; I see. So are you guys still now — okay, so you have your own products now, but do you still do traditional affiliate marketing, and what kind of areas are you in these days/

YOUNG: I just love anything to do with parenting, so I'm still there. I was thinking another thing to add to what I was saying before about the information products and digital products, because you like them so much, one of the differences between 2005 and today is that in 2005 you would create tiny little websites about very specific products, and today it's much better to create a site about a more general topic, like parenting, for example. And then you can promote products like strollers, but you can also promote information products, like how to help your baby sleep at night, how to toilet train your toddler, and all that goes on the same site, so you're not limited anymore to either promoting physical products or digital products. You can do both. So that is something that I wanted to say. We're also — my husband is more into digital products like you, so languages, things like that.

WOODS: Ah, yeah. There's an excellent language product that's basically digital. You can get a hard copy if you want, but it's primarily delivered in digital format. Commissions are very good, and I promote it on my show when they have their big sales, and so that way my listeners benefit, they benefit, and I benefit. It helps me pay the expenses of the show. So this is great. There's nothing bad about any of this, and yet for some reason — if I were to say to people, I'm going to teach you how to be a better skier or I'm going to teach you how to fly an airplane, nobody would suspect a thing. But as soon as I say to people I'm going to teach you how to earn a living, they immediately say it must be a scam, I don't believe you, I don't trust this. Why do you think that is? Is it because — frankly, there are some scammers out there, but why is there skepticism about this one area of teaching, when presumably there are some people who know how to earn a living who have some knowledge to pass on to you.

YOUNG: Yes, well I think it's mostly because this is still something new to most people, and when people hear about something new they're skeptical about it. And you know what, there really are some scams around, and I can give you some tips on how to check if something is a scam or not. First of all, check if it makes sense – first of all, check if they're actually telling you what's involved. Sometimes I go to a sales page on a website, and they tell you, oh, you're going to make so much money and just go on and on about how much money you're going to make, but they don't say anything about what they're going to be teaching –

WOODS: Right, doing what?

YOUNG: Yeah, press a magic button and the money will appear, right? So if anybody says that to you, then that is a red flag. This is probably a scam. But if they explain what it is you'll be doing and logically it makes sense, then it can actually be something that works. So first of all, check that it logically makes sense and that they're telling you what you're going to be doing. You can look around online for testimonials and just feedback from people who have already worked with a person that is teaching this program. Today it's so easy to go online and Google somebody's name and see what kind of feedback they get. So if you look around and you see that the feedback is generally good, then you know that there's a chance that this really is a good thing. I mean, today you can look around see that there really are a lot of people who are earning a living online. Look at you, right? You're doing it; I'm doing it –

WOODS: It's exclusively online. I don't do anything else. That's right; I just sit here all day.

YOUNG: Right, right. Yeah, and the last tip is if there's a money back guarantee. If there's a money back guarantee and you're paying with credit card or you're paying with PayPal, then it's going to be very hard to scam people for too long –

WOODS: Right.

YOUNG: – because these credit card companies will not work with scams, and PayPal will not work with scams, so chances are that if there's a money back guarantee and if they're working with a reputable, regular credit card company and PayPal, today it's very, very hard to scam people. I would say 10 years ago when everything was new it was much, much easier, but today you just can't last if you're a scammer.

WOODS: I want to point out that before you and I started talking, earlier in the episode I walked people through an example of an affiliate site of my own. It's a very, very simple one, but it's done very well for me, and I just want to point out that just while you and I have been talking, I earned a commission through that site – just while I was sitting here doing something else. So if that is appealing to you, the idea that you can be earning money while you're doing something else, then you're going to like this kind of stuff. And I've told people again and again that I had to really apply myself, because we've had some health issues in our family that have led to some

fairly high bills that we've had to pay, and that tends to focus the mind, right? You've got a lot of bills to pay; you've got to figure out how to make it work, so I looked into this. And it has done really well. I just earned a nice, healthy commission just while sitting here having this totally pleasant conversation with you.

Now, let me ask you, we're going to do this webinar – see, a lot of times when I want to learn something – beautiful thing about being a podcast host is if I have questions of somebody – I don't want to bother people by emailing them cold – I invite them on the show, and I get my questions asked. Well, likewise, if I want to know how something is done, I invite people to do a webinar for me, and yes, yes, it's for the listeners, and I want them to learn, but I want to learn too, and I know that I've got TomWoods.com/Sara – no H – set up as how to sign up for the webinar that we're going to be doing March 15th, 5 PM Eastern Time. And one of the things you're going to be showing is something that I actually don't know anything about, which is – because I've basically done products that I'm already really, really familiar with, sometimes products that I helped create. But how do you pinpoint a product that gives you a decent commission that is interesting enough to the public that somebody would bother, it's worth your time to promote it but not so interesting that everyone in the world is trying to sell it? That's not easy, and that's not easy for you to describe here on the show, but presumably that's going to be some of the instructional stuff you'll do on the webinar.

YOUNG: Yeah, so yeah, it's a little bit complicated to explain without showing you how it works, but I can tell you quickly that you need to check for three things. If you want to promote a product, you need to check that it's popular enough that people want to buy it, and you can get a little bit of an idea by going, let's say, to Amazon looking at the product – if it's on Amazon – and seeing how many reviews it got. If it's a digital product or not on Amazon, one thing you can do is Google has a special tool that you can use that we can show you on the webinar, has a special tool where you can see how many people searched for a certain product. So if you want to promote a specific stroller, let's say a BOB stroller, right? So you can go to Google to that little tool, and you type in "BOB stroller," and it tells you how many people search every month for that stroller, so you can get an idea of how popular it is. That's how you can tell if something is popular. So the first thing to see when deciding to promote a product is if it is popular.

The second thing is how much it costs, because we talked about wanting to have the commissions be enough that they can add up and be substantial, so you want to pick a product that, on the one hand, people search a lot for, and you check that with that Google tool, and on the other hand, costs, let's say, more than a few hundred dollars, or at least a few hundred dollars. And the other thing that you want to check for, and this is for people who just want to start getting visitors to their site very fast without having to pay for advertising, if you want to get free visitors to your site, you need to check what websites are ranking for terms related to that product on Google and how hard or easy it is to see if you can get your site to the first page of Google. And that is a little bit involved, but there's also a special tool that can show you how to do that. It just looks at the different sites that are ranking on Google, and it tells you how hard

or how easy it is for your own site to get to the front page of Google. So those are the three things to look for when deciding whether to promote a product or not.

WOODS: Okay, yeah, see this is stuff that – I know what keyword research is, but I've never really done any of that, so I'm looking forward to hearing about that. I want to pay you a quick compliment, by the way, before we wrap up today. You were talking about trying to figure out if a product is any good or not or if it's going to do what it promises, and I guess up to now I just sort of assumed that every product seller is as conscientious as I am, and I guess that's not the case. Because for instance, I have a digital product, a membership site, and any time there's any problem – people have a password problem or the videos aren't coming up for them or whatever it is – one of my people gets back with them very quickly – sometimes it's me perfectly that gets back with them very quickly. Unfortunately I now know that there are people in this particular field, in Internet marketing, that you buy their product, and then they're off in Monaco and you never hear from them if you have a problem. But with you, you have an excellent reputation for this, that if people need something, you're right there to help them. Same with your business partner, Andrew Hansen –

YOUNG: Yeah.

WOODS: Everybody knows that they're not going to be left out in Siberia, that they will be able to get help if they need it, so that when I have you on and we talk about a webinar, I feel like I can promote this with a clear conscience. I can promote it ethically, because I know that if somebody does choose to work with you someday, they're not going to be left out in the cold, and they're going to do very well. `

YOUNG: Yeah, thanks for point that out. I'm here, and Andrew's great, so I speak for Andrew also. We're here to help people, and the day that we feel like we're not helping people – I mean, I'll talk for myself – the day I feel I'm not helping people I'm going to stop, because I'm in it. I just got into teaching people, because I wanted to make a difference, and I still want to make a difference today, and if anybody at any point wants to talk to me, they can come right to my website. There's a help desk link there. I answer, have an assistant who also helps me and also answers, and there's no such thing as going to Monaco. Hey, I can't go to Monaco; I have seven kids.

WOODS: (laughing) That's right.

YOUNG: There's no such thing as disappearing. I want to help.

WOODS: Well, that is great, and I'm looking forward to it. I hope a whole bunch of people will attend. It's going to be March 15th – this is 2016 for people listening later on – March 15th, 5 PM Eastern, and the link to sign up for it is TomWoods.com/Sara. Well, Sara, thanks so much for your time today. I'm glad we were able to work this out with the tremendous time difference between us, and we're both awake at the same time, and it works. So thanks so much again.

YOUNG: Thank you.