

An Interview With Stephanie Bryant, Author - Videoblogging For Dummies

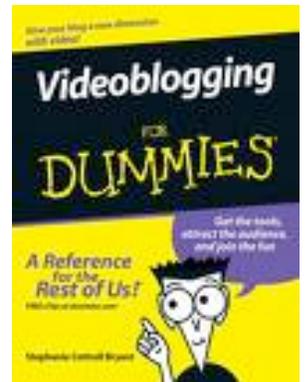
Lon Safko: Hello. My name is Lon Safko, author of the John Wiley & Sons, *The Social Media Bible*, the largest book ever written on a social media subject. And today we are here with Stephanie Cottrell Bryant, author of *Videoblogging for Dummies*, also published by John Wiley & Sons. And we will be speaking today about video and video blogging, so let's get started.



So, Stephanie, please tell our listeners a little bit about your background and why you wrote the book, *Videoblogging for Dummies*.

Stephanie Bryant: Well, I started video blogging in 2005, about four or five months after video blogging really kind of started to hit the scene (I guess you could call it), and a couple of months before video blogs became available, before the video iPod became available and video blogs could be shown on the iPod video. So there weren't a lot of ways to subscribe to video blogs before the RSS and podcasting movement started. Of course, once podcasting became a big hit, people realized, "Hey, if we can put audio in there, we can put video in there!"

I kind of skipped podcasting entirely and just went straight to video, which is, you know, just the way I am. The first video blog that I hosted was a video that I took of my cat. And it was really just, you know, 'cuz cat videos are just how people start doing video online. Lol. There are millions of cat videos out there, but it was just kind of a silly thing. I was just messing around with iMovie and I had my new digital camera with me and I was like, "Oh, look, it takes video." So I shot a little 30-second video of my cat attacking a toy. And then I edited it and posted it to my iJournal, and that was it. And then, about four days later I thought, "Well, I could turn this into a show. I could go around and video myself doing weird and stupid things and then post it to the internet." And I thought this would be a really good idea. So...lol.



Lon Safko: Having fun!

Stephanie Bryant: ...and having fun! And I used for my inspiration a book called, *This Book Will Change Your Life*, which was written by these two guys in, I don't know, Norway, or something. They're not Americans, that's for sure. And they have that very bent sense of humor that you get once you get out of the States. It is a 365-page book and each page has something to do that day. So like, day #1 starts and it is, like, "Just do one thing different today." Day #2 is something else, and so it is just like a day-by-day diary of something you do that pushes your boundaries.

Lon Safko: Great!

Stephanie Bryant: So I decided, "Okay, I'll do this and then I will video tape it. And then I will add it and post it to my video blog. And I called the video blog, *Hold My Beer and Watch This*. And I got involved in the video blogging group on Yahoo, which is still one of the very best resources for video bloggers and something I strongly recommend for anyone starting out...because you can ask all sorts of questions and every so often, you know, people are saying, "Oh, do we have to have this conversation again?" But most of the time somebody will give you a solid answer, which is kind of nice. Umm...and that was kind of the start. And within six

months I had proposed *Videoblogging For Dummies* to Wiley, and I previously published with Wiley with a couple of other computer books, so they said, “Hey, yeah, that sounds like a good idea. Let’s go for it!” And the rest is history.

Lon Safko: You’re hooked!

Stephanie Bryant: At the time, nobody was making money using video blogs. And this was kind of important for your listeners and your readers, because I know now the internet and [04:16.0] and podcasting, and blogging and video blogging, has become a genuine way of building revenue. But at the time, people were just out there having fun. And if I were going to suggest, or if I was to answer if you had a question about what insights have I learned, I would say, “Keep the fun.” Yes?

Lon Safko: Yeah, that’s exactly right. And that leads us into the first question. If someone came up to you and they have never done video blogging before, you know, what insights do you have and what have you learned from your background of video blogging? What are some tips that you’d tell a beginner?

Stephanie Bryant: I would say, “Make sure that you are having a lot of fun with it.” And that sounds sort of, like you know, “Oh, well, what if I’m making a whole lot of money?” But, you know what? If you’re not having fun, not only will it show...it will show in your video and people will get turned off. But, also, you will get burnt out and you will fail. You know, “I just don’t have time to do this.” So you will have hours and hours of video sitting on your hard drive waiting to be edited. Lol!

Lon Safko: Actually, the power of video is that people can tell that you are sincere, so when you are you really do come across that way.

Stephanie Bryant: You know, that’s sort of an interesting question, because on the one hand...people like video blogs because they see real people...but at the same time it is really easy to be deceptive with video. Lol. (You can) make a video that makes it look like you’re standing on top of the Sears Tower, if you wanted. Even if you have never been to Chicago. So, it’s pretty interesting to see how you can also make videos like...like...oh, what was that one, “Help Us Emo” or the one that hit the internet last year that was a big deal. There is a few that have come out, that seem genuine and they seem sincere, and they seem like real people...and then they try to be a marketing campaign.

Lon Safko: Have you seen the one where they were sitting at a conference table with cell phones, and every time the cell phone rang, popcorn sitting on the conference table would pop into whole kernels?

Stephanie Bryant: Yes, and I have seen people send that around as a genuine, “Oh, watch out for you cell phone, it’s going to radiate your head” thing. So, yeah, there are things like that. And it is interesting because, on the one hand you can be very genuine, you can make it a very, you know, real, personal connection. But, on the other hand, just like any blog, any podcast, anything you read on the internet, you still need to be aware that it is easy to be deceptive; and it is easy for it to be a marketing campaign, or whatever. And if it is a marketing campaign, you kind of have to decide if you care. You know, if you care they are not genuine, if you care if they are not real people; or is the entertainment value the same whether they’re real or not.

Lon Safko: Kind of like the BMW; the launch of the new BMW where they went into the fake town in Bavaria with the big ramp. I don’t know if you have seen that on CNN...and they were going to literally launch the

BMW in America, but they were going to launch it from Europe. Lol (Stephanie and Lon) It was hysterical and it's a full documentary. It runs like a half and hour and it is great. It's funny! And the funny thing is that they said that it cost less to produce this documentary than it would to produce a professional commercial, and more people are watching it.

Stephanie Bryant: Yeah, and actually when you asked...or I know one of your questions is "success stories", I would say BMW is one of the biggest success stories; and they have been, consistently, from the very beginning in the video blogging movement.

Lon Safko: Really!

Stephanie Bryant: Yeah, they have always had a BMW brand pod, you know, video podcast available. And I think that that is...that shows a lot of savvy and forward thinking on BMW's part. I really give them strong props, lol...for that work.

Lon Safko: So quality and consistency is important, too?

Stephanie Bryant: The quality and the consistency...they never pretend that it's not a BMW-branded thing. You know, they never try to make it a viral...something...except for this documentary for what I can remember, and even that is still...you know, it is very clearly made by BMW. So, I think that they really do a good job of blending the business part or just having their brand out there, as well as the human connection.

Lon Safko: That's great. And that's why they build the brand. That's what Social Media is...that trusted network.

Stephanie Bryant: Exactly. And I think, you know, that BMW owners and enthusiasts...and that the thing is BMW is a car brand that actually has fans. Lol. You know, people who read websites about BMW's, or listen to podcasts...who don't even own a BMW. Lol So, that's a good example of really powerful branding; using video blogs to reinforce brand. And it also gives something to their audience.

Lon Safko: Yeah, the entertainment take-away is always fun, as well.

Stephanie Bryant: Yeah, definitely...definitely.

Lon Safko: So you kind of touched on it a little bit, but of course the second question is, "What would you tell someone that's just starting out, what to watch out for, what are the misconceptions, the pitfalls, what shouldn't they do?"

Stephanie Bryant: Well, there are a couple of things I would say to be wary of, and one of them is, of course, "Watch out for burnout." And the way to avoid burnout is to just keep having fun with it. If you're not having fun, do something else, because it's really a lot of work if it's not fun. But the other thing I would say is, "Watch out for people who say, 'Oh, video blog is going to cost you a lot of money.'" Because it doesn't have to.

You can video blog with very simple equipment and still come up with a pretty decent video blog. There is a website out there called, www.freeblog.org, which gets a lot of people started with video blogging, and it's a

terrific resource done by some very...it's a real powerhouse in the video blogging community. FreeBlog.org. They will tell you "nuts and bolts", "step-by-step"...starting with, "I don't even have a blog" to "How to get a video blog up and running."

Lon Safko: That's great.

Stephanie Bryant: And they are very helpful with how to get an RSS feed and put it in iChat, and all of that. So, it's a very useful resource.

When people talk about money and how much it costs to video blog and stuff, the thing that I suggest is that you look at your equipment, your time, and your personnel; how many people you have that can be part of the video blog, and how much video equipment and tripods, and so forth, that you currently have. Even if that's just your digital camera and a book that you prop it up on...lol...and then how much time you personally have. And if you are lacking in any of those in a way that you feel will make your video blog less enjoyable for you, don't worry so much about audience, because at this point you don't have an audience...so it's just you.

If you're lacking any of those, that's where money comes into play. Money just replaces a resource. It either buys you time or it buys you somebody else's time to be personnel or staff, or it buys you equipment. It is not actually something you have to have in order to video blog.

Lon Safko: And that's a really good point that you bring up. In the book I talk often about pretty much what all of the Social Media tools are, whether you are podcasting or Videoblogging, or setting up WordPress, it's free. It really does require a lot of time, though. You have to understand what you're doing and the better the quality of production, the better the reception is going to be. But it's free, but it does require time.

Stephanie Bryant: Yes, it requires time, it requires a little bit of planning, I think. But, you know, if you're just starting out, one of the things that I do recommend for people is...if you're thinking, "Oh, I'm going to do a video blog for my business"...try doing a video blog for yourself first. Post it on a personal site. You can do it anonymously. You don't even have to be in front of the camera, you can be behind the camera, showing the world as you see it. Just do a few blog posts...you know, video blog posts of your personal life, and see if you enjoy it enough to keep doing it. You'll quickly see what you don't like in your videos, and what you do like, and that will shape when you start making your business plan and your business message. It will shape how you want to present that.

Lon Safko: That's a really good point, as well. To pardon the expression, the sports shoe slogan, "Just Do It."

Stephanie Bryant: Right. Just do it! Lol. Just do it and have fun with it.

Lon Safko: That's great! And, of course, my last question. We touched on it a little bit, when we spoke about BMW. Are there any other success stories, either from big corporations or individuals that could inspire the beginner video blogger that you are aware of?

Stephanie Bryant: Well, of course, *Rocket Films* is the big success story, and everyone will mention *Rocket Films* and everyone knows about *Rocket Films* at this point. Also, *Ask A Ninja*. *Ask A Ninja* started out...these were two guys who had a \$50 budget for their Ninja costume. Lol. It was great because they went in there and they were like, "You know, we only have \$50 for the Ninja costume, and it's going to cost us \$50." And one of

them said to the other one, “Do we like the “cat” costume?” Lol. They were so limited on their funds. And it turned out to be an enormous success. It spiraled, people love it, and it’s funny. It was featured on Myth Busters! I mean, yeah, it is not a show that just sort of came and went. This is a show that has really hit big time. I know there are a lot of people that feel like, “I don’t like *Ask A Ninja*, but those people probably haven’t seen it. It’s just really funny, and you know, it’s...*Ask A Ninja!* You ask the Ninja a question and he comes up with some, seemingly ad lib response that sounds like...if a Ninja had to answer a bunch of silly questions, what would be his answer?”

Lon Safko: That’s great. All on a \$50 budget, they built that following?

Stephanie Bryant: Yeah, that’s what they started out with. And, of course, they now have income and a much better budget. But that was their start and it’s one of the funniest things on the internet. And it’s become a big success, and I think that’s what this thing is. You know, a lot of these things start out as something little, and they steam-roll.

Lon Safko: That’s the power of video blogging, again.

Stephanie Bryant: Yeah, yeah it is.

Lon Safko: You start with a small budget, you add some creative content that they take away as entertainment, and you build a following.

Stephanie Bryant: Exactly, exactly. I could just go on and on about video blogs that I like, and such, but a few others successes, not necessarily that their show is a success but that they, themselves, have really contributed. Steve Garfield, of course, has a video blog and he is at SteveGarfield.com. He has just become a successful online marketing guy. Now, the people, they just listen to what he has to say about online marketing. Kind of like Robert [16:34.0] but a little bit different. A little bit less...I find it a little bit less corporate...but that’s just me.

Lon Safko: Well, when you get sponsors like Seagate...lol.

Stephanie Bryant: Yeah, Robert worked for many years for Microsoft, which is a little hard to deal with. We were all really relieved when he left Microsoft.

Lon Safko: Absolutely! He’s a great guy.

Stephanie Bryant: He is...he is. And then Mark [16:59.0], he’s a video blogger out in California and he’s actually...what I really like about him is that he may not put a whole lot of video in his videoblogs, but he is very thoughtful. And he builds relationships with other videobloggers. And this is the thing that I have always really liked about him. Behind the scenes, he will be very supportive and helpful, and that’s...there is a large community of people who may not post every day. I mean, I don’t even post to my videoblogs very often anymore. But there are a whole lot of people...they’ll just give their knowledge and their time. And of course, one of those three things that you need is the time.

Lon Safko: And that’s one of the things I really like about the Social Media community. It seems to be kind of a grassroots kind of feeling about it, where everybody says, “We’re all in this together”, and everybody has that

feeling. We are all kind of pitching in and helping one another.

Stephanie Bryant: It definitely is. And actually this is another thing that you could put in the “What to Watch Out For”, for your readers and your listeners. I know that a lot of your readers and a lot of our listeners will be coming at this as a business perspective, and the thing you have to remember is that these are people and they do not like being “sold” to. And without all of the Social Media and all of the social networking, if it’s clear that you are a “sales pitch” they will turn you off faster than you can blink. Lol.

Lon Safko: That’s a really good point, because that holds true for podcasts and blogs especially.

Stephanie Bryant: Yes, yes. And so that’s one thing where you want to tread very, very lightly when you enter into this arena with something that is financially motivated. If you’re just doing it for fun, and especially when you start out with your own personal video blog, you can really just start building that following, that personal connection; and then start branching out. And by that point, you’ll have that sort of “savvy” of where do I really want to go with this.

Lon Safko: Yes, and again, just do it. Just get out there and get the feel for it.

Stephanie Bryant: Exactly. Exactly.

Lon Safko: That was cool. This is great stuff. I love this.

Stephanie Bryant: Lol.

Lon Safko: No, truly, this is a pleasure. It is my pleasure. Is there anything else you would like to share with our listeners about your experiences? Anything else come to mind?

Stephanie Bryant: I would have to say that doing this has been....you know, I’m not even video blogging much anymore, just...I’m on the road all the time, so I don’t have a lot of [19:42.9] updates, but I would say that videoblogging is one of the most fun things I have done in the last few years; because it’s given me this chance to meet people I would never have met. It’s given me a chance to connect with people world-wide. I mean, I am friends now with people who are in the U.K., in France, in Africa, in Taiwan, just a world-wide reach. And it is very exciting to connect with people that way. And, also people are just so friendly.

Lon Safko: Yeah, and you touch them in some special way.

Stephanie Bryant: Or they touch me, I do not know. But it is really nice to make that personal connection and to just...even if you move a little way from videoblogging like I have, these are still people that I can email or chat with, or videoconference with, because we both know we have the equipment, at least. Lol. Or we go on [20:52.1], oh yeah, lets turn on the video camera, okay.

Lon Safko: That’s cool. You can meet them face-to-face.

Stephanie Bryant: Face-to-face, exactly. And literally face-to-face at conferences. There is a bloke in the U.K. named Paul Knight who does a blog...he is good shape being called that. He does a videoblog called

PJKProductions. It's really inventive and quite funny and he does a lot of digital editing where he does a lot of green screen. And everything you see in it...it doesn't come across as a "talking head" on a string telling you about his life. It's much more crazy and fun. It's science fiction and all sorts of cool animations and so forth. And I love it. And one of the best things that have come out of this videoblogging community is that Paul was able to get a sponsorship to send him to Blogger's [21:52.0] a few years ago. So I got to meet him in San Francisco at the Video Bloggers conference.

Lon Safko: That's so cool.

Stephanie Bryant: It was, you know. And so here's somebody I've made friends with online and I got to meet him in person.

Lon Safko: From the other side of the world.

Stephanie Bryant: Well, yes, from the other side of the world, from the U.K. So, then there are others like that that have been very important and fun. Just that human connection is very important to me.

Lon Safko: That is so cool. Thank you so much for sharing that. Is there any place where the listeners can find out more information, either about your book or about videoblogging, or about you, personally? Do you have a website?

Stephanie Bryant: I have a website. Its mortaine.com, and probably that would be the first "touch-base" to go to if you want to learn more. Also, if you are online on Facebook or Live Journal, or almost every social networking site that I'm on, my username is "mortaine". Except for U-tube. Somebody got there first.

Lon Safko: And, of course, *Videoblogging for Dummies* is a great resource.

Stephanie Bryant: I hope so! It's a good book. I'm pretty proud of it and it certainly has helped others in getting themselves up and running.

Lon Safko: Well, thank you so very much. I would really like to thank Stephanie Cottrell Bryant, author of *Videoblogging For Dummies* by John Wiley & Sons, for being here today, and sharing her valuable insights with us all.

This is Lon Safko, the co-author of the *Social Media Bible*. Be sure to check out our other valuable social media, tactics, media and strategies that can be found in the *Social Media Bible* book, or at our website at www.thesocialmediabible.com. For more information about me, Lon Safko, or to learn about how I can speak to your company or your next event, please visit our website at www.lonsafko.com. And thank you very much, again, Stephanie, and everyone else for being here today.

Thank you.

Stephanie Bryant: Thank you, Lon.