

147 - Stop Setting Social Media Goals That Don't Work

Laura Davis: [00:00:00] On today's show, we're talking about setting KPIs as a social media manager.

Laura Moore: Welcome to JFDI with the Two Lauras, the weekly podcast where we talk about everything related to working as a freelance social media manager. From business tips to marketing advice and the occasional random rant, which we may well have on this episode today.

But on today's show, we're talking about KPIs. This is something that comes up in our communities every now and then, so we thought we'd talk about whether you should use them. And let's start by talking about what we actually mean by KPIs, just in case you've never heard that term before. A KPI is a key performance indicator and the point of them is to show somebody's performance in their job.

So should we set KPIs as freelance social media managers, Laura?

Laura Davis: No.

Laura Moore: Okay, end of podcast.

Laura Davis: The end. Bye, see you next week.

Laura Moore: Um, let's go into it a little bit, [00:01:00] little bit more than that. I don't think it makes sense to use, to use KPIs. As a social media manager, because you're in a marketing role, not a sales or a task based role for starters, but also and more remote, like the most important reason is because you are not in control of the outcome.

You're not in control of the algorithm. You're not in control of the platform. You're not in control of Mosseri putting his cardigan on, getting in stories and telling you that everything's changing and there's a new feature.

Laura Davis: You're not in control of what's happening in the world that can determine how, whether someone opens their bloody Instagram or LinkedIn app that day.

Laura Moore: You're not in control of Facebook going down for a day. There's so many things you cannot control.

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Laura Davis: Your kids are off school sick, so that person doesn't open their Instagram account that day. You can't control anything.

Laura Moore: No, exactly. And look, like, I have worked in sales and marketing all my life, ever since I left school.

And [00:02:00] KPI's made total sense when I was in an employed sales role. Totally made sense. It was about my performance, what I did during my day when I was sitting on my desk in terms of we would have KPIs of how many sales calls you have to make, how many appointments you have to book, how many appointments you have to attend, you know, how many people can you convert into a client?

Those things make sense because you are in control. And if somebody doesn't pick up the phone, you phone somebody else. If somebody says no to an appointment, you phone somebody else. If somebody doesn't become a client, you've got another appointment booked. You are in control of that.

Laura Davis: That would be like saying on social media, if your, if your post doesn't go viral, you post another that day.

Laura Moore: Yeah, or just make it go viral. Why haven't you made it go viral? You know, you can't, there is no viral button. Yeah. It just doesn't make sense to do it as a social media manager because there's, there's too many variables. There's too many things that you cannot control. And KPIs are about your performance, not the performance of whatever it is you put out [00:03:00] into the world, right?

So, like, when I was working in sales and marketing, our KPIs would be based on what we've done. If we had, for example, put an advert in the newspaper, we wouldn't have a KPI about that, because we're not in control of whoever reads the newspaper, or if the delivery boy has even delivered the newspapers.

You know, it would be one of the tasks we've got to do is come up with a newspaper ad and get it in the paper. But it wouldn't be what actually happens from that.

Laura Davis: Yeah.

Laura Moore: You know, so you're not in control of those things.

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Laura Davis: And I could understand some of this if you were an employed social media manager. It may be, you know, you have to respond to enquiries within a certain amount of time, or, you know –

Laura Moore: Yeah, like, like, what's your response time in DMs?

Laura Davis: Yeah, yeah. It could be that kind of thing.

Laura Moore: You have to reply to people within six hours. Yeah, totally.

Laura Davis: But as a freelancer, we don't work like that.

Laura Moore: No, no.

Laura Davis: We don't need to. We don't have to.

Laura Moore: People are not paying for our time. We don't have to justify what we've done every day. So it doesn't make [00:04:00] sense. Just doesn't make sense.

Laura Davis: And the end result, if that's sales or leads, isn't just the, you are not the only person that contributes to that.

Laura Moore: No.

Laura Davis: Because obviously their website could be shit. Their sales team could be shit at converting.

Laura Moore: They might be out of stock that week.

Laura Davis: Exactly. So, you, yeah. As a freelancer, this just does not work.

Laura Moore: Yeah. KPIs are based on things like view counts, website clicks, comments, they, all of those things have too many variables that you are not in control of because they are not a one to one conversation, not a one to one task, not something that you can do when it's done.

You could, we wouldn't recommend it, but you could have a KPI if I'm going to post however many pieces of content every week, that would be a KPI because that is like your performance is that you've done that, but that's not, that's not what you would do in marketing. So it doesn't make sense.

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Laura Davis: And it doesn't mean anything anyway, does it? [00:05:00]

Laura Moore: No, absolutely not.

Laura Davis: Like to, so what?

Laura Moore: Definitely not. So, so basically we're not using KPIs. Absolutely not. But there are things that you should do instead.

Laura Davis: And I think it's important to pay attention to this because I have been asked multiple times by clients or leads in the past. Well, what KPIs would you set?

What targets would you set? So knowing what you would do instead and therefore how to answer those questions are important because these questions probably will come up with clients.

Laura Moore: Yep. 100%.

Laura Davis: Okay, so what would we recommend instead? Well, we would, there are various things. You've got your pen and paper. We would focus on, on the objective that your client has set, or if it's your business, your business, but the client has set to make sure that you're just working towards that.

Like the conversations I've had in the past with clients will go, [00:06:00] well, what, how much are you going to increase the reach? How much are you going to do this? How much are you going to do that? And I would be like, all I can guarantee is that I will do everything I can to focus on that objective and to get as many of those things as possible within that time frame.

Laura Moore: Yeah.

Laura Davis: So you just need to focus all your energy on that focus, what you're looking at in terms of analytics, all at that objective, that becomes your, well, focus. I was trying to think of a different word.

Laura Moore: Yeah. So like, like what we mean by that is if, let's just pick a really easy one. If your client says, I want to reach more people, you know that your, all your strategy is about what is the kind of content that would be shared? What's the kind of content that would be put in explore feeds or for you pages, whatever –

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Laura Davis: The volume of content.

Laura Moore: Yeah, exactly. So it's, it's, it's those sorts of things, the types of content, how much content you're putting out when you're putting out. That is aligned with that goal. If they said to you, my objective [00:07:00] is that I need more website traffic.

Then you're probably having a campaign that is, starts with reaching more people, getting them to understand why they need to go on the website, and then getting them to go onto the website. So your strategy would change depending on what the objective is, which is why the objective is so important to understand.

The other thing that we would really recommend, and it concerns me that not enough social media managers are doing this. Especially when there are now tools to do this, it's the testing, the testing is so important. And if you're saying to your client, look, we're not, I'm not setting KPIs, but what we are going to do is we're going to test different strategies, test different types of content, test this, this, this, and this to help us to reach this objective.

That sounds so much more valuable. And so much more likely to work than me just saying, Oh yeah, I'm gonna, I'm gonna post five times a week.

Laura Davis: And I'm going to increase your reach by 50 percent and I'm going to blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, because that would all be guessing. Yeah, I think it's hard, hard facts is a way better [00:08:00] way to work than basing it on ego goals because that's all it would be, wouldn't it?

Yeah, it's just numbers plucked out of the air, isn't it? Yeah, there is no way, and this is again what I've said to clients in the past, I could sit here and give you some numbers but I would be absolutely guessing because I can't see your analytics, I don't know anything about what content's going to work because I've not done any testing.

So I can guess, if you want me to guess, let's guess, but that means, therefore means nothing. It's like null and void.

Laura Moore: And this goes back to like when I was in my sales job and they would be like, you've got to make a certain amount of sales calls a day. That isn't a guess because they know how many hours you sit in your desk, how long a sales call takes.

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It's maths. But there is no maths with this.

Laura Davis: Yeah, it ain't mathing.

Laura Moore: The math ain't mathing, you're right.

Laura Davis: Yeah, yeah.

Laura Moore: Um, and then the other thing is obviously goes back to that reporting, doesn't it? It's reporting on the data that's most aligned to the objective. The data that the client needs to [00:09:00] hear. The story that they need to hear around that data.

Laura Davis: And it also is a, this comes down to communication with your client as well in terms of they need to understand that it takes time. They need to understand that you've got, especially when you first start working on an account more than ever, or especially if there are major changes, maybe brand new products or a different audience, you know, it's, it's any major change, things take time because you have to test and refine and test and refine.

And you need them to know that and to understand that, like your first post is not going to suddenly generate loads of sales. So keeping those communication channels open and just getting them to them to understand why you do come, you know, you're using a campaign based marketing, why you do testing, like be honest with them because they they'll be interested. Hopefully.

Laura Moore: Yeah, definitely.

Laura Davis: So communication, communicating all of [00:10:00] this is really important.

Laura Moore: Yeah. And also using that data to inform the future strategies and telling your client that you're doing that, like, for example, we recently closed our Facebook group and we had a lot of people telling us things like your clients probably will have, um, people were saying to us, Oh, I think you've made a mistake.

This is how I found you. And you know, all of these conversations and me and Laura are like, Oh my God, are we making a mistake? And it makes you question yourself. And then if you go back to the data and you're like, no, no. The numbers, they're not lying to me. The numbers are telling me the truth.

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Laura Davis: It's really interesting because there was a couple of people really quite vocal with us about how we've made a mistake and the only way that they had found us was from the group.

Laura Moore: So we were like, wow, okay. So we went and had a look. Am I allowed to say this?

Laura Davis: Yeah, yeah. Go for it.

Yeah. So we went and had a look and both of these people had been in the group. For over five years. I think possibly one might have been four [00:11:00] years. The other would have been five years. I can't remember exactly.

Guess how much money these people had, yes, so yes they found us and obviously they joined the group and they'd been active in that group taking free advice. Guess how much money they all spent with us in total.

Laura Moore: Drumroll.

Laura Davis: Sweet FA. And it just proved our point. Like, because we both were like, oh, bloody hell, I don't know, you know, because comments like that, they did, you know, they do wobble you and you kind of think, is this the right decision?

And then when we looked at the data, we were like, you know what, actually. And we looked at the people who were buying from us. And actually the most of the people who are buying from us are podcast listeners, or they come to us via other lead magnets, not the Facebook group. So that was what made us go, you know what, this is the right decision.

Laura Moore: Yeah.

Laura Davis: And you know, over the long period of that time, we made the right decision with that group because we based it [00:12:00] on the data and the data, the data never lies. Well, kind of, well, you know.

Laura Moore: Yeah, no, but it's so important to remember though, isn't it? Because you can totally be swayed by, by an opinion and if you, if your client is being swayed by somebody else's opinion, you've got data, you can back up what you're saying. That's so valuable.

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Laura Davis: And a client always will. When I was talking to Blah Blah. They were saying their social media manager says that they'll be able to, well their social media manager doesn't listen to JFDI with The Two Lauras podcast.

Laura Moore: Is that the standard line now to go back to the client with?

Laura Davis: Yeah Absolutely.

Laura Moore: Love it. Um, I would say though that you could use KPIs in your own business, not in relation to your social media marketing, in relation to helping you to stay on track.

Laura Davis: Yeah.

Laura Moore: So like, how many leads are you going to follow up with this week? Really important. How many discovery calls do you want to book this month? Really important. You know, things like that, that's where KPI is [00:13:00] coming to play for a freelancer, I think, for your own business.

Laura Davis: Yeah. That's interesting. I don't think I would do that, but that's interesting.

If you're very, if you're a target driven person like, like that, then absolutely. I'm not. I'd have to say, I'd have to incentivise it.

Laura Moore: Yeah, see, I, I don't, I've never had like a formal, Oh, I'm going to follow up with five people this week. But very much had a process that, of people who would kind of reach the top of my list, who I would then be following up with.

Laura Davis: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Laura Moore: And you know, like, if you've got the toolkit and you're using the Leeds tracking system. You'll know what we mean. You've got like a list of people you need to follow up with. And so if you are somebody who does need that structure and that reminder, then KPIs could be brilliant for that.

Laura Davis: Yeah, I think, yeah, yeah, I, yeah.

Laura Moore: So I think maybe before we wrap up, we should just go back over what if a client asks you to set KPIs, like what is the [00:14:00] response apart from just going, no,

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like Laura Davis would. So, and I think there's a few things that you need to kind of push back on. I think you need to remind them that you're not working on like a task basis.

You're a, you're a marketing strategist. You tell them that you're going to be reporting on the data that's most aligned with their objectives. You can tell them how many meetings you're going to have, you know, when you're going to have those meetings, when they're going to get their reports. You can tell them that you're going to map out campaigns, etc.

You can tell them that everything you're doing together is going to be working towards helping them to meet goals, but that you cannot set KPIs because you are not in control of the platforms and anything can happen at any time on those platforms. So it's impossible to set KPIs based on performance goals in terms of how many people you're going to reach, how many, you know, people, comments you're going to get, all of those sorts of things.

Because they're based on algorithms and platforms that are out of your control.

[00:15:00] And they really need to understand that. So don't be afraid to tell them that.

Laura Davis: And they are based on people taking an action and you also have no control over those people.

Laura Moore: Yeah.

Laura Davis: You can do the best you can.

Laura Moore: Yeah, totally. But I totally understand why a business would ask you this, because they don't know about social media marketing.

So if, for example, they have got a sales team, they'll be used to working with KPIs. So it stands to reason they're going to ask you. So it's just that education piece that will help them to understand why not. You know, don't, don't kind of take it to heart that you, that they're going to be expecting it.

They just need to understand why not.

Laura Davis: But, and all of this is good content for your social media marketing.

Laura Moore: Yeah.

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Laura Davis: Like all of this, this is about education. This is the perfect kind of content to put out there. To explain to people that you do things better than set KPIs. And, and that's, you know, that's what people are like, Oh my God, I [00:16:00] hadn't thought of it like this.

This is brilliant. And I'm, this person knows their shit. I'm going to hire them, obviously won't be on one post. It will be over a campaign.

Laura Moore: Yeah. Love it.

Laura Davis: So I would definitely do what I do best is sit in your analytics on the platform, sit in Google analytics and start to. Understand what the data is actually telling you, how you can be confident in talking about that data and those analytics, and therefore understand by doing so what you can't promise to, like, and what you can't set targets for.

The more comfortable you are with the data and understanding your role, the more easier these conversations are going to be with your clients. If things like Google Analytics are stuff that you completely struggle with and it's, you've not even gone there, we have a complete training within the Social Media [00:17:00] Managers' Toolkit to help you to find ways to track this kind of data.

Because these are the kind of services that people would expect from you as a four figure social media marketer who is working with this campaign led strategy. So if you want to find out more about the Social Media Managers' Toolkit. You can head to thetwolauras.com/toolkit and we will put the link in the show notes.

Laura Moore: Excellent. Well, there we go then. So, to wrap up, we're not setting KPIs as a social media manager and we could have just finished the show at the beginning where you said no, yeah?

Laura Davis: Yeah.

Laura Moore: Perfect. We'll be back same time, same place next week. And in the meantime, hopefully we'll see you on Instagram.

Laura Davis: Yeah, see you there. Toodlepip!

Laura Moore: Toodles!

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