156 - Why the Algorithm Isn't Showing Your Content

Laura Davis: [00:00:00] On today's show, we are diving into the weird and wonderful world of the social media algorithms.

Laura Moore: Welcome back to JFDI with The Two Lauras, our weekly podcast, where we talk about all things related to working in social media, from marketing tips to pricing advice, content inspiration to rants about Instagram updates.

We're here in your ears every single Tuesday, and we're also now on YouTube. So if you are watching on us on YouTube, lovely to have you join us. Excuse the state of us. Um, in this episode, we are diving into a juicy bit of strategy that way too many people overlook. How to train the algorithm about your content so it shows it to the right people because yes, primarily you are creating content for your audience, for actual humans, but everything that you post also sends signals to the platforms themselves.

And if those algorithms don't know what you do, who you help or what you're an expert in. Your content won't land in the right feeds. [00:01:00]

Laura Davis: But before we get into it, we would love to hear from you. So if you are watching on YouTube, do drop us a hello in the comments. And if you are listening in the car or maybe you are out walking, come back over to Instagram later on and let us know what part you enjoyed the most and ask us any questions.

Okay, so on with the show.

Laura Moore: Right. I think we need to start this episode by being very clear that what we're gonna be talking about is algorithms, but we are very clear that your content needs to speak to humans first.

Laura Davis: Yeah.

Laura Moore: So always humans first. What we're saying second. Okay. And it has to be created with them in mind.

But what we're gonna say today, kind of sprinkles the algorithm on top so that the algorithm knows what to do with your content, who to show it to, right? So when we're coming into this, remember what the platform's aim are, aim is. All of the platforms, whether it's a meta platform, LinkedIn, TikTok, wherever it is, their aim is to get people to go onto their apps.

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That's their first aim. Second one is to get people to stay on those [00:02:00] apps for as long as possible, because when people do that, they generate ad revenue, it's how they make their money. Right? So it's in your interest to show, create content that the algorithms can then show to people to stay on the co, on the, on the platforms.

Okay. It's in their interest to get your content in front of the right people who want to see that. 'cause then they'll stay on the platform for longer. But if they can't do that, if they don't understand what your content is or what your channel's about, or who you wanna show your content to. So that's why people don't get the reach that they want because the, the algorithm.

It's like, I don't really know who to show this to, or I'm gonna show this to the people who I think I need to show it to. And then they don't resonate, and they're like, yeah, okay. So. Either it thinks well they're the wrong people and can't be asked to go and show it to other people. So I'm sure that's the kind of conversations it has with itself.

Or it's like, okay, I've shown it to who I think is the right people. They don't give a shit about it, so they're probably gonna leave the the platform. So let's not show it to any more of those people in case they close the app.

Laura Davis: Yeah.

Laura Moore: And then it stops them from showing it. Right. So you just [00:03:00] have to think about that all, all the time. Is this serving, this, the purpose of the platform and of the humans who you want to see it, right?

Laura Davis: Yeah.

Laura Moore: It's kind of twofold.

Laura Davis: Whether we like it or not. We have to think about what the platform needs and wants from us.

Laura Moore: Yeah.

Laura Davis: Like I know everyone has this. Oh, well, don't like meta. Um, they don't, I don't, my contact doesn't get, content doesn't get seen anymore.

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Like I get it. I get that. It's frustrating, but if you then try to work against it, you are not going to help. You've got to kind of think, what, what does the platform need me to do? And at the end of the day, they want your audience to be online for as long as possible.

Laura Moore: Yeah. And so it's things like, how long is somebody watching that video that will tell them that that content is useful?

How long are they spending reading a caption that will tell them that people like it? Are they engaging with it?

Laura Davis: Yeah. Are they saving it?

Laura Moore: Yeah. Are they saving it? Are they sharing it? Are they commenting? All of those things tells the [00:04:00] algorithm, okay, yes, I've shown this post to the right people 'cause they're engaging with it and they're staying on the platform for longer.

Well, who, this is a win. And so therefore it kind of starts to learn about what your content is. So let's talk about then how the algorithm kind of learns. So that you can understand what sort of things you need to do. So if you think of the algorithm that it's learning it, uh, think if you've ever had a puppy, right?

Laura and I both had puppies, nightmare. Um, but when you're training a puppy, you have to be consistent. You have to repeat your message all the time. You have to be really clear. You have to say the same thing every time. So if you want them to sit, you have to use the word sit. You can't keep saying sit down or sit over there, or you know, you have to use the same words. It's a, it's, it's a, it's repetition.

Laura Davis: Take a seat.

Laura Moore: Exactly. Take a seat. It has to be really specific and you have to keep repeating it. 'cause that's how it learns. Right? So if you think about training the algorithm, like training a puppy, it's about repetition, it's about consistency, it's about clear signals.

And every single post that you put out, whether it's a, a single image, a [00:05:00] carousel, a reel, a story, a TikTok, a, just a text -based, whatever it is, every single thing that you do. It's sending a signal. So if it's different every single time, it's like, I don't know what the hell you're going on about. And it gets really confused, has no idea what your content is about.

And so then it goes and pees on the carpet or in algorithm terms, it kind of shows your content to the wrong people or to –

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Laura Davis: No people.

Laura Moore: Yeah. Which is obviously even worse. So you have to do these things. You have to be really specific. And this is why in last week's, um, episode when we were talking about niching.

We were saying that it makes it really easy for you to create your content because you can keep repeating the same things. You can keep being really consistent. Your, your content's really clear, which is great for the humans looking at it 'cause they know it's for them. But it's also really important for the algorithm.

And if you missed last week's episode, by the way, go back and listen to that. That was all about how to be more consistent and more clear in your messaging and like in a niche kind of way. So definitely have a listen to that one again.

Laura Davis: Okay, so [00:06:00] let's think, what does the algorithm actually learn from? So what is it kind of looking at?

And one of the main things is obviously your keywords in your captions. And this is why, what, well, one of the reasons why we will always say that you have to speak to a particular niche. You know, and primarily that you, you do that because you want the person on their phone to identify that, yes, they fall into that category.

I'm now going to consume this content. But also it is telling the algorithm so it knows who else to show your content to. So the key words has, it is kind of two-pronged approach really. It's why we always say social media managers. So not only do when you see that piece of content, you go, okay, this piece of content is for me, or it will also mean that the algorithm knows that, where you've all got social media managers in your bio, it means that.

The algorithm knows, okay, [00:07:00] this content is for those people. So those keywords are so important and yeah, it's, it's not about keyword stuffing, which we see a lot, or putting loads of just keywords in a list at the end of your post. It's absolutely not about that. It's just about making sure that in your captions, you are finding a way to naturally weave those keywords into what you are trying to say.

Laura Moore: Yeah, and I think a lot of people think that keywords are just so you can be found in search and it is so you can be found in search. Like that is another added bonus.

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But, but that's, but they're two separate things, right? And they're two separate brilliant things. So if you're not using the keywords, you can't be found in search.

But also, if you're not using the keywords, the algorithm has no idea what the content is about. And keywords are not just in your caption. They can be in your video hooks, the text that's on the screen, anything that you've put like as, as text on a photo, maybe, the captions. So like when you're recording a video, the words that you say, and [00:08:00] then they're in the captions.

They're like the transcript. It's all of those sorts of words that will help the algorithm to understand what it, what it does. But it's not just the words themselves, like the literally the letters. It's what's in those photos and those videos just as much as that text. So you know literally what is in that photo that's in your B, your, or that video that's in your B roll that will help the algorithm to understand what it is that you're doing.

So if you are a business speaking to businesses, the videos you use. Make sure it doesn't confuse what the algorithm is kind of trying to understand. So for example, like let's say that you're a social media manager who works with lawyers. I know that's very different to my usual example, of, you know, green grocers.

Laura Davis: Yeah, it's not a green grocer.

Laura Moore: But let's say you work with lawyers and all of your B rolls, you take in the gym, you are on your running machine, maybe you've got a gym behind you, whatever it is.

What you say in the caption confuses the algorithm. 'cause it's like looking at the video going, okay, this is, she's in the gym, she's doing running, whatever, this [00:09:00] must be fitness content. But then she's talking about this in the caption, so like, I don't really know who this is for. And then that gets confusing.

Laura Davis: Because the way you describe it then it's like there's someone sat there, the algorithm is a person making these decisions and it's not, the algorithm is –

Laura Moore: AI.

Laura Davis: – a computer. It's, it's machine learning. So it has, there is no, they're not going, oh, okay, I get it. This person's just in the gym, but they're wanting to speak to, there's no, there's no interpretation. It's it's fact. Yeah. So you have to just make sure that you are being really clear, which keep, keeps coming back to just being very clear about who you're trying to appeal to.

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Laura Moore: Now, if you were trying to appeal to fitness businesses, and you are in a gym. Perfect. Yeah, that kind of might be shown to people, especially if you are in the gym, but you've got maybe a laptop in front of you or an iPad.

'cause that's kind of adding a little bit more nuance to it. So it's like, okay, maybe it's the business owner who [00:10:00] owns the gym, then it can kind of understand that a bit more. So just think about what is in the background of those videos. And if you are recording your content in the gym. I mean, well done you for getting out to the gym.

First of all. You'll never see us doing that. Um, but, but secondly –

Laura Davis: Speak for yourself.

Laura Moore: When was the last time you recorded any content in the gym? Or is it because the algorithm doesn't want you to, is that your excuse?

Laura Davis: I don't need to because social media managers don't go to the gym. Right.

Laura Moore: Yeah. Love it. Okay. And now I've completely forgotten what my point was. So moving on.

Laura Davis: Sorry, sorry, that was my fault.

Laura Moore: Oh, I love it.

Laura Davis: Basically don't film content in the gym.

Laura Moore: Don't go to the gym. You have our permission not to go. Anyway. It's that time of the day where I need to crack open a Coke. Um, right. Moving on.

So it learns from what you're saying in your content, what's in the videos, the photos, all of that stuff. It also learns from what is in your bio and what is in like the name field, et [00:11:00] cetera, and like you know that this is important for search already. But it, it's all of these little pieces that helps the algorithm to understand, right?

Because those sorts of things, like we said earlier where Laura has said, you know, if we've got social media managers in our content and you've got social media manager in your bio, the AI can kind of put those two pieces together and think, okay, this is, these are similar, you know, this content is for social media managers.

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This is a social media manager. Let's show them that. So your bio and your name field have to be really clear about what it's you do, et cetera. And same goes to your clients like theirs needs to be as well. So it can teach the algorithm, um, like what, what the platform's about. And if you are, have got mixed messages on there, sometimes it can be confusing as to what to put in your bio. Because you're talking about loads of different things.

Laura Davis: Yeah. And I think sometimes, can think about, oh, let's put loads of emojis, 'cause it looks pretty. Let's think about how it looks or let's, you know, try and be really funny. Which I get like, but you've got to remember [00:12:00] the purpose of and of what you're trying to achieve and therefore, is what, is chucking a load of sparkly emojis in your name actually gonna help you. Um, so definitely bear that in mind when you're next renaming yourself.

Laura Moore: Yeah. Um, the other thing is your alt text. So if you are, um, using videos and photos and you've got alt text, so it describes it to somebody who's using a screen recorder.

That is, again, what we know is telling somebody what's in the photo because it's telling somebody who's using a screen, screen recorder. So it's also telling the algorithm what's in it. Right? So this is though, it is mostly for accessibility. If you are describing what's in that video or that image to a human, you are also describing it to the algorithm.

So it's not about keyword stuffing and putting loads of keywords about who this post is for. It's about saying literally what this post is. Who is in it, what it looks like. You know, it is a blue sky with a person with a red jumper on. You know, it's being really specific and then it kind of understands what it is.

[00:13:00] And that is somewhere that people often go wrong and just put loads of keywords in. Please don't do that. 'cause that is so bad for accessibility.

Laura Davis: Yeah, it's awful. Um, there's also hashtags, and obviously this is gonna vary depending on which platform you're on, um, but they are still relevant. Yes. You could maybe argue, well, people don't follow hashtags anymore and maybe they don't. Who knows?

But they still can be used as a signal to that algorithm if you are using it smartly. So it's, I think without a doubt, keywords probably supersedes now the the hashtag, but I still think it's important and it's an opportunity for you to be able to use some kind of descriptive

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keywords or keywords that strategically will align you to the right people to help that signal to the algorithm.

Laura Moore: Yeah, definitely. The other thing is like the tone of your content. So is your content really professional? Is it really funny? Is it really woo woo? All of that [00:14:00] kind of builds up this picture so that the algorithm knows who to show your content to. So for example, if you are like on Instagram and you come across a really funny post and it's really funny and you engage with it.

Chances are you're gonna probably see more funny content because you've, you've told the algorithm, I like this 'cause it's funny. So then it's like looking at all of what's in it. Okay, why are they like it? They see these points that have like the same points that are in other content that okay, they're also saying these kind of things.

There's also lots of emotions and, um, emojis and exclamation marks and what have you. So, this is similar. So it's a similar vibe or if you're like there's, you are often mentioning meditation and journaling. Those sorts of people will probably look at more content about meditation and journaling and woo woo stuff.

And that again teaches the algorithms. So it's all kind of put, putting this picture together. So just have a think about all of that. And this works on every single algorithm based platform. The AI is learning constantly. It has to learn what is this content? Is this gonna make people [00:15:00] stay on the app longer if I show it to the right people?

If it's not, I'm not gonna show it. So you have to teach it that stuff. And it's on, you know, it's the same LinkedIn, TikTok, Instagram, Meta, wherever it is, it's the same.

Laura Davis: Snapchat.

Laura Moore: Oh yeah.

Laura Davis: We don't mess on that one.

Laura Moore: Bit old for that. You know? Anyway.

Laura Davis: But, I think it just, on that it, it's all, I think sometimes we forget. We think, oh, there's, you know, there's us and maybe a few, handful of other people putting content out there every day.

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There is millions, probably billions of pieces of content being put out on all the platforms. So they have to, they have to find a way to make sure that piece of content goes to the right people. So these signals are so important to help them, to help them to work for you. They're trying to make your experience and, and your audience's experience the most positive.

They're trying to show them the content that they want to see, [00:16:00] and they're doing that by using all of these kind of signals. So how the person behaves versus how your signals you are providing. So the two can. Connect in the middle and then hopefully the right people see the right content. And obviously it's gonna get it wrong, but you know, you see it all the time, particularly on like Facebook, you see these like round robin things going "you don't see my content anymore.

So I've been told that if I do this, this, this, this, this, this, this", all you've gotta do is engage with the content that you wanna see. Yes, there are more ads probably than before, but the, the general message is if, if people are engaging with the content, they wanna see, you want your content therefore to show up.

So if they've post, if they've engaged with something about social media, you want yours to be the next one they see. You want your signals to be going to the algorithm. Hey, that person who's just engaged with social media, I wanna be next. You know? So you need to constantly be thinking how [00:17:00] you can get yourself in front of these new people.

Laura Moore: Yeah. And it's, it's not just for you, this is for your clients as well, right? Yeah. So we asked our inner hub members what kind of industries they work with. So we could give you some examples of this because otherwise I would just go down my green grocer alley, which we don't wanna do.

Laura Davis: Or silk pillow case.

Laura Moore: Silk pillow cases, you know, all these random things that we come up with.

Um, so here's some examples, right? If you, your client is a nutritionist. You're probably doing a lot of this already, but if you're just really intentional, so your content should consistently include language that helps the algorithm to understand that you're a nutritionist. So it might be things around gut health, energy, food freedom, all of those sorts of things.

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And then the vid, videos and visuals and all of that stuff should align with that. If you work with business coaches, your content might be filled with words like leads, scaling profit revenue, systems, those sorts of things. And then your content would look like a business account. So there might be photos of the person with a [00:18:00] laptop.

You might be literally sitting at a desk, maybe you are podcasting, those sorts of things. So it's not, not like a lifestyle blog where the person's on holiday and a yacht this time, and then they're turning left on the plane and there's all, that speaks for a totally different type of person. And that means the algorithm's like, okay, I am looking for travel.

Kind of people. So you know, you have to be really clever in who, in what you're doing because it's not, although your humans are first, it's not just about the humans. Yeah. You have to remember about the algorithm. Maybe it's a fashion brand, someone said they work with, uh, a fashion brand. You might already be posting really good photos already about the clothes, so that kind of teaches the algorithm stuff already.

But you could add keywords like capsule wardrobe, slow fashion, everyday staples, transitional outfits, flattering styles, those sorts of things. So that that's like, okay, this really is a fashion brand. It's not, they don't just sell t-shirts. They sell t-shirts that are part of a capsule wardrobe. Right. So [00:19:00] understands those sorts of things.

And then my final example is not green grocers. Um, if you are doing like a beauty product brand, your content might have phrases like hydrated skin, natural glow, clean beauty, anti-aging, you know, wrinkles, cruelty-free skincare, vitamin C, collagen, those sorts of words. And of course your visuals would line up with that.

They might have. Videos of applicant applying those things they might have before and afters. They might have UGC of people using products, talking about those with, with those sorts of words in the videos, right? So just think about how all of that ties in. Now, everything I've just said is probably stuff you would do for a human anyway.

But you just have, if you just think about it, okay, when I'm writing this cap, this caption, have I actually said, any words in here that will tell the algorithm what I've done? And quite often I will write a caption for like for our Instagram or something, and I think, okay, this caption is great for our audience.

And then I'm like, hang on a minute, I haven't said the word social media manager or the word social media management. Let me just go and see where I [00:20:00] can fit that in,

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because then that's telling the algorithm who it's for. Right? So just think about those things.

Laura Davis: And it, it, this works. I think it's not, this isn't just us saying this. You could go on your phones, open them up, go and engage with stuff, go search with stuff, just go see what's in your feed and you will start to see if you think of it in a more, like with your business head on, with your data head on. Don't think of it as just someone scrolling on, on your phone. Think about, hang on, why am I seeing this piece, piece of content, all these signals.

Laura Moore: Yeah. What have I done before or after?

Laura Davis: Yeah. Yeah. Because when people go, oh my God, have you seen that they've, I've got this piece of content. They must be listening to me. They're not listening to you. They're just like, on it with the, with the signals that you are providing. You know, it's that hover time some, but people are, oh, I don't like anything. I'm only a lurker. But actually, if you hover on something, [00:21:00] you know –

Laura Moore: That says a lot.

Laura Davis: – TikTok is perfect for that. Isn't it? It like you, you hover on something or you hesitate when that's saying they like this and then suddenly you get more of those. It's why my feed is full of you know, horse farrow, farrowers. What they called?

Laura Moore: Farrier.

Laura Davis: Yeah, farrier. That's it.

Laura Moore: And it's not, 'cause she's looking at the horses. Anyway.

Laura Davis: Sometimes I am.

Laura Moore: But it's, it's not just learning about you from what you're doing on the platform either, is it? If you're like on a Meta platform, for example, it's also learning about what websites you've been on because you know you've been tracked by the Pixel.

So that's also teaching the algorithm stuff. So think about all that stuff too. So, you know, oh, they heard. They were listening to me because they knew that I was interested in con, in buying some toothpaste. I haven't looked at any toothpaste on social media. No, but you just added it to your basket in your Ocado shop. It's like, come on.

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Laura Davis: Yeah.

Laura Moore: You know, just think about it from that, that perspective, um, and look like variety. Does kind of matter in your content because you [00:22:00] don't wanna just repeat the same single thing every single time with the same photo, et cetera. You need to say things in, you know, different ways, different messages, because that obviously, from a human perspective, people need to see things lots of different times in lots of different ways, lots of different formats.

Laura Davis: Yeah. But also from a data perspective, you should be testing.

Laura Moore: Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly. But it, but it needs to be consistent, like from a data perspective too. It needs to be consistent of those things that you're saying. Because then your, you are learning, your audience is learning the algorithm's, learning, everything's kind of working together.

And you're not confusing it by say, you know, you've, you've done loads of great content that's about you being a social media manager, and then suddenly you're posting about your two week cruise, and now everyone thinks, hang on a minute, is this a travel account? You know, it's confusing. It's just confusing for everybody.

Laura Davis: Yeah. It is.

Laura Moore: So have a think about that. So a bonus tip for you before we finish. If you are doing all of this stuff that we've talked about in your organic content and you're doing ads for your clients, your ads will already be miles ahead because the [00:23:00] algorithm will already understand what that account is about.

It'll already understand who the audience is. So then if you're using Advantage Plus audiences, those can work better 'cause they already know who the content needs to go to. And you can use everything that we've just said about what's in the, the videos, what's in the, the text, et cetera. In the ads as well to help the AI learn from your ads as well as your organic content. So think about that as well. Love a bonus tip.

Laura Davis: Nice. Yeah. Love that one. Okay, so before you hit publish on that next post, I want you just to ask yourself, would a stranger scrolling know what I do from that post? Would the algorithm know who that post is meant for? Do the visuals and text align or are they confusing the algorithm?

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And have I used the keywords very naturally and very clearly. So the content still works as a human. There's no keyword stuffing.

Laura Moore: Definitely. [00:24:00] Oh, I love this episode. I hope this is helpful to you as well. Drop any comments below, questions below if you're watching on YouTube, dive into our DMs if you are listening on your podcast player and ask us anything.

We love talking about all this stuff. Yes, we are human first, like in terms of content, but the algorithms. So fascinating.

Laura Davis: Yeah. It is.

Laura Moore: So yeah, always happy to chat about it and hit subscribe wherever you're listening to us as well, because we'll be back, same time, same place next week with something just as riveting, which I can't tell you what it is yet. Mostly because, I don't know.

Laura Davis: Don't know.

Laura Moore: Anyway, that's that for us.

Laura Davis: Alright. See you next week.

Laura Moore: Toodles.

Laura Davis: Au revoir.

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