

Dealing with the negative effects of success and online visibility from your business

Lea Turner is the founder of The HoLT business community and host of the podcast The HoLT's Survival Guide for Small Businesses, in this piece she shares some of her experiences since becoming popular on the internet and how you can deal with the online visibility your business can bring you.

Temps de lecture : minute

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She was crouched in a ball, in a darkened room, wailing in terror. ears streamed down her dirt-blackened face.

The message read: *"This is going to be you. I know you live alone with your son"*.

The messages kept coming, one after another, after another. I was to die by his hand, he would shoot me, then he would shoot everyone associated with me. No one was safe, he told me. And this was all my fault.

I stood in my bedroom, my heart racing, the sound of my little boy's favourite Sunday morning cartoons drifting up the stairs, as I stared in disbelief at the onslaught of threats.

I took screen shots of everything before blocking the user, and with trembling hands, called a friend for advice.

That was the first time I'd ever felt truly scared as a result of being

'known' online, and while no one should have to expect threats to their life on any internet platform, the fact that it was on LinkedIn – the *professional* platform – was more jarring.

Thankfully, this occurred during Covid lockdown. So the offender, based in New York, wouldn't be catching a flight to the UK any time soon.

That was one of the worst examples of what I've experienced since achieving minor internet 'popularity'. But there has been an endless slew of sexual harassment, bullying, articles and forums criticising who I am, what I say, how I look, and anything else the tragic internet trolls could muster up. Why do they do it? I'll never truly know. Maybe feeding the negative narrative they've created of me in their head helps them feel less inferior and unhappy in their sad little lives.

At first, it affected me greatly. So much so, I sought support from a psychotherapist friend of mine. As a natural introvert, the online attention was hard to get my head around, especially when lockdown lifted. Soon after, I was occasionally approached by strangers in the street who recognised me. It didn't feel real, from my office, safely behind a computer screen, but as it started to leak into my 'real' world, I needed professional support to deal with it.

'Why bother?' You might think. 'If you hated it so much, why not just log off and slip back into anonymity?' That's still a tempting option at least once a week. But I have built successful businesses through the reputation and visibility I have created, and without those, it would be a struggle to pay the bills.

And, maybe more importantly, I'm too stubborn to let bullies win.

I learned to turn the negativity into content, and leveraged the controversy it brought for my own brand visibility, and to empower others to stand up for themselves and others, too.

I learned to let the nasty comments bounce off my ever-toughening exterior, laugh at their attempts to shame and insult me, and focused my energy on people who would help and support my goals, while I helped and supported them in return.

Earlier this year, I even took to the stage of The London Comedy Store. I did a 20-minute set based entirely around the hilarious, off-the-wall comments and accusations internet trolls had used to try to attack me.

I would be lying if I said it never hurts. But I have come to learn that if you can turn a negative experience into something that can help you, or help others, then the resulting positivity neutralises the negativity; balance is restored, and life goes on.

Without the visibility, the community, the *influence* I have established online over the past five years – I wouldn't have achieved even a fraction of what I have; helping thousands of businesses, raising hundreds of thousands of pounds for charities, and providing financial security for myself and my son.

The wet wipes who criticise and insult me, to my face, or in their seedy internet forums, don't hire me, don't pay my mortgage, and don't put food on my son's plate. So, their opinions of me are irrelevant.

I try to remember that happy people don't invest time being hateful to strangers on the internet.

Successful people know that supporting one another creates far more opportunity than cutting one another down.

Other people's negative (and untrue) opinions of you are *their* business. It is not your job to try to change them. And you can't change them. *Your* business is focusing on the people you can help, drowning out the unhelpful noise, keeping your head high, and moving forward towards your goals.

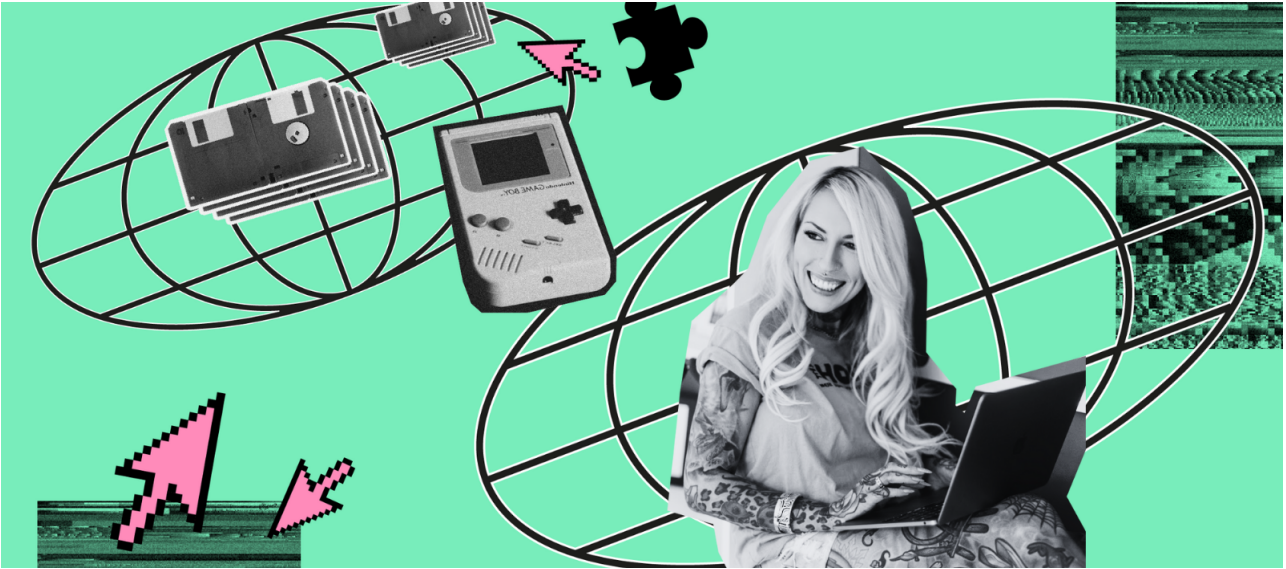
Internet visibility can, and is, an albatross around the neck to those who let it get inside their heads and hold them back. We all stumble under the weight sometimes, but building our strength and learning to carry it can lead to a goldmine of possibilities and opportunities.

You just have to decide whether it's worth it. And for me, it absolutely is.

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