



ELISE GETS CRAFTY WITH ELISE BLAHA CRIPE
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This is a transcript of the Elise Gets Crafty podcast episode 58, “Developing a Pinterest Strategy.”

Hey! This is Elise and you are listening to Elise Gets Crafty. This is my weekly podcast where I talk about blogging and small business and creativity and inspiration and motivation. You can find out more about me and about the show at elisejoy.com.

ELISE: Hi, thanks for joining me for this week’s episode of Elise Gets Crafty. We are going to talk about Pinterest strategy today. You might be like me and be like, “I did not even know there was Pinterest strategy!” But I went to Craftcation at the end of March, and one of the panels I sat in on talked about social media, and someone spoke about Instagram and Facebook and Twitter and Pinterest, and the one that really jumped out at me was the Pinterest one because as a blogger and as a shop owner, I pin my own projects, I do some of that stuff, but I never really thought about having a full plan for Pinterest.

So Megan Aumen was the person who spoke about it and I loved what she had to say and I immediately knew that I wanted to get her onto the podcast to discuss this a little bit further. Happily, Megan said yes, and so Megan I want to thank you for joining me today.

MEGAN: Thank you for having me! I’m always happy to talk about Pinterest.

E: Yeah, I know! You seemed so passionate about it so that was awesome. [laughter] I’d love to hear... so talk to us about what you do online and kind of what your job is online.

M: Yeah, so I actually sort of have two jobs online. So I am a designer and a metal smith. I run my own jewelry line under my name, meganaumen.com, and that’s been my primary business for the last about eight years now, so that’s both an online business - I have my shop, started on Etsy, transitioned to my own shop as many have - and I also sell to stores as well. So that’s a kind of big part of my business. And then I also run a website called designing an MBA, which is business thinking for designers and makers. So one of the things that I am always doing online is I’m looking and seeing what tools people are using, what platforms people are using, and I’m always thinking a) how can I apply that to my own business, and then b) how can I teach that to other business owners as well?

E: Awesome. That’s good, I think. And that’s kind of what this podcast is about, right? It’s sharing ideas to makers and creators, and I love that you’re doing that and you’re so open with it.

M: Yeah.

E: With Pinterest specifically, I think I tend to use it like, here are my recipes, here are my home ideas, here are my whatever... You know? I’m pretty casual about it. Then in the past couple years I definitely started to share more of my own projects. Like if I made some sort of DIY project I would share a link through Pinterest,



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or if I did a recipe I'd share a link as a way to kind of promote my own work and hopefully get more eyeballs and exposure. And that to me I think might be the extent of how most people tend to use it? Small business owners or bloggers. And you have a different strategy, and again, it was awesome. Why don't you go ahead and talk to us about how you use Pinterest.

M: Yeah, absolutely! So first off, I want to say that I got started on Pinterest just like everybody else. I didn't join it with this idea of having a strategy to use it to promote my business. I literally went, "Ohh! Pretty things! Let's make boards! Let's play!" And for me it was immediately a platform that really resonated with me. I'm very visual. And I love Instagram for that reason as well. But I tend to be one of those people whose daily life looks very chaotic. My studio always looks like a bomb went off. The pretty pictures thing on Instagram was always a little harder for me, and with Pinterest I was like, "Oh look, here are other people's pictures. I can just find them and slot them into place." So I was doing that for a couple years and I think probably occasionally pinning my own content as well. But I hadn't really started to think about it as a strategy until about a year and a half ago. I had a friend who is a home blogger (her name is Danielle Cresp and she runs a site called Style for a Happy Home), and she had started this experiment and decided to see if she could grow her Pinterest following very quickly. She went from maybe 500 to about 5000 followers in a couple of months.

E: Wow!

M: She kind of shared her strategies with me and I thought, okay, you know what? I really like this platform, I really like spending time on it. Can I be a little bit more strategic and gain followers? Because for me the other challenge that's always come up is that I have a tendency to attract, on other social media platforms, a lot of my peers. And that's fine with me because I do a lot of education, but I really wanted a platform where I could focus on attracting the audience for my jewelry, and Pinterest seemed like a good fit. So I sat down and started being really strategic about how and what I was repinning on the site. I went from about 1000 followers, which I had been at for a little while, to about 10,000 followers in maybe a matter of four or five months, I think. And now I'm up to 25,000 followers, so I've really been very strategic about growing.

E: Yeah, absolutely. So I want to just call attention to something you mentioned there. I remember you said this at Craftcation and I wrote it down because it was so interesting to me. You've noticed that the people who tend to follow you on Instagram may be other jewelry makers or may be other small business owners. They're not necessarily your target customer. But you made a conscious decision to kind of... what would be the word? Kind of like, draw in or try to attract your customer through Pinterest. And then you thought about that really specific. And that to me is huge. It's something I've never done. I've never thought, "Who is following me on these platforms? Who am I catering to?" I just kind of, for lack of a better word, throw things up there! And I think there's real value in thinking hard about who your customer is and then delivering what they need to see depending on the platform. So what are some of the things that you've been able to do the past four, five, six months that have grown your audience so significantly?



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M: One of the things that I found, which is really just amazing, is that the secret to growing your audience is to pin a lot of pins. And it's silly how stupidly simple that is. But the reality is that's sort of the very first step. And now, when I'm talking about pinning a lot of pins, there is some very clear strategy to that. So the first thing that I've found is that you really need a critical mass of pins on specific boards. My boards that have the most followers are the ones that have a thousand plus pins to them. And most boards I find don't start really gaining traction 'til they've got at least 250. So instead of saying I'm going to add more boards and I'm going to pin a couple things here and pin a couple things here, I really focused on, here are the main boards that I think are going to attract my audience. For me those fall into two categories (there's more than two boards). They fall into fashion and home decor or interiors. So I picked a handful of boards, and really focused on pinning a lot and very frequently and just repinning from within Pinterest to really build up that critical mass. And that really helped grow my following quickly.

E: I noticed, too, there is that development. Maybe it was even a few years ago, but suddenly when you could see like pins, that was when I started following new people, because I would like something on your page, for example, and then I'd scroll down and then I'd like some of their pins there, and then I'd go see who pinned that. I think that was when it seemed like it started to really help. The more you pinned, the more people were finding your stuff.

M: Absolutely, yeah. Pinterest is very much... I've heard a lot of people from Pinterest speak including Ben Silverman, who's the founder, and a lot of what Pinterest is really focused on is this idea of discovery. So the way that they handle discovery is by basically building algorithms that see, "Oh, people have pinned this image and this image onto the same board - they must be related." So the more that you're pinning things and then putting your own things with these other things that you're pinning, the more Pinterest says, "Hey, that's related. Let me show you other things this person is pinning. Let me show you other images that are similar to that." That's really the way that the Pinterest platform is built. Once you understand that, you can really take advantage of it.

E: Yeah, and it's creepy accurate.

M: It really is!

E: Like, I'll find an outfit that I like and then I'll scroll down and there'll be ten more that I really like too! To me it's kind of weird but it's also amazing because suddenly it seems like such a better resource.

M: Right. And what I've found is that the stronger and clearer aesthetic you have on Pinterest, the more creepily accurate it is. Now with Pinterest on the Smart Feed, they're starting to recommend pins, like "We think you would like this." And I've heard some people say "Oh, those don't really fit for me," but because I've curated a very specific aesthetic on Pinterest, when it pops those pins up for me, they are really scary accurate. I'm like, "Ooh, yes! Yes! Yes!"



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E: Interesting.

M: The clearer you are about who you are as an aesthetic person, the better Pinterest serves you.

E: That's amazing. I kind of consider myself pretty clear on Pinterest, but I get the most random recommended pins [laughter]. So maybe I need to do a little bit better, because I'm getting such obscure stuff. So that's interesting.

Before we get into Smart Feed, I want to talk a bit about what you just said about curating your boards or coming up with that aesthetic because you mentioned at Craftcation that you've kind of thought about, "Okay, who's the person that's going to buy my stuff? What do they want to see?" And I loved that message. I remember writing that down. Let's hear a little bit more about that.

M: Yeah, so when I approach Pinterest, the way that I think about it is that it's really my brand's lifestyle magazine. I think some people who are trying to actually use Pinterest strategically and use it as a promotional tool make the mistake of [thinking] Pinterest is another portfolio, and they just pin their own stuff. You don't need that. That's what your website is for.

I view Pinterest as "Here's my chance to, for free, create a lifestyle magazine for my brand." It's not just about "Here's my product." It's "Here's my product, here's an outfit that someone might wear with that necklace, here is the living room that they might be hanging out in while they're wearing that necklace and that outfit, here's maybe the trip that they're going to take while they're wearing that necklace." It's really about curating that entire lifestyle. Thinking about the same things you would think about with a lifestyle magazine. So what is the aesthetic, and what categories does your magazine cover?

For me, those categories, as I mentioned, are fashion and home, but for someone else, those categories might be parenting and crafting. It's a really big range. Honing in on what your aesthetic is. For me there's a lot of black and white and grey and clean lines and modernism. There's not a lot of bright color, there's not a lot of romantic, ethereal... you know? That's not my aesthetic. So I work very hard to pinpoint the vibe of my lifestyle magazine.

E: Yeah. Which is smart for anyone, even if you're like, "Who cares about Pinterest, I'm not interested." There's definite value in thinking, "If I had a lifestyle magazine for my brand, what would that look like?" I think that's a really great creative exercise to just jot down "Who is my customer? What are they doing? What kind of colors do they like?" I think that's a really valuable experience that is so visual on Pinterest. On Pinterest you can really get that vibe.

M: And it's amazing, too, because it can even just tell you a lot about yourself. Danielle Cresp, who I



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mentioned, she tells the story that I love that before she started using Pinterest, she didn't realize how much she loved color. Her entire wardrobe was kind of black and white and grey, which is my wardrobe and I love it and if you go onto one of my Pinterest boards it's very clear that that's what I love. But Danielle, when she started really actively pinning on Pinterest, she started pinning all of this color and she was like, "Whoa! My life and what I'm gravitating towards are totally out of sync!" So she started adding more color into her wardrobe and adding more color into her home and adding more color into her blog, and suddenly she realized that was who she was. She discovered that by being really active on Pinterest.

E: That's awesome! I kind of had the opposite. I felt like I would constantly buy colorful clothing, and I'd get home and wouldn't want to wear it, or I would wear it and I'd feel weird out to dinner. And when I'd go back and look at my style board, they were all neutral. [laughter] And it was like, "Oh, obviously there's a disconnect here." It is a really interesting way - obviously you have to think about your customer, but - to learn about yourself, too.

M: Yeah.

E: And it's a good way if you are just building your business, or you're just thinking about a brand. You can create a private board and pin all the things that are appealing to you and then look through there and find some threads that are similar. And that can maybe help you determine your aesthetic, like what you want your blog to look like, or what you want your website to look like, or whatever it is. I think that can be really helpful.

M: Absolutely. And I love Pinterest's secret boards. I love that now... It used to be that you could only have three, which was a little bit limiting. I love now that they have a lot, because I'll do things like plan out photo ideas or keep track of resources that are targeted towards me and not my ideal customer. I'll put them on my secret board. I'll even use my secret boards to actually build potential customer profiles - things that I want to keep on the DL but that help me kind of understand my brand a little more.

E: Yeah. I think that's a really good resource to be able... It's the same thing that we've been doing forever, like ripping things out of magazines and sticking them on our wall, but it's so much easier.

M: It absolutely is. [laughter]

E: So I like what you've said about it being a lifestyle magazine, and I LOVE that with Pinterest you can curate. You can take from all over the world, everything, and pull them all together. But I do know that, I think you mentioned you end up pinning one of your own products for every ten, or some sort of ratio you've found that works well. Was that what it was?

M: Yeah. I aim for about 1:10. So 10 things that I'm repinning on Pinterest for every one thing of my own that I'll put on. And by one thing of my own I mean, it might be pinning something from a blog post that I've done, or it might be actually pinning a product image. What I consider is my own varies. It's a



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general rule, not a hard and fast rule. It's not like I'm in there going, "Pin, pin, pin, pin, pin, ok, ten! Go over and pin my own thing!" Because one of the things that I do is I use a service called Viraltag. It's not a free service - I do pay for it - but it's fairly inexpensive per month. I use that to actually schedule the pins of my own content (so my own blog posts, my own product), so that I don't have to think about, "Oh, did I pin something of mine today?" I'll go onto Viraltag and I'll batch schedule a whole bunch of stuff so that it rolls out. And I tend to aim those scheduled pins for the times when I'm usually on Pinterest pinning anyway so that it just seems like a natural extension of what I'm doing on the site.

E: Right. It's not just randomly going up at two in the morning.

M: Yeah, exactly.

E: So how much time do you feel like you spend daily on Pinterest?

M: I'm a big fan of the stolen time, so I do a lot of pinning on my smart phone. I'll usually spend maybe fifteen to twenty minutes in the morning. If I have less time I'll do less, but when I'm first up, it's like, in bed, just easing into my day, I'll pin, pin, pin. And if I'm in line waiting for coffee, it's like, oh quick! Pin, pin, pin. And then usually at night, if you're hanging out watching TV, those are the kinds of things that I'll jump on for another fifteen to twenty minutes. I'm not spending a ton of time. I might throw in one more time when I take my lunch break. Because I have a jewelry line and I make things myself, I'm not on there all day long. I don't have time. So it's definitely not like I'm spending six hours a day pinning because that could never happen.

E: Right. Yeah, I think I tend to do the evenings watching TV, simultaneous, just more mindless for me. I think I remember hearing that Thursday nights and Sunday nights tend to be the busiest traffic. I have no idea if that's true still. But I think at one point someone had decided those were the busiest because you're at home watching TV.

M: I think those are. I do think they tend to be more busy times, for sure. Anytime that you're home watching TV or your husband's watching some stupid show and you can jump on your iPad, that's when people are using Pinterest. Because they don't want to engage with what the other people in their household are watching on TV or doing in the evenings. So that's definitely the strongest time when people are using it. A good time to be putting your own content out, for sure. And it is one of those things, too, where things like holidays and seasonal stuff do really impact Pinterest traffic. I know that Memorial Day weekend, that's a weekend where everybody's outside, the weather's finally nice... Pinterest is going to be really slow that weekend. And that's okay. I might try to put a little content on that's specific to that, like if I have an outfit post that I've done that's barbeque themed or summer party themed or something... I might put that on. But I know that it's not going to be when people are on there,



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and that's okay.

E: Yeah. Absolutely. Your brand and you are similar, obviously. But do you think that there's value in having a separate account for your business, or do you feel like.. Like, is Pinterest the type of site that makes the most sense... like it's one person pinning? Have you thought about that before? It's hard because it IS you. Let's say, Target has their own board. I wonder how that would go for a small biz.

M: I think for most people, if you're a small biz where it's just you or you and a couple of people, I would keep it all you and your personality because the beauty of Pinterest is you do have those secret boards. My lifestyle magazine, I don't post a lot of recipes. I have a secret board where I post the things that I might make for dinner tomorrow night. So Pinterest makes it easy to sort of balance that without having to be like, "Which one am I logged in under?" Anytime you have to login or logout, my brain just shuts down. I think for most people, unless you're aspiring to be on the Target scale, I think it's easier to just use one and use your secret boards.

E: That's probably smart. I think what I tend to do is, if there's a recipe that I want to try but the photo isn't great, I'll just "like" it. [laughter]

M: That's what I use my secret boards for. It's like, "Oh, that's not a pretty picture, but I want to make that for dinner." That's what the secret board is for, for sure.

E: That's so funny. That's awesome. Let's talk about - again, we're still going to get into how Pinterest has changed a little bit recently - but I just want to talk a little bit more specific for people who have a small business, they're totally intrigued by what you're saying, and they're like, "How would I even begin to profile my customer?" Do you think that they're... Where do you even recommend people begin if they're trying to curate their customer's persona?

M: I'm a big fan of coming up with very specific people, as opposed to big demographics because people go demographic and they're like, "My customers are women who are between 30 and 65 and they live in places." That doesn't really tell us anything. I have these very specific profiles, and I name them because that makes it seem really real. I have Susan, and Susan is a 45 year old interior designer. She lives right outside of Boston. She's got probably two teenage sons. She obviously is very, very interested in interiors. She loves style but she's not really following the trends. She's got long, dark hair.

Then I've got Bernice. Bernice is my hip grandma. She's got that grey-white bob and the awesome red glasses.

E: I think I know her! [laughter]



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M: Yes! I swear, people have told me, “I was in a store and I saw Bernice!” Everyone knows Bernice. She loves to go to museums, she loves to travel. And then I’ve got this other profile, Annie, and Annie is a professional. She’s 35, she’s single, she’s living in Washington, D.C. She doesn’t have the disposable income of my two other profiles, but she’s looking for more professional work attire and the things that can transition out with her friends. And you’ll notice I have a professional style board on Pinterest that is very focused on that profile. So those are the way I think about my customers, as these very distinct people. That makes it so much easier.

The way I developed these people is partly as an exercise in imagination, but also I’m trying to pay attention. I used to do retail craft shows and now I do some trade shows, so I’d watch people, see who was coming to my booth, see who was ignoring me. I’d watch the twenty-something fashionistas walk by my booth and not give me the time of day, and I was like, “Oh, they’re not my people.”

So you still have to kind of hone in, and if you’re not in situations where you see your customer in person, Facebook is really great for that because you can see who’s liking your site and you can click over and you can probably see a picture of them and you can get a sense of their interests. It’s worth paying attention. I don’t always love Facebook, but I do love it for customer profiling because it gives you so much more information. But even just on Pinterest, seeing who’s pinning your stuff, you can do a source search (pinterest.com/source/yourwebsite). It will show you what people are pinning and you can get that in your analytics, too, if you have those set up. But it will show you what people are pinning, and then you can go look at the people who’ve pinned your stuff. You can say “Okay, what else does that person like?” They probably have a picture of themselves. You can get a sense of what they look like, they might have their location.

The internet is really great for profiling customers, and you have to just realize it’s not creepy stalker. Big businesses are doing it in a WAY, way more formal way. Our informal poking around is not hurting anyone. We’re just trying to serve our customers better.

E: To me this is brilliant. I’m wanting to get off this call and start thinking about my customers. I tend to, on a completely different spectrum than you... I’m launching a planner and I’ve not really thought at all about it. I’m like, “My customer likes to do stuff!” I think there’s so much value in thinking specifically, who is your person and what groups do they fall into? Whatever. Anyway, this is hugely valuable. I’m hoping that there’s takeaways for any small business listening. Awesome.

I do want to talk now about how Pinterest has changed because if you’re on the platform at all, you’ve noticed that it’s different, and you’re seeing pins at different times than they were pinned, and you’re seeing a lot of recommended things and a lot of old links are broken because affiliate tracking was



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removed. There's been a lot of changes, and I think, Megan, you have some insight onto those.

M: The biggest change that people have probably noticed was back in the fall. Pinterest rolled out Smart Feed, which most people don't tend to like. I have learned to kind of roll with it. What I've discovered with Smart Feed... The way that that works now is they're not showing you things in real time, which is actually great because if you're following someone and they go in and they pin like 50 pins in a row of stuff inspired by *The Great Gatsby* and you don't care at all about *The Great Gatsby*, it stops that from happening. It keeps you from unfollowing people that you might have had to unfollow because they were being a little bit annoying. So it kind of saves you in that regard. But it also is giving you more recommended content and it's giving priority to certain pins.

The way that the Smart Feed works in a very brief nutshell, is that it looks at what other content is being pinned from a site, and the authority of the pinner. So the person who's pinning it, do they pin a lot? Do they pin good content a lot? So if those two things are very high, they're going to bring content up in the feed more quickly. But that doesn't mean that they're not going to bring it up at some point. So what I find with my things is that, it used to be that I would pin stuff and I would get almost all of the repins that I was going to get or I would get a big boost within the first half an hour.

E: Sure, while it was still on the front page.

M: Right. Now what I've noticed, is it's like a 12 to 24 hour window. I'll pin it, I'll come back a couple hours later, and I'll be like, "Oh, only 2 repins." And then I'll look the next day and I'll be like, "Oh! 35 repins!" So it's still rolling out your content, it's just rolling it out a little bit slower. And once you realize that, it starts to be okay, because the beauty of Pinterest is that content lives so much longer than it does on any other social media platform. I have pins from blog posts that are over a year old that are still sending me a ton of traffic and getting a ton of repins every day. The beauty is you put all this work into putting your stuff out there, and Pinterest keeps it kicking if it's good content. And then, really, the other way with the Smart Feed is that, as I talked about before and the way Pinterest values discovery, they want to see pins related to other pins. So the more that you're pinning your own stuff in context with lots and lots of other things from the site, the more likely it is that your pins are going to show up higher in the Smart Feed and they're going to show up as recommended pins because Pinterest says, "Oh yeah, that's related to that, so I'm going to show that to people." It's actually, even though for that instant gratification the Smart Feed is very frustrating, in the long run I think it's better for all of our content if you're really using Pinterest the way Pinterest wants you to use it.

E: That's really interesting. I'm wondering... Some people have, like I have... on my boards I have my projects, and then there's 50 posts of my own stuff that points to my own blog. I'm wondering if I dispersed those in my DIY projects board that has 1000 pins, would they do better?



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M: Absolutely. They would absolutely do better.

E: Okay. awesome.

M: And if you look at my boards, you'll notice that I really only have one board that's very specific to only my own content. I think it's called Megan Auman Style. But really, when I make an outfit post on my blog or when I'm pinning my own jewelry, I'm mixing those up into all those other boards that I've created. My street style board, into my professional style board... And those are the ones that do better because I'm putting them in the context of all those other pins.

E: Okay, this is so helpful. [laughter] I've seen so many blogs that have their own board, like, "Here's my recipes, or here's my blah blah blah." And I was like, "Huh, maybe I should do that!" So I go through and do it. But I've noticed that those pins which used to do really well haven't gotten as much stuff, and it's very possible that they're not being shown at the same rate anymore.

M: Exactly. It's because Pinterest wants to see things in a relationship to other things.

E: Yeah, which makes sense. I appreciate it as a user, for sure. Megan, this is so interesting, and I feel like we could talk forever about it! [laughter] I want to thank you so much for coming on and sharing your insight. We both, for anyone listening, we want to say, "You can use Pinterest however you want!" We just wanted to present... I was so intrigued by this whole way of thinking about it, and so I really wanted to share it. Hopefully anything that gets you thinking more about your customer and gets you thinking more about creating a positive experience for your customer is a good thing. So, really inspiring, Megan. Thank you.

M: Thank you for having me!

E: Tell us again where we can find you.

M: You can find my jewelry at meganauman.com. You can head to designinganmba.com and that's where you'll find business thinking and I've got a lot of posts about different aspects about using Pinterest. And you can find me on Pinterest - I'm Megan Auman there as well as Megan Auman on every other social media platform you could possibly be on.

E: All of these links will be in the shownotes if you didn't catch it, so you will be able to find her. And Megan, thank you again for joining me.



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M: Well thank you for having me!

And that's it, folks! Thanks so much for listening. As always you can find out more about this show at elisejoy.com. If you liked what you heard, please tell a friend and consider subscribing on iTunes. Thanks!