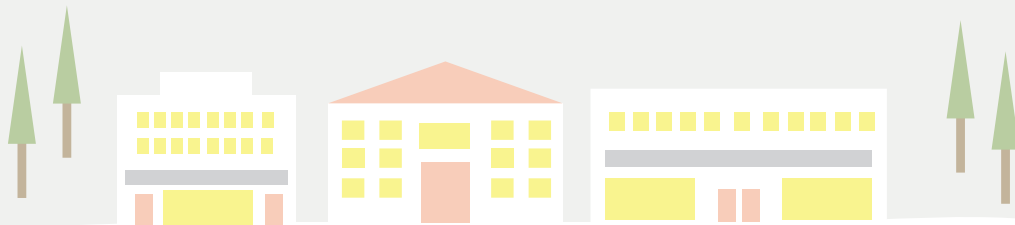
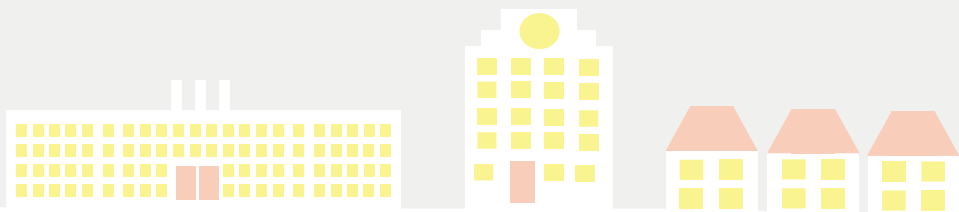
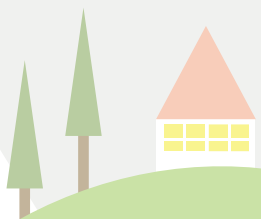


# GETTING PAST ZERO



2013 ALTITUDE SUMMIT PANEL PRESENTED BY:  
Mariah Danielsen, Jessika Hepburn, Mina Brinkey, Emily Frame



# WELCOME!

*Consistency in Blogging: Content + Curb Appeal*

MINA BRINKEY & BOHEMIAN VINTAGE

*Keep it Real! Be Yourself*

EMILY FRAME & SMALL FRY

*Creating a Community: Start with One*

JESSIKA HEPBURN & OH MY! HANDMADE GOODNESS

*Networking: Be the Connector*

MARIAH DANIELSEN & OH, WHAT LOVE



*All of us started at zero...*

# *Getting Past Zero*

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to ground zero! It's nice and level, the perfect platform for getting started. Each of us begins right here with zero; zero knowledge, zero connections, zero followers, and zero credibility. From that first post you hit publish on or status you send out to the internets you've started the journey of getting past zero. Starting anything is a bit scary but luckily you are in the very best of company! We hope our panel leaves you feeling confident about taking the next steps to build your network and that before you walk away you connect with at least one person in this room. Start with us, we're friendly!

*Love & best wishes!*  
*Mina, Emily, Jessika and Mariah*

# Consistency in Blogging: Content + Curb Appeal

MINA BRINKEY & BOHEMIAN VINTAGE

So you've taken the first step and clicked on the publish button on your screen. Here you are...ready to be seen by the world...literally. In fact, you want to be seen by the world. Your blog, your ideas, your inspirational stories, your amazing photographs. Problem is... you're wondering how you're going to convince those readers to stop on by and pay you visit. Or to even find you in the first place!

*One of the most foundational and imperative things you can do to begin on your path to blogging greatness is:*

- Maintain consistency

## I. MAINTAINING CONSISTENCY

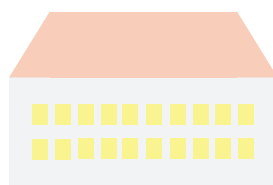
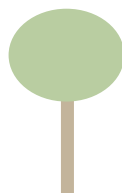
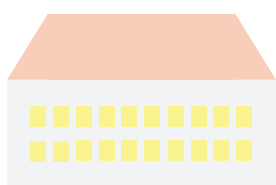
con'sis'ten'cy / noun: *the quality or fact of being consistent: such as: the quality or fact of staying the same at different times.*

In what areas of your blog should you be "staying the same at different times?"

- Blogging consistently
- Quality content
- Original content
- Quality blog appearance (curb appeal!)

## A. BLOGGING CONSISTENTLY

Once you've committed to starting, maintaining and growing a blog, it is hugely important to show up regularly.



Now, "regularly" could actually differ from one blogger to the next. It all depends on the nature and purpose for your blog.

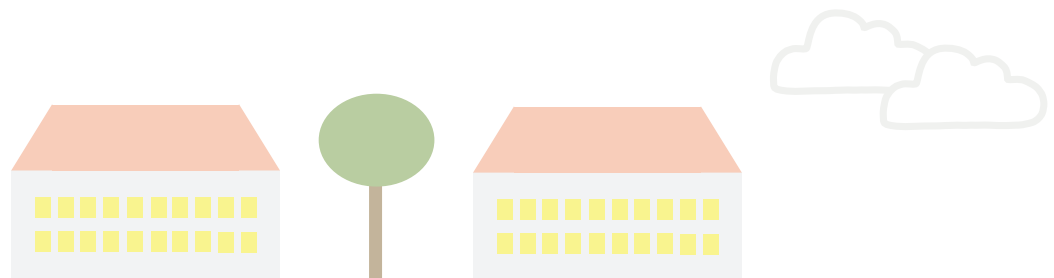
For one blogger "regularly" may be every Friday. For another it could mean daily. What determines how many times you blog is truly dependent on your schedule, other commitments, family/work life balance and the purpose for your blog. If your blog is being created to promote a larger business (e.g. A blog about interior decorating to promote your brick and mortar vintage furniture boutique), then you may choose not to blog daily. You may only blog a couple of times a week. On the other hand, if your blog is your business, you may want to blog more often because your sponsors will probably expect/want that of you. One good method is to adopt a schedule of some sort and stick to it. You may even blog ahead of time and schedule your posts to go live on the dates and times indicated by you. For instance, Sunday could be your "blogging day" when you prepare all of your blogs posts for the week.

Preparing and maintaining a schedule will aid you in keeping consistency in the number of times readers can expect to see a new blog post per week. This will attract readers to your blog and keep them coming back for more of your brilliance!

## B. QUALITY CONTENT & ORIGINAL CONTENT

The content that you put out there should be of excellent quality. This quality should also be consistent. In other words, it shouldn't be mediocre one day, excellent the next and extremely poor the following day. Readers will come to expect a certain quality from you and you should strive to deliver it consistently. Quality comes in many forms. It's in the spelling, grammar and photographs you post. It can also be in the information you convey to the reader. Remember, you're the pro! You're the one they're coming to see and learn from. So, deliver quality information in a quality way and readers will surely return for more.

If you can make your content original (created by you), it will add a uniqueness to your blog that will also be a great magnet for readers. Original content can be in the form of DIYs, recipes, photographs, ideas, etc...The creative possibilities are endless!



## C. QUALITY BLOG APPEARANCE

Have you ever walked or driven by a house with awesome bones, but a neglected front yard that looks dingy and dead? If you're like me, you may think "You know... that'd be a nice looking house if they'd only do something with the front yard!" I've thought that so many times when walking past houses. Your blog is that house! You may have amazing "bones" but no curb appeal. Your blog may have great information, but low quality images. It may have great images, but too much clutter around the image, lowering the beauty of the image. The look of your blog is key in attracting more readers. It should look nice.

Granted, "nice" will and can be defined differently by many people. And that's okay. You need not try to meet everyone's definition of a "nice" looking blog. What you should think about, however, is your target audience. Who are you trying to attract to your blog? Is it 25-35 year old women with an Anthropologie obsession? If so, capturing that Anthro look is probably a good idea. Are you trying to attract the same guy or gal that subscribes to Dwell and drools over each issue? Then having clean, modern lines in your blog may be a good call. Again, only you can make the decision of what kind of front yard you will give your beautiful house. Just make sure it's an attractive one that will make readers want to come back for more.

## MEET MINA!



Decorating and design blogger, Mina Brinkey, works as a Social Studies high school teacher by day and authors and edits the Bohemian Vintage blog by night. Mina has been featured in various publications, such as The Tampa Bay Times, Nesting Newbies Magazine and Apartment Therapy. She has also been featured as a design expert in Allison Serrell's book *New Cottage Style*. She lives in sunny Tampa Bay with her husband Bill and their daughter, Savannah.

*Website Facebook Twitter Pinterest*



# Keep it Real! Be Yourself

EMILY FRAME & SMALL FRY

Being yourself: maybe the only thing in the world that is easier done than said. It's hard to define, because it is nature, habit, and totally ingrained in us from our first breath. The best blogs and bloggers are those who have a clear vision of who they are, and who they are not, and they see the combination as a definable presentation. They and their blog (and you and yours) are a brand.

## YOU ARE YOUR BRAND

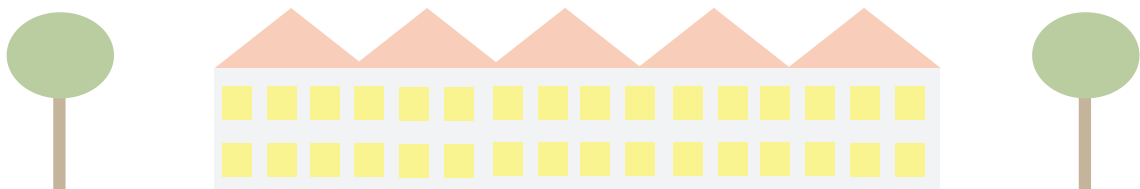
You represent this brand every day with what you choose to post, the look and feel of your space, who you invite to that space (sponsors, collaborations, and guest posters) and how you interact on your social media networks and in real life. So how do you fine-tune what your brand represents?

## THE BOX PROCESS

If you've spent any time working for "The Man" in a creative field, you've most likely heard: "Think outside the box!" which is just a more ambiguous way of saying, "Think of something we haven't thought of yet." But, when it comes to being yourself, and defining your blog's special brand, let's say the opposite. Think inside the box!

Defining your PERSONALITY is your starting point. Where do your thoughts go when you're daydreaming, what hobbies and talents come naturally to you? What would your friends say you're best at? As @jessicahische said, *"The work you do while you procrastinate is probably the work you should be doing the rest of your life."* All of these factors are elements of your personality.

As you look through this list you will start to see a clear POINT-OF-VIEW that is unique to you and in turn, your blog. You can't fake passion, and blog readers can sniff out a phony half-hearted post a mile away. When you blog from your core, pulling from elements of your personality, and your unique point-of-view, you'll never be short on content! Your blog will evolve with you over time, and feel authentic and personal.



Having a concise point-of-view will give you direction and a guide for your BEHAVIOR online and off. *What should I tweet about? What kinds of sponsors should I work with? What classes should I take at Alt?* Just think about your point-of-view and you can answer those questions with ease!

You don't have to be good at everything to have successful blog. Smart bloggers use outside SUPPORT to fill in the gaps of their skills, talents and abilities. Do what you're good at, work on skills you want to be good at, and bring in help for what you don't need to be good at. Bring the experts to your blog and in turn you will naturally build a network of friendships and new readership online.

## LET YOUR READERS IN

You can have the most authentically personal POV in history, but unless you tell your readers they don't know what it means to you! Let them in! Building an emotional connection is what will turn an occasional blog reader into a fiercely loyal supporter.

# MEET EMILY!



*Website Facebook*  
*Twitter Pinterest*

Emily Frame of Small Fry is a Jane-of-all-trades. Her job experience has varied from managing a retail store, to writing how-to manuals for a software company, to being the fashion editor for a magazine, to freelance commercial styling. A painstakingly slow-paced desk job motivated her to start a family blog in 2006, Ruffling Feathers, but it wasn't until 2012 when Alt named it and Up and Comer. Her love of creativity and community sparked an idea to found the handmade and vintage boutique, Bijou Market in 2009. Her love of family led her and two dear friends to launch Small Fry in September of 2012; which is all about celebrating motherhood and creating more meaningful experiences with your children. She has a saint of a husband, and two tiny boys, Hayes and Callum, who are 16 months apart and make her world go 'round!



PERSONALITY

SUPPORT

BEHAVIOR

POINT OF VIEW

# Creating a Community: Start with One

JESSIKA HEPBURN & OH MY! HANDMADE GOODNESS

You are all community builders, I promise! You already have the skills and smarts to build a community of people who are going to celebrate and support you. All it is going to take is three simple things that involve love, time, and a little self-confidence. So let's get started!

To get past zero you need to start with one. It seems really basic but it makes more sense when you realize growing a community and growing a following are not really the same thing. There are lots of resources, programs, and services on the internet to get you more numbers beside your avatars but if you want to build meaningful connections you need to be less interested in the numbers and more in the people they represent.

*There are three pieces to starting with one:*

1. REACHING OUT
2. FOLLOWING UP
3. ENGAGING

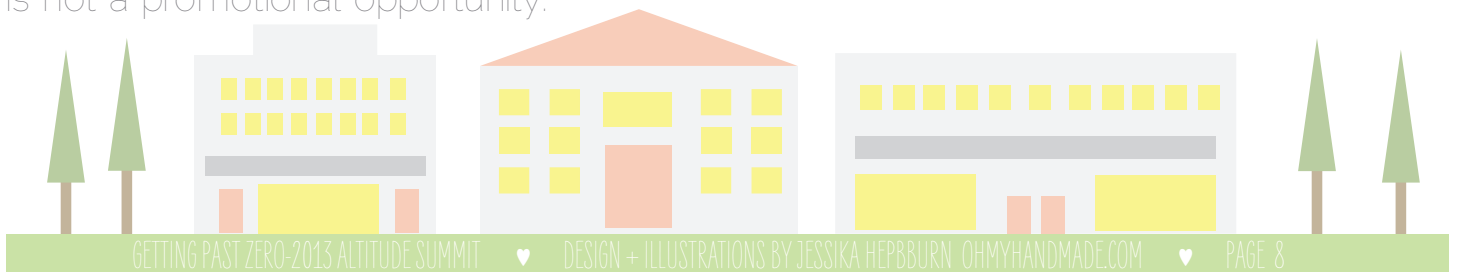
## REACHING OUT

Think of building your community like being a new kid in a small town. You are away from friends, family and no one knows you. Maybe it even feels like everyone is looking at you with their 'who-the-heck-is-she' faces. Shy folks might retreat and wait until some kind person reaches out, but you want to grow your business, so waiting for people to find you isn't the best choice.

*So what do you do?*

- Go door to door bearing gifts
- Say hello and thank your inspirations
- Connect with other people by thanking them for what THEY do not telling them what you do

Instead of waiting to get noticed start with one person who seems approachable and bring around a plate of cookies (virtual ones would probably be easiest)! Remember you are not going door to door selling your new site or why you are so awesome-this is not a promotional opportunity.



All you are doing is saying a genuine hello and thank you to people you would like to connect with. On Twitter, Facebook, the comments of their site, by email-send a hello or hooray to each person who you would love to know. If you move to a new town/street/job in real life this approach will lead to a crew of friends in no time! Don't be discouraged if you don't hear from people with bazillions of followers (though you might!) but be sure to also seek out people of different levels and backgrounds to keep things interesting and fresh. Diverse perspectives are what make communities so fabulous! The second part of starting with one comes along while you've been sprinkling the internet with your little thank you notes.

*You get your very first follower-now what?*

## FOLLOWING UP

Starting with one means that you are stoked you have one follower. You've moved on from zero! In fact you are so over-the-moon excited that you go visit their links, say hello, ask them about their projects, welcome them to your life. Your first follower is a happy dance moment! Your first comment - more happy dancing! Don't think "*Oh man one is nice but I really wish I had ten followers-I'd be way more awesome then! Lucy has 10 followers, why don't I?*" you are going to appreciate the heck out of your one follower. And your second. And so on!

*Follow up by:*

- Learning about & welcoming new followers
- Responding to comments, Tweets, and emails
- Celebrating the connections you have not looking past them to the next new thing

Starting with one means believing every single person who shows interest in your work has value and is worth welcoming. Don't worry about what they can do for you, if they are going to buy what you are selling, or how you can convince them to love you more. Just appreciate them, and take interest in what they do, the relationship will naturally evolve! Don't look past the people in front of you to potential new followers. Choose to invest time, love, and energy into the people who connect with you. If you keep in mind that growing your community is less about you or what you want, and more about how you can be of service to others, your life will fill up with people who both support and are supported by you.

## ENGAGING

You've done all your groundwork and have a small supportive group of followers-you love them, they love you, all is well in Blogland. How do you keep building momentum and bringing new connections to you? How do those relationships translate into sales, press, and collaborations? Engagement! Essentially the art of participating in/beginning

conversations. If you are just tweeting your latest posts, listings or automating your status updates don't be surprised if you have a boring time online. It is sort of like going to a party and standing in the middle of the room yelling blog titles at people instead of asking them what they think about <insert topic here>.

*Here are a few ways to engage with your new community:*

- Ask questions vs. making statements-leave an opening for people to get to know you and respond.
- Listen to people! Remember their stories, ask how their new baby or project or DIY or illness is going etc
- Start and join discussions on topics that interest you
- Respond to tweets/emails and comments
- Attend online and offline events that relate to your interests and follow up on connections
- Take your relationships offline! Get on the phone, Skype, meet up in person, plan adventures!

With time and tending these connections will deepen into friendships. Many of my online meet-ups sparked meaningful relationships that changed my life, work, and worldview. These friends are the first to buy and promote a new product or post without ever being asked. They have become contributors, collaborators, and a truly supportive community. As you begin to develop a following remember the importance of starting with one and your community will grow around you. Never forget it is better to have 10 truly engaged supporters than 100 apathetic ones!

## MEET JESSIKA!



As editor + leader of the Oh My! Handmade community, Jessika has created a place where the creative entrepreneurs of the world can connect to build the work of their dreams, figure out how put food in the fridge, and find a big hug when things don't go as planned (and they never go as planned). Part cheerleader, part mother hen, and part rebel with a cause, Jessika is all about building communities where creativity can thrive. Stop by & say hi, she is waiting to welcome you!

*Website Facebook Twitter Instagram*

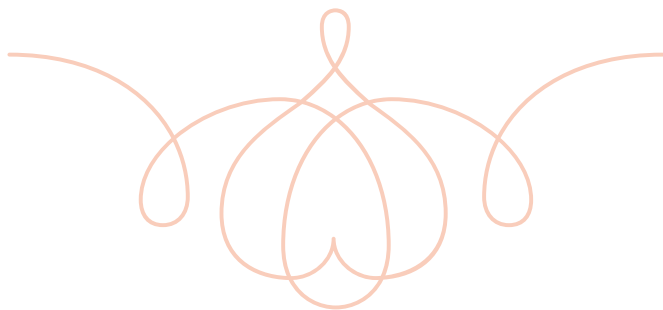


*Everybody can be great,  
because everybody can serve.*

*You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity to serve. You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve.*

*You only need a heart full of grace,  
a soul generated by love.*

*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*



# Networking: Be the Connector

MARIAH DANIELSEN & OH, WHAT LOVE

When it comes to growing your blog and business, making connections and forming friendships is a must. And sitting around waiting for people to reach out to you doesn't really work either. You've got to be the connector - reach out for those friendships, partnerships and opportunities that you want. Connecting and networking will help your business grow tenfold.

## ONLINE NETWORKING

### SOCIAL MEDIA + EMAIL:

Social media and email will most likely be the best way for you to connect with people you want to network with - it's much easier and much less formal (and scary!) than picking up a phone or meeting someone in person. Use social media sites to start building relationships.

### TWITTER:

*Tweets:* Twitter is a great way to break the ice with someone. A simple retweet or @reply gets your name on the radar, and your relationship can grow from there. Also, if someone tweets to you, reply to their tweet.

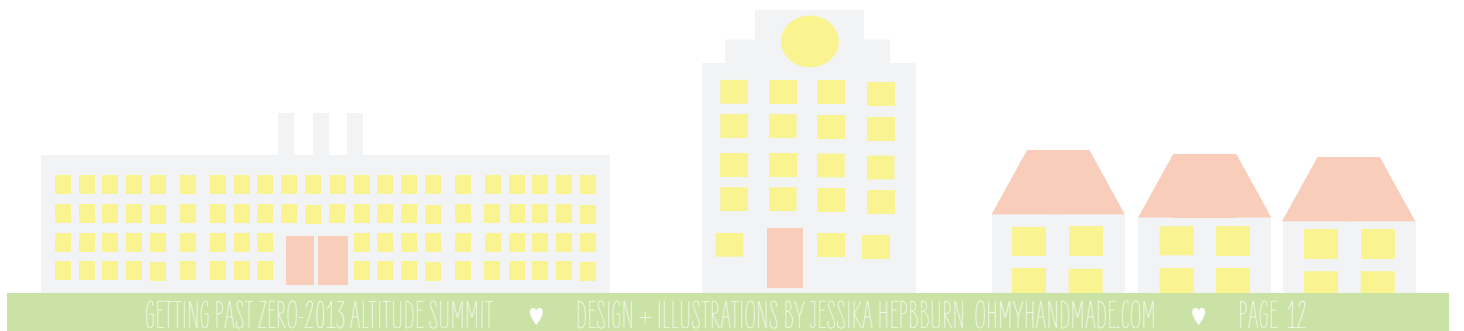
*Twitter Lists:* One way to keep up with all the people you dream of networking or collaborating with is to set up a twitter list - this way you can stay up to date on the things they're talking about.

*Tweet Ups:* A Tweet Up is a way for people to get together online and tweet about a topic with a particular hashtag. Tweet Ups are a fun way to chat with people in your industry on Twitter and can be a great way to meet new people to collaborate with. *Some fun examples are: #omhg, #blogbrunch, #bridechat*

### FACEBOOK:

*Sharing Other's Successes:* Love something someone you follow is doing? Share it on Facebook! It's good karma to share the successes of others, and it gets your name on their radar. Another great way to get on someone's radar is to like and comment on things they post on Facebook.

*Holding FB Contests and Parties:* Wanna do something special? Host a Facebook



contest or have a Facebook party. Contests are a great way to gain new likes on your page, and the more activity and interaction you have on your page, the more people are exposed to your page. Facebook parties are fun too, especially for product launches - specify and promote a certain time to get together with your Facebook fans, host giveaways and hang out with them for a while.

#### EMAIL:

*Short and Sweet:* Email can work wonders, even though it can be scary to reach out to someone via email. Make sure you make it personal though, emails that are canned and cold get skipped over in an instant.

*Heres a good rule of thumb:* Tell them something specific you like about their blog, site, project, etc. In a sentence or two, tell them who you are. Next, tell them how you want to collaborate. Be specific. The less work they have to do, the better. Finally, tell them how they can get ahold of you and when you will follow up with them.

*Follow Up:* Most people get tons of email, especially bigger bloggers who get collaboration requests on a daily basis. It's possible that they missed your email or read it briefly with the intent to get back to you. So a follow up a week or two later is just a friendly reminder to them, and most people will get back to you after you follow up.

#### OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA SITES:

There are tons of other social media sites where you can connect with people you want to collaborate with. Following those you want to network with on these other sites will help you get to know them a little bit better and can serve as an icebreaker on Twitter or via email. *Some other great networking sites are:* Instagram, Pinterest, FourSquare, and more.

#### WEBSITES:

Once you've reached out to people you want to network or collaborate with, one great way to grow the relationship is to feature those people on your website, comment on their blogs, or work out a way to contribute to their site.

#### FEATURES + PROMOTING OTHERS

*Interviewing Others in Your Field:* Interviewing others on your website is great for both you and the person being interviewed. If they know when you're featuring them, they will hopefully share the interview with their readers which will drive traffic to your website.

*Promoting Others' Products:* Promoting others' work or products is a great way to build a relationship with people as well. Whether you're being paid to do so as an affiliate or as a sponsored post, or if you are just promoting something because you love it, there's a chance for a relationship to form out of those features.

#### COMMENTING:

*Commenting on Other Blogs:* Commenting on other blogs is something I think we all wish we could do more of. Not only does it show the blogger that you love their stuff,

your comment also leaves a link back to your website - which can be seen and visited by both the blogger and any of their readers.

*Asking Questions at the End of Posts:* One way to get to know your followers and get a conversation started with them is to ask them a question at the end of each post. This gives them a chance to share what they like and think.

*Replying to Comments on Your Blog:* Once someone has commented on your blog, it's a great gesture to respond to their comment. It makes them feel important and valued as a reader.

#### GUEST POSTING:

*On Bigger Blogs:* Guest posting on bigger blogs is a great way to get your name in front of a bigger audience. It also helps with building relationships with the editors of bigger blogs.

*On Smaller Blogs:* Many times smaller blogs have more loyal followers, and those followers could become followers of yours too.

#### COLLABORATIONS:

*Organizing Series with Other Bloggers:* Teaming up with a handful of bloggers to collaborate on a project is awesome exposure for everyone. Each person gets introduced to a bunch of new audiences and can help everyone grow their following. Get the ball rolling - be the person to initiate the collaboration and reach out to each collaborator with all of the details ironed out in advance. This makes it easy for them to participate and hard for them to turn down.

## OFFLINE NETWORKING

Connecting with people online is wonderful, but meeting your blogging buddies face to face is fun too! It takes your relationship to the next step on the road to building a lifelong friendship.

#### CONFERENCES:

*Both Local and National:* Make a list of conferences you'd like to attend + what you'd like to get out of them. Then work towards saving up the money or vacation time to go to the conferences. Don't brush off the local events either - it can be a great way to make new friends and like-minded people in your area.

*Exchange Cards, Follow Up After:* You don't have to hash out all of the details all at once. Once you make contact and get someone's card, think about different ways you can collaborate with them and follow up with an email containing your ideas. This gives you some time to think things out.

#### NETWORKING EVENTS:

*Potential Customers or Partners:* Hitting up the local networking events may sound a



little cliché, but it really is a great way to get new clients or meet people who share the same dreams and goals as you. Like conferences, make sure to exchange cards or information and follow up after the meet.

*Online Classes:* How many of you met someone in an Alt Class that you're planning on meeting up with here at Alt? Online classes are an awesome way to network with others who share your interests, which can lead to collaborations and friendships.

#### PEOPLE IN YOUR AREA:

*Use Who You Know:* Find people who share your dreams and goals through your circle of friends can lead to partnerships, brand building and lifetime friendships. You never know what can come from meeting someone new.

*Talking to Local Businesses About Partnering:* Get out there and meet some businesses! Bring a sweet little goodie bag or a real life media kit to leave with them, and each time they see it they'll think of you and hopefully refer your services to their customers as well. If you already love the product or place, find a way to work with them. Host a party at your favorite cafe, reach out to your favorite store about hosting an event with them. The worst they can say is no!

Go out there and take hold of the future you want. If you want to be interviewed on a big site - reach out to them and put yourself out there. If you want to partner with other bloggers, suggest a collaboration and volunteer to work out all of the details. No one can make you successful except yourself, and networking and connecting with others will help you reach your business and life goals.

## MEET MARIAH!



Mariah is an award-winning graphic designer and marketer who discovered that she could build a business around what she loves: weddings, stationery, vintage details and DIY projects. She is the owner of Oh, What Love, a wedding decor and vintage rentals website for bohemian, indie + vintage brides, and she is the co-creator of The Create+Connect Project, a program that helps creative entrepreneurs turn their passion into profit.

*Website Facebook Twitter Pinterest*



# GOOD LUCK!

If you ever feel you are starting from nothing all by yourself remember there are lots of people who have been where you are who would love to support you!

Your community won't be built in a day but if you show up regularly, generate valuable content and conversations, be the connector, and follow up. . .before too long you'll be the one looking back and helping someone else get past zero.

*You are already well on your way!*

