

The Maverick Show Episode 20
HOST: Matt Bowles GUEST: Anja Winter

Matt Bowles: Welcome to The Maverick Show. I'm Matt Bowles. And today I'm here with Anja Winter. She is a teacher nomad and a location-independent entrepreneur originally from Germany. She decided to take her passion for language, people, and video-based learning and build a YouTube channel called *Learn German with Anja* that now has more than 340,000 subscribers and has received over 30 million views.

Her teaching methods incorporate games, interaction, humor, making her channel fun, engaging, and highly entertaining which keeps her students coming back daily. She's also launched a very successful self-study online course that teaches the German sentence structure in just 10 days.

She now generates six figures a year from her online businesses and runs them completely remotely while traveling the world. Anja speaks four languages. She has been a world traveler for five years and has now been to 24 countries on four continents.

Anja, welcome to the show.

Anja Winter: Hello, Matt. How are you today?

Matt: I am doing wonderful. I'm so glad we're finally able to land this interview. And just to set the scene here, you and I are in Jericoacoara, Brazil, doing this right on the beach. And it is a beautiful, warm, sunny day outside.

Anja: Exactly. It's beautiful. Yeah.

Matt: Is this your first time in Brazil?

Anja: Yes. It's my first time in South America, actually.

Matt: In South America.

Anja: So not only in Brazil. Yeah. I'm excited to be here.

Matt: It's an amazing place. I lived in Rio for a couple months back in 2015.

Anja: Oh, wow!

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Matt: Yeah. I went to Carnival. And then I just lived there for two months and I just totally fell in love with it. It was just a magical –

Anja: Oh, wow! Cool!

Matt: – magical place, to the extent that I didn't leave Rio for the entire two months. Because I was like – I was like, "Who would leave Rio? This place is too amazing." So, I never saw any other part of Brazil.

Anja: Yeah.

Matt: And so, now I'm back here kind of seeing some of these – these more – these beach towns further north.

Anja: Amazing.

Matt: Yeah.

Anja: Yes. I love it here.

Matt: Pretty epic. And then the other thing that you and I have in common, which I'm super excited about – when I met you, I learned that you were about to embark on a remote year.

Anja: Yes. It's starting in January.

Matt: Which is so amazing and exciting. I did that, of course as you know, for the year as well. It was the end of 2016 to the end of 2017 that I did it. And it was really just truly one of the best years of my life. I mean, a really, really special experience. But, for people that don't know what it is or haven't heard of it, can you maybe just start off by describing what it is and what led you to make that choice to do that?

Anja: So, basically, it's a whole year of where you spend one month in a new country. Each month you go to a new country. So, I'm starting in Peru, then Colombia, then I think Mexico. At first it's South America, and middle America, and then we're going to Asia. So, it's going to be amazing. And I don't know. I signed up for it basically because of the community first of all. I want to keep traveling with the same people. And also, because I kind of got sick of all the planning and booking, and – yeah.

Matt: All of that stuff. Yeah. One of the things that I think distinguishes Remote Year from some of the other work/travel programs in this space, is that you go with the same group of people, which is usually at least 40 or so, for the entire year.

Anja: And everybody's working online. So, you can also get your work done. And it's going to be nice there.

Matt: Right. It's a group of traveling professionals that spend the entire year together. But you're able to go to different places and actually see the world. But to see it with the same community, so you're together and you're able to build those deeper relationships. So, I'm super excited for you. I'm sure that I will cross paths with you at some point on that venture.

Anja: I hope so. Yeah.

Matt: And that's super amazing.

Anja: I'm also very excited. Yeah. It's going to be fun.

Matt: That'll be awesome. So, let's talk a little bit about your background and your passion for teaching. And sort of then lead up to how all this evolved for you in terms of the YouTube. Because I feel like teaching is something that when people think about, "Oh, I want to go live in another country. Or I want to live abroad," a lot of people think, "I could teach my native language to the local people in this other country. And then I could live in that country and I could teach the language in a traditional classroom setting." Or something like that.

Anja: Yeah. That's what I did in the beginning. Yeah.

Matt: You did that in the beginning.

Anja: But you can also take it further. Yeah. You can also take it online.

Matt: Yeah. So, but – well that's what I would love to hear about. Because a lot of people think about teaching as a geographically restrictive thing. And also, a thing where they have to then make the income of whatever the local country is. Right?

Anja: Yeah.

Matt: So, if you're going to a much lower income country, you're not able to make income on that – what you were making at your home.

Anja: That's right.

Matt: You're making it now based on the living expenses of the lower income country. And so, you're living there, and a lot of people I think view teaching as that geographically restrictive opportunity. But you have been able to really parlay that into a totally location-independent online opportunity. And so, maybe let's just start with, back from the beginning in terms of where you're from, where your passion of teaching came from, and then how that led you on your travels.

Anja: So, actually, I'm from Germany. From Dresden. That's in the east of Germany. And I had a pretty normal life. My childhood was pretty normal. Middle class family. And then I got my bachelor's degree in Business. International Business Administration that was close to Berlin. And after my bachelor's degree, I didn't really know what to do with my life. So. And I always thought, "First I want to make big bucks and go into business."

But I was always passionate about education, actually. I watched Ken Robinson and all these people. And I loved their philosophy about education. And I always was enjoying it. But I thought, "You can't really make a lot of money in education. So, first I'm going to go into business and make a lot of money."

So, but after I got my bachelor's degree I didn't really know what to do with my life. So, I went to Thailand. I just thought, "Okay, I will go traveling. Figure it out." In Thailand I was broke at some point, didn't have any money left. And that's why actually I started teaching. Because it's very easy to get teaching jobs in Thailand.

And so, I started teaching English and German. English, even though I am not a native speaker. So, that was kind of cool. And German also, at the same time. It was just a means to get money. But then I started enjoying it so much and I reconnected with my passion. And I thought, "Wow, this is it."

And then I also started teaching one on one lessons online, on a website called italki.com. And I started teaching there. And I enjoyed it also. But, I kept thinking, “Okay. It’s not that efficient. And my students, they need to repeat it at home – whatever I taught them.” And I thought, “I could make a video. It’s very efficient.” Being German, I like the efficiency.

So, I thought if I upload a video, anybody can watch it at any time of the day as many times as they want. And I only make it once. So, I thought, “Whoa. This is pretty cool.” So, yeah. And then I decided to upload my first video on YouTube. First I only tried it with my students, and my friends, and so on. But then it kind of caught fire. Then I kept doing it. At some point I could make money from it.

Matt: And so, you started the YouTube channel in Thailand.

Anja: In Thailand. Exactly. Everything started in Thailand. I started teaching in the classroom at Chiang Mai University and Prince Royal’s College. I was teaching there. Then one on one lessons online, I also started in Thailand. And then the YouTube channel as well. It’s a magic country for me.

Matt: It is a magic country. And you were based in Chiang Mai, which is really an amazing place. I spent a couple months there earlier this year. It’s a super, super special place.

Anja: Yeah. I love Chiang Mai. Yeah.

Matt: So, you – okay. So, you start the YouTube channel. And then it was just initially making videos and sharing them with your students so they could watch them again and again at home and practice and all that.

Anja: Exactly. Exactly. Yes. Exactly. Yeah.

Matt: And then how did it evolve from there?

Anja: So, I also shared it with my friends and family. And they were also thinking I was very crazy. You’ve seen my first videos, where I jump on the bed. And it’s very – so they started sharing it as well. And yeah. And then it got bigger. And then I actually had to pause for a while because I was so busy teaching in the classroom and

teaching one on one lessons. So, it was very hard for me.

But then I continued. And actually, at some point I told myself, “I’m going to upload daily.” And from there it really grew a lot. Because I uploaded daily. I didn’t make videos daily. Actually, I scheduled them in advance. But I uploaded, or I published videos daily. And then it caught a lot of fire. Because it was for free. And people love free stuff. And funny.

Matt: Well that’s the thing, right? The thing is, that – the other thing that is amazing, I think, is that when people think about the type of content on YouTube that would garner enormous amount of viewership, learning German would not typically come to mind as something that can all of a sudden garner 340,000 loyal subscribers who watch your stuff daily.

Anja: That’s true.

Matt: And so, I wonder if you could talk a little bit about that. Because your videos are really particularly unique. And if you could talk about the way that you’ve incorporated humor and the other things that you’ve done to build that audience.

Anja: So, the thing is actually before I started my YouTube channel, I watched some other teaching channels. And I thought, “They were good.” But I kept thinking, “Why is there no fun?” You can make learning fun. And I love having fun while teaching and also while learning. When I learn something else I also love it.

So, I try to always think of ways – always before I made a video I thought, “How can I add something that people will remember what I teach them? How can I make them laugh?” And that’s what I try to do.

So, for example, one of my videos is when I teach the alphabet song in German. Ah, beh, tseh, deh, eh, eff, geh. And I jump on the bed. And this is very – people love it because it’s different. I can also just sit in front of the camera and be like, “Ah. Beh. Tseh.” And it’s also nice. But if I jump on the bed and sing it, it’s a bit more entertaining and people enjoy it usually.

Matt: That was one of your very first ones.

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- Anja: Yeah. The second video actually.
- Matt: The second video.
- Anja: The first one was even crazier. Yeah. But it's still up there.
- Matt: But you've kept that spirit along your entire journey.
- Anja: Yeah. Sometimes it's hard though, I have to admit. Because when I teach grammar it's hard to – but I still try to make it at least visual. I try to use colors and make it somehow interesting. Use a lot of examples and be a bit crazy also in the beginning. *Learn German with Anja!* So, I get their attention and then they're already at least awake. And I start like that. So, yeah. I try to keep doing it. Sometimes it's not that easy. But yeah. Most of the time I have some ideas of how to make it fun.
- Matt: That's amazing. So, now you've been doing it for about four years now? Total?
- Anja: Yeah. Four years. Yeah. In total. Since I uploaded my first video. Yeah.
- Matt: And putting serious attention into it in the last three years or so?
- Anja: Yeah. Exactly. Yeah. Yeah.
- Matt: And so, you started with uploading weekly. And then you went to daily.
- Anja: Yeah. In the beginning actually, it was just a trial when I uploaded my first few videos. It was about three or four videos or something. It was just for fun. Then I had kind of a break for half a year where I didn't upload a lot. Just once in a while. And then I told myself, "Okay. Now I'm going to take it seriously. It's amazing. I can reach a lot of people." So, then I started uploading daily. Yeah.
- Matt: And now what are you doing on your channel?
- Anja: So now it's back to weekly, actually. Because I'm also concentrating more on other things. YouTube is nice. But YouTube is also fluctuating a lot. So, sometimes I want to focus more on my own products and use YouTube more as a marketing
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tool, and to reach people who don't have the money to pay for stuff. Yeah.

Matt: Yeah. Can you talk a little bit about the monetization of your YouTube channel? And then we'll talk about your other products as well. But in terms of YouTube, at what point when you were creating these videos, did you realize that you had something there? Like what was your sort of, "This really could be something big?" Like, what was that breakthrough moment for you?

Anja: Well actually, first when I thought, "You know, you have to apply for monetization." But I can't remember when I got it. I think you need at least 10,000 subscribers. It might be different now. I can't remember. But, and then I saw – the first time I thought, "Oh. I'm making like \$3.00 a month with this." It sounds like a joke now. But I thought, "Oh. Wow! I can already buy kebab for that in Germany." And it sounds really funny.

But if you make money online it's a funny thing. Because in the beginning, at least a few years ago, it wasn't that common. Now it's more common. But when I saw it, "Oh! YouTube! I can buy actually something with my YouTube money." It's kind of surprising. And then I thought, "Oh. Well I can take this somewhere."

You just go step by step. But \$3.00. Then it's maybe \$30.00, then \$300.00. You can pay an apartment with that. Monthly rent in Chiang Mai. I mean, not in America or Germany, but in Thailand. And I thought, "Wow. This is – yeah." And then from there I thought I took it more seriously.

Matt: And so, the initial form of monetization of your channel was just simply that you had built an audience to a particular level.

Anja: Yes. And donations. Yeah. So, lots of students started sending me money through Patreon. Yeah. It's a crowd funding website. And lots of people liked my videos. So, they thought, "Okay. We have to support this girl – jumping girl." And they started sending me money.

So, there was even one Australian guy. He sent me \$300.00 at once. And I thought, "Wow! This is awesome." Back then it was a lot of money for me. It still is. So, it's not – it's good.

Matt: And then YouTube will pay you a certain amount of money based on the size of your audience in order to run ads on your channel? Or how does that work?

Anja: Oh. Actually, on YouTube it depends on when people watch the ad, in front of the – before the video. Or they click on the ad and I get money. Yeah. And some people have an ad blocker or stuff. Me too, actually. Yeah. I don't make any money with that.

Some people think it depends on how many “likes” you get, or how many subscribers you have, or how many – it doesn't depend on that at all. It really just depends on how many people click on your ad, or what your ad –

Matt: Got it. But obviously if you have 300,000 people going to your channel the ad will be in front of more people. And then more people will click on it and then you'll get more people.

Anja: Then of course – yes. Exactly. Exactly. Yes. That's right. Yes.

Matt: So, you allow YouTube to run ads in front of your videos. And then you get monetization for everybody that clicks on that. Which can then become a recurring stream and cover living expenses and all that.

Anja: Yeah. Yeah. That's right.

Matt: Now, then once you've built that audience – because you then did something very interesting, which was you realized that you had a loyal audience and that they would potentially want to buy other things from you that you could sell to them. So, what did you do from there?

Anja: Yes. Then I published my e-book. My first e-book. It's actually about my travel stories. So, I just – very little funny stories about traveling. So, I put them in the book, and I always translate. And so, I wrote them in German and translated to English. So, and people like that a lot.

And then I published my first course about the German sentence structure. And then another course where you can learn with German dialogs, with real-life dialogs.

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- Matt: So, you now have two courses out.
- Anja: Yeah. Exactly.
- Matt: And you initially just sold them to your YouTube channel. You went in front of your YouTube viewers and said, “I have this thing to offer.”
- Anja: Yeah. I’ve never done paid advertisements for my products, which I should do though. After the Nomad Cruise, I noticed – Matt and I were just on a Nomad Cruise recently together – I thought, “Maybe I should do that too. Because some people are doing that, and they are very successful with it. So, maybe I should start doing that.”
- Matt: But it’s amazing though, because I think your warmest audience is always your followers.
- Anja: Definitely. And I love them.
- Matt: They know you. They’re loyal to you. They’ll buy what you’re selling to support you also.
- Anja: They are loyal. They trust me. Exactly. Definitely. Yeah. I noticed that too. Yes.
- Matt: And that’s always amazing because I was talking with some of the people that do Udemy courses. And Udemy is a separate type of platform where they take a portion of whatever you sell on their platform. But they provide the leads, or the prospects, or the students, right?
- Anja: Yeah.
- Matt: To buy the stuff from you. But the kicker is that, in order to get your course, from what I understand talking to these people – I have not done this yet. But the people that are successful on that platform basically say, “You need to bring in your first initial group of people that you’ve cultivated yourself to buy this stuff.” And then it’ll go up into their algorithm and get it to other people, right?
- Anja: Yeah. It’s helpful for sure. Yeah. I was also thinking about putting a course on Udemy. I will see. But I have a huge audience already.
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So, I'm not sure if it makes sense.

Matt: Yeah. That's the thing.

Anja: I'll have to see. Yeah.

Matt: That's the thing, right? Yeah.

Anja: It's an interesting platform though. Because it's very big. So, it might be very nice to get on it and see.

Matt: It might be. But I feel like a lot of people that benefit from that also don't necessarily have a 340,000-person audience that they can sell to, right?

Anja: That's true. Yeah.

Matt: So, let me ask you this, just business-wise. How do you as a content producer, and an information product producer, and a teacher, how do you structure your work day? Do you have to have certain morning routines that you do every day? Do you have a work structure? How does your day work?

Anja: I do. Yes. So, usually in the morning I try not to use my phone at all because it's very distracting. Sometimes when I get on my phone and I check it, it's first all emails and messages. And then you think, "Oh my God. I've got to do this and fix this." So, it's good to have like a morning routine where you say, "Okay. Until 9:00 a.m. I don't look at my phone." Or leave it on airplane mode and just use a meditation app or something.

Matt: And what time are you getting up in the morning usually?

Anja: It depends. Usually I get up pretty late. But here in Jericoacoara I get up very early. You too? And so, I get up at about 6:00 a.m., 7:00 a.m. or something. Then I try to do – I always say "try to do" because I don't always do it – but six out of seven days in the week I usually do it. Ten minutes of exercise, then 10 minutes of meditation, and 10 minutes of stretching a little bit. Stretching or yoga, slash yoga. I just do what kind of feels right.

And for meditating, I use an app. And then, yeah, I try not to use my phone and get some creative work done first. So, that's my

morning routine.

In the evening I also write in a journal. And I always tell myself, “Only one sentence.” Because otherwise if I think, “Oh, I want to have to write in a journal, and then I get sick of it. But one sentence?” And usually you end up writing more. But if you tell yourself, “I just want to write one sentence of the most important thing that I learned, or what affected me, or whatever.” And usually I end up writing more. So, it’s nice. But one sentence is something I can – there’s no excuse for not writing one sentence. So, it helps a lot.

And then during the day it really depends on where I am, what’s happening. In Jericoacoara there’s so much stuff going on so it’s kind of hard to have one fixed schedule. You know how it is, no? When you travel. It’s not that easy.

Matt: Of course. Yeah. Well that’s part of the reason why I asked the question in terms of constructing routines, optimizing your productivity while you’re in these amazing travel destinations with lots of cool people, and there’s interesting stuff going on. And how are you able to kind of discipline and maintain that so that you can optimize your work productivity?

Anja: So, normally I have a schedule. I have deadlines of things I want to do. And I upload weekly, so I do that for sure. One video per week – that’s a must. And then the other things, I try to do them in the morning. And then in the afternoon have more fun time. In the evening sometimes, I also go back to work. It depends on what’s happening.

It’s not that easy to keep doing it while traveling but I try my best. And usually it works when I put it in the calendar. It’s fixed and then I just do it. I just have to sit down and do it. And the good thing is we are surrounded by other digital nomads, so they also have to sit down and get some stuff done. My phone with me would be the worst. But this way it’s fine. Yeah.

Matt: So, let’s talk a little bit about your travel structure. I know that you’re going to do Remote Year. Actually, at the end of this month it starts, in fact. Which is so exciting. So, you’ll have your next 12-month itinerary planned out. But up until this point, over the last five years as you’ve been traveling the world, how have you

decided where to go? How long to stay? How has your lifestyle design worked?

Anja: Actually, the first foreign country I went to was the U.S., to Minnesota. That was just to learn English. So, in the beginning I always decided to go to a certain country because I wanted to learn the language. So, then I went to Mexico during my studies for half a year to learn Spanish. Then I went to France for one year to learn French. So, that was the first part.

Thailand was just because I was lost, and I thought Thailand sounded like a good idea to find myself. So, I went to Thailand for one year. And then I had this crazy idea that I want to live on each continent for at least one year. So, that's why I also went to Australia and lived there for one and a half years. And now it's North America for a while.

It was always first because of the languages and then because of my goal to live on each continent for at least a year.

Matt: And through your travel experiences, as you've been traveling the world for five years now and you look back on it, how would you describe what you get from traveling? Why do you travel? What do you get out of it? What does it mean to you?

Anja: Oh, wow. A lot. I love it. Yeah. I love it. So, first of all, you can learn the language, know the culture, and everything that's interesting. But for me, always the most important thing I learn along the way is two things I think. Inspiring people – I got to know a lot of inspiring people who also shaped my life in a lot of ways. When I lived in Thailand I think I also launched my YouTube channel in a way because I wasn't in that community after Nomads. So, it helped me a lot.

Back home my friends had normal jobs, in quotation marks. They just worked from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In Chiang Mai it was the first time I was surrounded by people who were totally inspiring. And I thought, "Wow. How are they doing this?" And then I watched my friend's email. She was showing me, "Ah! Anja, this company is paying me like €100.00 now to put an article about them on my –" And I'm like, "Wow. This is possible?" So, it was very interesting for me to see that.

And the second thing I learned on my travels was just about

myself. You can't flee from yourself even when you travel. You still have ups and downs and you still have difficult days. I started realizing this. And then you also talk to other travelers and they go through the same. So, it's very nice to experience that and also experience yourself.

And I think sometimes the ups and downs, they are – but I don't know if that's true – but they are higher and lower than when you stay home. Maybe. Because sometimes you're more lonely. And sometimes more in deep shit. Sorry. Then maybe you just stay home. Because at home you have your friends, your family. You know the country. You know the language. But when you travel, everything changes.

Matt: Can you talk about some of the downsides – or not downsides, but down times, or down moments, or challenges of long-term travel that most people who do long-term travel probably experience or could expect to experience? What are some of those challenges that you've gone through? And then what are sort of some of the mitigation techniques that you've learned for how to sort of overcome those or sustain a long-term traveling lifestyle?

Anja: One of the challenges is, I always travel by myself. So, you first arrive in the country and everything is new, and the language is new. You don't know anybody. I think that's a big challenge. And especially me – I am a bit hyper and I overthink stuff. So, sometimes in the beginning I'll say, "What am I even doing here?" I don't know the people. I don't know the language, and so on. So, it's kind of hard in the beginning.

But then I think to overcome it is really just to go out. Meet people. Go in to Facebook groups and start talking to people on nomad lists. Whatever. Find people, talk to them. Don't stay at home. I think that's one of the best ways to put yourself out there and explore.

For me also, actually one of the biggest challenges was always when I was in a new country and I was sometimes by myself. I don't like doing sightseeing by myself for some reason. Do you like that? I don't enjoy that. Yeah? You don't mind it?

Matt: I will do it sometimes. But I'm usually doing it with other people I would say.

Anja: Exactly. And so usually what I did, I would wait in the hostel until I met somebody who I liked. And I was like, “Hey, do you want to go there? Okay. Let’s go together.” I didn’t like doing sightseeing by myself. But that’s also something I noticed about myself. So, I just try to find people and do it together.

It’s just something – I don’t know. I think it’s cooler when you see something awesome and you can be like, “Hey! Look at that!” And then you talk to people and make jokes and have a good time, rather than if you’re by yourself in front of an amazing building or an amazing beach. Yeah.

Matt: I agree. I think that’s actually one of the reasons why you’re going to love Remote Year.

Anja: Yeah. I think so too.

Matt: Because you’re always going to have –

Anja: Because of the community.

Matt: Yeah. The community. You’re going to always have people to go do all of the stuff with.

Anja: And I love it. I loved it. Definitely. Yeah. And then also, yeah. A challenge is also that sometimes you might feel lost. If you don’t –sometimes I arrived also in the airport, and just little things – you don’t have internet. And then you need a SIM card and you don’t know where to get it. You don’t speak the language. It’s just lots of little hassles, so it’s really good to have a community of people who you know already.

I actually also talked to **Yan**. Do you know a friend of ours?

Matt: You mean my housemate from Barcelona?

Anja: Ah, yes! That’s right. And he –

Matt: Which is actually where you and I met when you would come in to do laundry in our apartment.

Anja: Ah, yes! That’s right. That’s when we first met. Yes. And he told

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me he doesn't travel for places at all anymore, but only for people. So, if he knows a good person there, he will just go there. He doesn't even care about the sites, about nothing. He just goes there because he knows the people and he knows he's going to have a good time. I thought that that was very interesting. It's a good approach maybe. But I still want to see amazing places. But I thought it was kind of interesting, too.

Matt: Well, that's why these work/travel programs are really a great way to do both. And to combine them.

Anja: Yes. You have great people and great places. I agree. Yes.

Matt: Exactly. That's exactly right. And so, that's what I've been doing now since I finished Remote Year. I've been continuing to go to great places and overlap with these communities, either plugging into other Remote Year groups which you can do as an alumni, or other work/travel programs, like Hacker Paradise and some of these other places. Because they go to different places than Remote Year does. You know what I mean?

Anja: Yeah. It's true actually. Yeah.

Matt: Yeah. So, like this year I went to places like Seoul, Korea, with Hacker Paradise, which was so high on my list.

Anja: Nice. Nice.

Matt: And, "Oh, I can go do it with like, 25 cool, amazing people? Done!"

Anja: Awesome!

Matt: Like, sign me up, right?

Anja: That's great! Yeah. I love it.

Matt: Yeah. Or when there was another program this year I went on called Wanderist Life, and they were going to Nairobi, Ken –

Anja: Oh. I never heard of them. Yeah. Okay.

Matt: Yeah. They went to Nairobi, Kenya for a month. And I was like,

“Nairobi, Kenya? And you’re taking care of the accommodations, and the co-work expense, and setting up the safari for me to go on? And bringing in a bunch of other cool people for me to hang out with? I’ll take it! Where do I sign?”

Anja: Exactly. Yes. I agree. I agree. I love that too. Yeah. It’s nice to be surrounded by people like that.

Matt: And it’s amazing how quickly the world is changing, and these opportunities coming up, right? Because when I started traveling I left the United States in the summer of 2013. None of these companies existed. None!

Anja: No! It’s crazy! There are so many digital nomads. It’s growing. It’s exploding.

Matt: It’s amazing. But it’s –

Anja: And I think it’s a good thing. Definitely. Yes.

Matt: One hundred percent yes. I mean, it’s an amazing opportunity because now all these businesses are coming in to the space to serve and cater to exactly the types of pain points that you were describing. I don’t want to get to a place and be lonely and not have anyone to go see stuff with. “Okay, here’s an amazing community and we’ll take care of all the stuff.” Right?

Anja: I agree! Yeah.

Matt: I mean, that’s what it is, right?

Anja: That’s why I have a home base. And Nomad Cruise was amazing because you met people from the first day who were in the same situation. And then the good thing is also, we help each other a lot in the groups. They say, “Hey, you can go to this place and buy this SIM card, and then you activate it like this. And then it’s done.” I love it. It’s awesome. We support each other a lot.

Matt: That is an amazing aspect about the community. And even when you’re going to a new community and you never met the people in that particular community, you’re still just welcomed into it, and you’re a part of it, and they help you out in the same way, which is really nice.

Anja: Yeah. I love it.

Matt: So, let's go a little bit deeper into the YouTube stuff. If you can give some sort of tactical advice, explanation, strategy for building an audience on YouTube. What are the most important components that people should think about in terms of conceptualizing it, I guess, strategically? But then also tactically, how should people go about doing that?

Anja: I would say really first, maybe find out if YouTube is for you. So, make some videos, upload them, see if it feels right. For me, it felt right. I was crazy in front of the camera, but I thought, "I like this." Even though I'm talking to the camera I know I can reach people. Some other people like you might like podcasts or just writing a blog.

So, just find out if it's for you, if you like it. And honestly you don't have to feel comfortable in front of the camera right away. I didn't feel 100% comfortable. But as long as you enjoy it, and you think you really can put yourself out there, and you have something to give back, then I would try it and see if you like it. And then I think it's very important to be different. When I started YouTube, there were already a lot of people teaching German, actually, on YouTube. But I thought, "I can still add value to this. I can make it different. I can be different." So, I think there's always room for more YouTubers who have to give something.

And nowadays I would also say, find your niche. But I didn't have a niche really. I was just teaching German. *Learn German with Anja*. And that was it. But that was back then. Now, I think it's better to have a niche and really focus on that probably. Yeah.

And then have a schedule. In the beginning I would also even recommend uploading daily and to take it very seriously. And then later maybe slow down. It's just to get really in the habit of making videos and having a lot of practice. Because making videos takes a lot of practice.

And feeling comfortable and also getting feedback. You have to take the feedback from others seriously. Ask your friends what they think about your videos and things like that.

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HOST: Matt Bowles GUEST: Anja Winter

Matt: I think that's good advice. I think especially about the medium. Because different people are going to be more talented in different mediums. Right?

Anja: Yes. That's true. Yes.

Matt: So, for some people, Instagram is their medium. And they're amazing photographers, and they're passionate about that medium, and they're great. And they can build tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of an audience on Instagram.

Anja: Yes. Exactly. Yes.

Matt: Or audio medium like a podcast like we're doing now, or video medium like YouTube, or just writing a blog. I mean, there's plenty of text blogs that have millions of viewers per month.

Anja: Exactly. So, I wouldn't say – if you think, “Oh, I definitely want to become a YouTuber.” Don't be too stubborn. If there's something else which maybe suits you better, just change it. But I would recommend focusing on one medium first. It's really something I would recommend. I think one, or maximum, two. Yeah.

Matt: Yeah. I think that makes sense. And then what you can do is, you can repurpose some of your content. Right?

Anja: Yeah.

Matt: Like if you create, let's say for example, this podcast that we're recording now. This podcast is going to be transcribed also into a text format.

Anja: Exactly. That's right. Yeah.

Matt: And then we're going to be able to have microcontent created on social media with a snippet from this. Or maybe a quote from this or something. And then that can go out on social media. Right?

Anja: I agree. Yes.

Matt: So, focus on your pillar content being your primary medium that you're passionate about, and you love, and you're good at.

Anja: Yeah. I agree. Totally. And you can find this out just by doing and using it. I think nowadays we overthink stuff a little bit too much. Sometimes it's just good to do it. For example, when I had the idea about uploading my first YouTube video, I just asked my friend – I didn't even have a camera. So, I just asked a friend, "Can I borrow your camera?" And then I uploaded it.

And sometimes we just have to do things to see if we like it. Like action triggers motivation. It's not the other way around. Sometimes you have to be active first and then you get motivated. I was more motivated when I saw comments on my videos. So, it's both. It's both ways, but sometimes you've just got to get active.

Matt: Do you have any tactical tips? Like let's say somebody goes through this exercise and they say, "Yes. You know what? YouTube is for me. That's my medium. I'm a video person, and I want to do this. And I'm going to commit to the once a week, or multiple times a week, or even a once a day schedule."

Once they do that, what tactical tips do you have for actually effectively growing your channel besides frequency of posting?

Anja: Nowadays it's good to have good quality and quantity also. Both, kind of, but find a balance between them. But quality is important, I think, more important now. Get a good camera later on. And get a good microphone and then just put it out there. Yeah.

Lots of people also use a lot of keywords, research. But I don't know. I didn't do that in the beginning and I still grew a lot. So, I think the most important thing is really to be passionate and do it and put it out there and see.

And then also what you can do is, do some marketing for your video. Because nowadays it's hard to grow. So, you can even put your own marketing on YouTube. So, before other videos are played, your video will show quickly and then people come to your channel from that. I would actually recommend this a lot nowadays because there are so many videos out there. So, you've got to stand out.

And also put it on Facebook maybe. There are also some people who post mostly on Facebook. It might also be good. Instagram – one-minute videos. Or IGTV is a new thing. You've got to try

different things. And do some marketing for it. I would do that nowadays. Definitely. I did it a little bit, but not a lot.

Matt: I think that makes a lot of sense. And I think the differentiation point is really significant. Because when people go to your YouTube channel – we’re going to send them there. We’re going to put all the links to your stuff in the show notes at TheMaverickShow.com for this episode, and we’re going to send them there.

But I’m going to encourage people to all go to your channel even if they’re not interested in learning German. Just to see what you’re doing with that channel, and the types of videos that you’re recording, and how entertaining they are, and how it’s fundamentally different from any teaching videos they’ve ever seen. And then while you’re growing that audience because it really stands out. And it’s so different. I think that’s a really crucial point, to think about how you’re going to add value in the space.

Anja: Yes. Definitely. Add value. That’s the most important thing. You’ve always got to think about why people would watch your videos. That’s so important. Either they have a problem they want to solve. Or they want to be entertained. They need some funny video or whatever. Or they love their cat and they want to see other cats which are playing. Give them something which adds value to their life. That’s the most important thing, as with anything. Like this podcast, too. Anything.

Matt: Yeah, totally agree. And then as you thought about from there building this into your business, that would be a full-time business, can you talk a little bit about that? Did you create any systems and processes and outsource certain things to other people? And if so, how did you scale that? How did that work?

Anja: Yeah. So, first I didn’t outsource that much. I just had my e-book, so it was very – the thing is actually when I started to grow much more was when I moved to Australia. Because Australia was so expensive. Coming from Thailand it was easy. I think we always stay kind of in our comfort zone. But if you move to a more expensive country then you have to make more money. Otherwise you sleep under the bridge. So, you don’t want to do that.

And then I started outsourcing first just with fiverr.com actually

for WordPress issues and things like that. So, little things. But then I also hired an assistant, a virtual assistant. She's German but she lives in Bali. And a video editor and things like that. But that's only part time. So, I don't have really full-time employees up until now. But I want to get into that maybe a little bit.

Let's see. I like hiring people who also travel and understand this whole lifestyle a little bit. It's kind of nice because then they know when you're on the plane, and they know that your internet might not be good. And it's kind of cool when you have people who understand you.

Matt: One hundred percent. Totally agree. All of our staff at Maverick Investor Group is all location-independent and they can live where they want.

Anja: Oh really? Wow.

Matt: I mean, some of them choose to be in this place or that place but none of them are required to be in any place. And so –

Anja: Yeah. If they have a home base, I love that too. Having a home base for a while, then keep moving or coming back or something like that.

Matt: So, then when you started thinking about the courses – can you talk about how you conceptualized the courses? And then what your process was for sort of building and selling those.

Anja: So, actually for both courses I partnered up with two people. Yan – actually the first one was Yan.

And so, the thing is I got so many questions about the German sentence structure because it's very difficult. I don't know if you ever studied German but it's all over the place. It's quite confusing. So, I thought, "I have to make a course about this. Because I get too many questions. And I need to structure it and also give them give exercises." Because otherwise it doesn't stick in their brain. So, that's why I made the first sentence structure course.

And the second course was with a guy who I met at the LangFest. It's a language festival in Montreal, Canada. And he already had

some dialogs ready and stuff. And then we started talking. And I really liked his way of teaching languages. And I thought, “Okay. Let’s make a course together.” So, I kind of had my audience. He had the method and also the technology. It was already set up. So, we just launched it actually within two months or something. And it was very successful.

Matt: And then the difference between the two courses – what was the content of each one?

Anja: So, yeah. The first one was about German sentence structure. Mostly grammar. And the second course is more learning with natural dialogs. So, you listen to German people speaking, and dialogs about different topics. And then we have some grammar. And then use some exercises, and so on. And we tell them exactly how to study with the dialog and how it gets easier.

Matt: Got it. And I like the model though, of you building the audience. And then taking feedback from the audience and listening to the questions. Or basically identifying the needs of that audience.

Anja: It’s very important.

Matt: And then from that, assessing what they would be willing to pay for if you were to produce a product that would fill their needs.

Anja: Yes. Definitely. You’ve got to listen to your audience. But sometimes also not. I mean, some people are also a bit – they just say something like, “Do this,” or “Do that.” And sometimes I think, “Maybe not. This is not right.” But if the majority of them have the same problem, then it’s good to make a video about that – “All right, now I’m also doing that other course,” or whatever it is.

Matt: And then in terms of your traveling stuff, you’re going to do something relating to –

Anja: Ah, yes. I have another blog. It’s called [Anja de Alemania](#). So, in Spanish. It means “Anja from Germany.” So, my main website is [Learn German with Anja](#) where I teach German, but I want to have [Anja de Alemania](#) for telling people how to travel while teaching. What is it like to be a digital nomad? These things, and also the ups and downs, and things like that.

So, it doesn't really fit into the niche of teaching German. It's more about me traveling, being a teacher, being a digital nomad, being an entrepreneur. It's also what I like to call myself. And also, how to grow your YouTube channel and things like that.

Matt: Awesome. Cool. We're going to link up to all of that stuff in the show notes at TheMaverickShow.com for this episode.

What would you say if you're thinking back on your entrepreneurial journey, can you describe maybe at least one failure or setback or challenge that you had along your business journey? And then what you learned from that. As entrepreneurs, we try stuff out, and we do things, and we go in particular ways. There's sort of this concept of the entrepreneurial roller coaster, right?

Anja: Yeah. I have that too. For sure. Usually my problem is more that I'm overwhelmed with stuff. I have a lot of ideas and then I'm overwhelmed and sometimes I think, "Which direction do I go? What's right to do now? And to focus on?" So, it's not that easy. Because I'm more a creative mind. I'm sometimes all over the place.

And that's why now I'm also thinking about hiring a manager. Like 10 hours per week, who just tells me, "Hey, Anja. Stick to the schedule. Let's do this. This is the work flow." And just so I'm a bit more strategic and a bit more organized. I think lots of YouTubers and also other creative minds, we have ideas, and then we get distracted easily. And then we are surrounded by other people who like to go out and do things. And so, it's hard to focus. And being overwhelmed – that's my biggest challenge usually.

Matt: That's really interesting. I think one of the most important things for all entrepreneurs is to be able to do that self-audit and understand what our strengths are and what our weaknesses are.

Anja: Definitely. I know. Yeah.

Matt: Because we all have them.

Anja: Definitely.

Matt: And then once you're honest with yourself about it –

- Anja: We can change it.
- Matt: – and you’ve identified them, then you think about mitigation strategies. Which is fascinating about what you’re describing. That you’re actually looking now into hiring a manager-type person to manage – like to help you to execute your deliverables.
- Anja: To be more balanced and to follow the plan. Yeah. Accountability and things like that. Exactly. Who just checks in with me maybe twice per week to see if I did what I wanted to do. Did I follow the flow? That’s something I need. Yeah. Definitely.
- Matt: That’s really good because I feel like a lot of times entrepreneurs will try to do everything themselves. Or think that they can do everything themselves or think that they want to. But in fact, when we’re able to identify our weaknesses or the things that are not getting us there. And then either outsource it to someone else to do. Or like you’re saying, hire someone to basically help us to execute in a particular way that we need to.
- Anja: I agree. Totally. Yeah. And sometimes when we hire people we also find out that they not only can help us but sometimes they are better at it. I hired a video editor and he did some stuff and I was like, “Wow! That’s good! I never had this idea.” So, sometimes also they are better than us because they are specialists. And we can’t be specialists at everything.
- Matt: For sure. For sure. Awesome. All right. Anja, at this point, are you ready to get into some lightning round questions?
- Anja: Yes. Sure. Let’s do it.
- Announcer: The Lightning Round.
- Matt: All right. What is one book that you would recommend maybe that has influenced you significantly?
- Anja: Honestly, *The Biography of Steve Jobs* the most. It was crazy because he was such an interesting character. And for me, it was very interesting. And it also helped me meditate more because he was meditating a lot. So, some of the things I really took from him were very inspiring. And other things I thought, “I never want to
-

be like that.” How he treated people sometimes and things like that. But it was still a very – such an interesting book. I loved it.

Matt: What is one app, or productivity tool, or gadget that you are currently using that you would recommend?

Anja: I like the app called *Calm*. I use that a lot just to meditate in the morning. And they also have some other messages. I like it a lot. I use that. And one video editing app that I love is *Perfect Video*. It’s for iOS. I love that one. I want to say that.

Matt: Cool. What is one either blog you read, or podcast you listen to, or a YouTube channel that you watch? Some type of content medium that you consume regularly or person that you follow that you would most recommend.

Anja: So, I love funny people as you might have noticed. Because I’m also – I want to be funny on my YouTube channel. That’s what I like. I like Liza Koshy. Do you know her? She’s very funny. I love her. She’s very entertaining. It’s good for me to relax in the evening. Just have a good laugh. Then I can sleep well.

Matt: Does she have a YouTube?

Anja: She’s American. She’s on YouTube. Exactly. And she does some crazy stuff. It’s cool. And then a guy from Chile, I think. He speaks in Spanish and its called *Hola Soy German*. I also use it to learn Spanish and he’s also very funny. Be he hasn’t uploaded that much recently. But still, to learn Spanish, I watch him sometimes just to have a good laugh.

Matt: Awesome. Awesome. All right. Let me ask you this. In all of your travels – you’ve been now to 24 countries and I’m sure a number of different places within those countries. What would you say are your top three favorite travel destinations?

Anja: Oh, wow. I would say, Mexico, Thailand, and let’s see. What other country? Maybe Brazil so far, actually. Yeah.

Matt: It’s pretty amazing.

Anja: I think so. But it always depends on what your goal is in those countries. Do you like hiking? Do you like just swimming in the

ocean? Do you want to be in a cheap place or in a very clean place? That depends a lot on your preferences. But I love Mexico because it's so – first of all, I speak Spanish, so it's easier. And it's very versatile so there are so many things to do. And I like the food and the people a lot. So, it was very nice.

Matt: And what would you say are your top three bucket list places that you've never been that are the highest on your list right now, that you'd most love to visit?

Anja: Japan, for sure. South Africa. I'm going there with Remote Year. That's also one of the reasons I signed up for Remote Year, because they were on the list. So, I would say Japan and South Africa. I've got to say three? Probably Peru. Yeah.

Matt: That's awesome. I was just in Kyoto right before I came to Barcelona.

Anja: Nice! How was it?

Matt: It was amazing. I was there with a Remote Year group. Participated in that for the month in Kyoto and it was actually really cool. My sister came to visit me, and she had never been to Japan before. So, we traveled around, and we were in – I had been to Tokyo before. But she had never been to Japan, so we went to Tokyo of course. And there is all kinds of crazy in Tokyo. It's amazing. It's just like, "Wow!" Over the top, eccentric, but in all these mesmerizing and delightful ways. The food is insane, like it's just –

Anja: Wow. I'm excited.

Matt: It's culturally fascinating.

Anja: Some people say that you feel like you live in the future or something. You're in the future. Is it true? I don't know.

Matt: It's pretty epic. Yeah. And depending on where you are in the city, there are just all of these different kinds of amazingly interesting cultural nuances going on. So, it's a truly fascinating place to be.

Anja: I'm excited. Yeah.

Matt: Tokyo is epic. Kyoto is also epic in an entirely different way. Right? I mean, these cities are extremely different from each other but both of them are really amazing.

Anja: Awesome. Yeah. I'm excited to go there.

Matt: And then we went out and saw some other smaller places. Some islands, and really, really beautiful stuff. So, it's an amazing place. I'll give you all the tips before you get there, of course.

Anja: Thank you. Thank you.

Matt: But that'll be cool. And then Cape Town will be awesome. I was there for about five weeks. Before Remote Year I went to Cape Town. And then Peru of course is insanely gorgeous. Really, really epic. So, I'm super excited for your year.

Okay. Let's do this. Let's start closing this out here with a final question. And then I want to ask you where people can find all your stuff and follow you and everything. But last question. If you were to go back a decade and give one piece of advice to your 18-year-old self, what would you say to 18-year-old Anja?

Anja: I would say, "Just relax. Everything will be fine." Because I'm very impatient. So, I think that's what I would just tell myself. Yeah. That it will be fine. And as Steve Jobs said, "You can't connect the dots looking forward. You can only connect them looking backwards."

And I clearly can connect lots of dots now. Me going to Thailand, being broke, all these things. They were happening for a reason, and sometimes when you look back things make sense. Yeah. But looking forward you don't know sometimes what the heck you're doing. Yeah. That's life.

Matt: Cool. So, let's talk about all the different places that people can find you. I mean, to find your content, but then also if they want to follow you on social media or things like that. Where can people find you? Where should they go?

Anja: So, mostly it's [Learn German with Anja](#) if you want to learn German. So, I'm on [Instagram](#), on [Facebook](#), on [YouTube](#) of course. That's the biggest one. On [Linked In](#) it's Anja Winter. And

then [Anja de Alemania](#) is my new website. And it's A-N-J-A. That's important. J-A. Anja. That's the way we say it in German.

Matt: Awesome. So, we're going to put all of those links and all of those social media handles directly in the show notes so you can just go to one place at [TheMaverickShow.com](#). And just go to the show notes for this episode and you will see all of those links and how you can contact Anja in one place.

And I definitely encourage you to go to her YouTube channel even if you think you have no interest in learning German. Just look at the type of marketing and the type of video she's producing as applicable to any other content space. Because it is really quite something different. And just the fact that you've been able to go into that niche and then just really get that many subscribers is truly amazing.

And just something that anybody starting any kind of business, or trying to grow a business, or trying to grow a YouTube channel should definitely watch the tactics that you're using because it's super impressive.

Anja: Yeah. Cool. Thank you so much.

Matt: Anja, thank you so much for being here today.

Anja: Very nice. Thank you for the podcast.

Matt: Of course.

Anja: Very nice. It was fun.

Matt: All right, everybody. See you later.

Anja: See you. Bye-bye.

Announcer: Be sure to visit the show notes page at [TheMaverickShow.com](#) for direct links to all the books, people, and resources mentioned in this episode. You'll find all that and much more at [TheMaverickShow.com](#).

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