

**EPISODE 395****[INTRODUCTION]**

**[00:00:00] ANNOUNCER:** Welcome to The Real Estate Syndication Show. Whether you are a seasoned investor or building a new real estate business, this is the show for you. Whitney Sewell talks to top experts in the business. Our goal is to help you master real estate syndication.

And now your host, Whitney Sewell.

**[INTERVIEW]**

**[00:00:24] WS:** This is your daily Real Estate Syndication Show. I'm your host, Whitney Sewell. Today, our guest is Donna Serdula. Thanks for being on the show, Donna.

**[00:00:32] DS:** Thank you so much for having me, Whitney.

**[00:00:34] WS:** Yeah. I'm looking forward to this. The listeners I know hear me talk about personal branding and branding yourself often, because it's something that's been important to us. But we're learning all the time. It's such a big topic, isn't it? There's so much to it, it seems. But Donna's going to help us break down some very important components of this branding and social media stuff today that I know you are going to enjoy.

Before we get into it, I want to remind you to go to Life Bridge Capital where you can connect with me personally. Also, go to the Real Estate Syndication Show Facebook group, where we can connect with experts like Donna and other industry leaders who can help us grow in our business and I'm sure you can help provide value to them as well. So, get connected on all these platforms, and so we can connect and learn from other people and meet other people that are ahead of us and other people that we can help as well.

So, a little about Donna, she pioneered the concept of LinkedIn profile optimization. She is the author of *LinkedIn Profile Optimization for Dummies*. On her website, [linkedin-makeover.com](http://linkedin-makeover.com),

Donna and her team of 40 writers help thousands of people strategically brand themselves with a strong LinkedIn profile in order to engage with their audience and grow their brand. So very important. I love that, “engage with your audience.” You’ve got to engage to grow your brand.

So, Donna, thank you again for your time. I'm looking forward to you sharing some expertise here on this subject. Then tell the listeners a little more about who you are, maybe where you're located, and let's dive in.

**[00:01:58] DS:** Sure. I'm just outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I'm actually in New Jersey, but we work with clients from all over the world. We've been doing so since 2009. What we found really early on – I discovered that it doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter if you're a great leader, if you're a high performer, if you're fantastic in sales. None of that matters. It's almost always hard to write about yourself. So, we try to take that away from people, so they don't have to.

**[00:02:26] WS:** Yeah. It is hard to write about yourself. I've experienced that so many times now. Yeah. It's hard to think about what to say about yourself, or does this sound this way, or does this sound this way. You're fearful of what other people think. But those words are – it's crucial that we use the correct wording, and it can make a big difference I know.

But why don't we get into that a little bit? Then I know we're going to talk about our LinkedIn profiles a little bit probably. But first, I wanted to just talk about everybody's trying to develop their thought leadership platforms and how we post on LinkedIn or what that should look like. I'd love for you to elaborate. Maybe we start elementary, and we'll get deeper.

**[00:03:01] DS:** So, for years with LinkedIn, it really wasn't the – it still isn't the sexiest of platforms. Let's be honest. But it really is a wonderful, wonderful vehicle. It's a great channel. It's a great network. I believe the real shift came not necessarily when Microsoft acquired LinkedIn back in – Oh, gosh! What year was that? 2015, 2016? Times flies when you're having fun. But I feel that the real big shift with LinkedIn came with the LinkedIn app. For a long, long time, with LinkedIn, you had to go onto your desktop computer. You had to go onto your laptop.

A lot of companies, if you were working as an employee, they would even block LinkedIn,

because in their minds they thought that this was just where people would go to find jobs. We don't want our employees getting poached. So, they really blocked LinkedIn. So, the only place for you to really go and use it was at home. Who wants to think about the professional side of things when they're home? But I think with the growth of LinkedIn and that mobile app, is people can access it whenever they want to, and they're going through. They're scrolling through that LinkedIn feed, and it's really become a great place to stand out, to be seen, to network, and to really showcase yourself as a thought leader if that is part of your brand message.

**[00:04:21] WS:** How do we stand out though in all that noise? You're scrolling down through there, and everybody is in a hurry. They want to see as much as they can. Give us some tips about standing out on LinkedIn.

**[00:04:30] DS:** I think for most people, it's a little intimidating to even start creating content on LinkedIn. So, I believe that it's better to take just some baby steps, and the first baby step is to use the app and put it on your phone. Start to scroll through it. When you want to go to Facebook or someplace else, pull up LinkedIn and start to scroll. As you're scrolling, if something catches your eye and you like it, like, comment, or share. Like being the easiest. But commenting is a little bit more powerful, so you want to put a little context and you want to add your two cents' worth. Then if you really want to go a little bit further, then you share it. When you hit share, that's then being posted, so you're actually promoting that person's post.

By doing this, it's a really great way. Rather than really creating anything, you're just curating what's already there. But it allows you to, without too much effort, have a presence on LinkedIn. Once you do that for a little bit and you really start to see what people are putting out there, then it becomes a little easier. Then at that point, you still don't even need to create any content. When you're out there and you're online and you're looking at things, and there's an article or something that catches your eye, just take it, grab it, and post it onto LinkedIn.

Again, you're not having to create anything specifically. You're just curating that content. One of the easiest ways of doing that is rather than even looking for it, just create some Google Alerts and have Google alert you when something is being stated or something interesting within your industry or within that core competency that you have. So those are just a few things that you can just do just to get started where you don't have that huge need to start creating, because

not many people have a lot of time to do that.

**[00:06:18] WS:** I would say most people have more time than they think they have. We're doing a daily podcast, and it's crazy. So, we're creating lots of content. But I know lots of people that ask me about creating content, they're like, "I don't even know where to start. I don't know what can I do to create content?" But I like how you really just brought it down to a level like anybody can do that. I love the tip on all Google Alerts. It's a great tip that most people don't know about, I think.

**[00:06:41] DS:** I think sometimes people get stuck on the creating. Let's stop creating. Just curate. Just see what other people are doing. What you want to do is think about your audience. Don't think of your colleagues. Don't think about your competitors but really think of the people, your clients, your audience, the people you really want listening, and paying attention to you. What are they hungry for? What's going to be interesting to them? It's a good idea to sit down with just a tablet and just really think.

When I'm talking to clients or prospects, what are the three questions they're constantly asking me? Start jotting that stuff down, because there you go. That's the beginning of content that you can start creating.

**[00:07:20] WS:** I love that. So, asking your potential clients or other people. So, writing their questions down. If you don't write it down, you're going to forget. But then you're going to know what content they even search for or maybe the specific Google Alerts you should put in.

So, sharing someone else's content. How often should we do that? How often should we try to be on LinkedIn? How often should we be doing these things?

**[00:07:40] DS:** I would love to tell you that you really only have to go in every now and then. But you really do want to create some schedule for yourself. If you could do something once a day, just something so simple as once a day is better than nothing at all. Once a day, if you can do it a couple times, two to three times, that's even better. But, again, I recognize people have lives. They have families. They have jobs. So sometimes, it is a little difficult. But if you can at least say to yourself, "I'm going to aim for three times a week or at least just once a day during the

weekdays,” go for it.

That’s something that I think once you start doing that, one, you’ll realize how easy it is, it really is something that you can handle. It’s not that hard. Two, you’ll start to really see that you’re gaining traction. You’ll start to see things starting to happen, you’ll start to see people reaching out, you’ll start to see engagement taking place, and you’ll start to see opportunities start to flow.

**[00:08:37] WS:** I know numerous guys or people on LinkedIn, specifically, that they don’t have a thought leadership platform of their own, but they’ve done just what you said that they like things. They comment, they share, and they’re very active on commenting on stuff. So, they’ve built kind of their own following. Maybe people aren’t specifically following them on their group or something like that, but they know them. They’ve built this relationship just by them doing those three things that you mentioned. They didn’t have to go out and create a bunch of content. But I feel like getting started is the key, and I like how you just broke it down. So, share somebody else’s stuff that’s relevant to your clients.

**[00:09:13] DS:** What’s great is when you are active on LinkedIn, LinkedIn sees this. They know. They know that you’re active, that you’re logging in. That conveys to them a freshness. It conveys to them relevance. So, if a person is on LinkedIn – I want people to realize that LinkedIn isn’t just a professional network. It’s not just a place to get active and talk to people. It’s a place that people go. They use it as a search engine and not just recruiters searching for people. Maybe someone is saying, “Hey! You know what? I want to see are there any real estate developers here? Hey! Let me see who knows someone within my network, because I want to talk to someone. I have some money to invest.” Or, “I’m really interested in learning more about...” Whatever that topic might be.

So instead of going to Google and typing this and getting millions and billions of results of everything and anything under the sun, you go to LinkedIn and you get to see people, real people who have profiles, that have pictures, that have bios. So, when you’re active on LinkedIn and you have a strong profile, that’s written with your keywords in mind. If a person is searching for someone like you, you’re more apt to turn up in those search results, turn up higher. That’s when you start to collide with opportunity.

**[00:10:27] WS:** I was thinking about – you were talking about the thought leadership and posting. But the more I've thought about this, you wrote the book on LinkedIn profile optimization. I feel like we should talk about that. I'd love for you to dive into profile a little bit and maybe some common things that are missed, or things that maybe aren't so common that we don't even know about if we haven't talked to somebody, or an expert like yourself.

**[00:10:46] DS:** Well, you know what? I have your profile up here on my other screen. There's a few things that you're doing that I really like. I think if your audience can visit your profile, one of the first things that I think a person would see when they look at your profile is a beautiful background graphic, and it's branded. It looks like it was professionally designed, and you've got this really great tagline. "Invest better, live better, make a difference." That right there, it really – for me, it brings so much more credibility to you. That's a really strong part of this brand. It's knowing, liking, and trusting. Already I feel like this is someone he knows what he's doing.

So, if everyone here who's listening to this, you go to your LinkedIn profile and you look at it. If you see a blue-green background, that means you haven't uploaded a background graphic. So that's one of the first things I would suggest doing is getting a background graphic. You don't even need to go to a graphic designer like I think you did, Whitney. A person can just go to someplace like unsplash.com and find a really nice image and upload it. If you can find something that kind of illustrates your brand, even better. If you think of yourself as someone who does like unsurmountable tasks, or insurmountable tasks, maybe find a picture of a person climbing a mountain. That would be a really good way of getting that across. So, I would say definitely the background graphic.

The other thing that I really like about your profile is – what do you think I'm going to say?

**[00:12:09] WS:** I'm scared. But at least it's something you like. You're being very kind. I appreciate it.

**[00:12:14] DS:** Your picture. Your profile picture. That looks professionally taken. You're beautifully dressed. Again, it just screams that this is a polished professional. What's the year? 2019. We're almost 2020, and I can't believe for the last 10 years I'm still talking about this. But

so few people have a professional headshot, and it really makes a huge difference in how people see you.

I always think of – oh, gosh! There was that old movie with Vince Vaughn, and they used to say, “Oh, yeah! He looks like money.” When I look at this picture, that’s what I want people to think. “Oh! That guy, he looks like money. He’s someone that knows what he’s doing.” That’s what you want. You want to convey that. So, get a professional headshot. Don’t spare any expense there. Really get one. It’s going to make a big difference.

One area that I think you could improve upon, and this is something that I think would affect most of your audience as well, is your headline. That’s the area right below your name. Yours is “Host of the Real Estate Syndication Show, Real Estate Investor.” I think you do a lot more than just that. So, I would say infuse a little bit more in there, maybe a benefit statement. Put in some keywords. Really think of what it is that you do. You actually have a really good tagline. “Invest better, live better, make a difference.” That’s something that you can actually bring into your headline as well.

**[00:13:30] WS:** Great. I’m taking notes.

**[00:13:33] DS:** But I think for most people, if you only have 120 characters, so you don’t have a lot of space. But really try to tell a story as quickly as you can. But recognize that that headline, no matter where you are on LinkedIn, is following you. So, if you’re messaging people, if you’re posting on LinkedIn, if you’ve left a recommendation, it doesn’t matter. That tagline follows you. If you really take the time to optimize your profile, you want to make sure that that headline is beautiful, it looks great, because you want people to look at it and go, “Oh! This is someone that I need to learn more about.” Click. So, they open up your profile, and they can read more about you and perhaps do business with you.

**[00:14:14] WS:** I appreciate that. I appreciate those tips as well. With only 120 characters, I mean, how much can we say?

**[00:14:20] DS:** There is a limit, but I will tell you this. If you visit my website linkedin-makeover.com. I do have – it’s an online app, and it’s the LinkedIn Headline Generator. So, I

actually walk you through. It's really quick. You just click a couple buttons, and out pops a beautiful optimized LinkedIn headline. So, if it's something that you're struggling with, and a lot of people do because it's such a limitation, only 120 characters, but there is quite a bit that you can do with it. So, check out [linkedin-makeover.com](http://linkedin-makeover.com) and download the LinkedIn Headline Generator. It will help, and it's free. Anyone can do that. It does tell a story.

Actually, that takes us down to your About section. Talking about character counts, I would say you might have about 75 to a hundred words in your about section. But you can actually go down to 2,500 characters, which is probably about 500 words or so. So, you can really tell a much bigger story in this About section. I really like that you start to talk about yourself and how you've helped people in what you're doing. But there's so much more that you can be telling. I'd love to learn more about your show, why you're doing this, who do you hope to help. I'd love to hear some success stories about people that you did help and what it meant to them.

So, there's so much that you can write in here, and that's what I say to all of the people who are listening. Don't just copy and paste an old bio that you might have. Or don't go into your old resume and copy that professional statement and paste it in there. It's easy to do, but it's not going to impress anyone. It's not going to make anyone really take notice. This is really the place where you've got to think about it like a digital introduction or that first impression. You want to really grab people and tell them why you matter.

**[00:16:01] WS:** It makes so much sense, telling a bigger story. You said more about the show. But even who we help, that makes so much sense. Hopefully, they're reading. At that point, they're going to connect.

**[00:16:08] DS:** Everyone reading it is like, "What's in it for me? What's in it for me?" So, tell them what's in it for them. Let them understand. Don't be afraid to tell the story of who you are. But at the same time, you want to position it in a manner that makes sense to the audience. You want to be answering their questions and what they're thinking about.

**[00:16:25] WS:** Are you going to keep going?

**[00:16:26] DS:** Would you like me to keep going?



**[00:16:29] WS:** I don't know. Yes, please.

**[00:16:31] DS:** All right. Well, I'm going to keep going, because the next thing I see is your activity, and I love it. You're sharing things. You're sharing things, and that's fantastic. A lot of times, if you don't have an activity section on your profile, that means you haven't done anything. You're not liking. You're not commenting. You're not sharing. You're not posting. So, this is one of those ways for people to really almost date timestamp your last activity on LinkedIn. That's another reason why you want to get in there and like and comment and share things. It's to say, "Hey! I'm active. I'm alive. This is not a dead account."

So, what I'm saying here is you're putting an effort. You are putting in some activity to LinkedIn, and that's a huge, huge thing. That's what I say to everybody. Go in there and comment, like, share. If you can write a blog post, then you can post it right here within your profile. It's a great thing. But you're doing a fantastic job there.

The other thing is it looks like – I'm going through to your Experience section, and it looks like you've got a pretty good trajectory here. What an interesting one. Being in the Army National Guard, then becoming a Kentucky State police, then a special agent. Now, I'm really going to say you've got to update that About section, because what a transformation you yourself have done. This is fascinating. I want to learn more, why you took these steps and what did each part teach you, and what did it do to get you where you are now? But I definitely see that there's a thread that you like to help people. It comes right back to right now.

**[00:18:01] WS:** Yeah. Thank you for that. I appreciate that. I don't even know what to ask you about that.

**[00:18:04] DS:** Did I just render you speechless?

**[00:18:08] WS:** No. I appreciate that. I see what you're saying though about how I could use that. I'm looking at it right now too. I thought it would be useful if I was looking at it as you're talking through this. Bringing my experience and what you just said like into the about section

and writing that story. So, they've read the story, and then they get to go down there and see the experience that kind of built the story a little bit.

**[00:18:28] DS:** Yeah. Because for me, it always kind of bothers me when I'm looking at an executive's profile, and the most current is the only position, and it's CEO. How did you get there? There's definitely been a journey, and I think most people want to have – maybe we don't want every single turn on the journey. But give us an idea. How did you get to where you are? What imbued these choices and how did you get to this place?

If I keep going down, this is really interesting. You've given three recommendations. So, I find that interesting. To me, that really tells me that you're a leader, because you're giving these recommendations. But I have to say it's also nice to receive some and sometimes you just have to ask. So, it's not a quid pro quo where you've given them, and then a person feels a need to give one back. I like that it's not that. That's not an exchange. It's not a transaction.

But at the same time, I'd like for you to have some recommendations. Sometimes, it's always hard for us to ask for testimonials. But it's one of those things where maybe just say to yourself, "For the next remaining part of this year, I'm going to ask some people that I feel that I've done something really good for. I'm going to ask them for a recommendation." Then you write it for them, because it's so hard for people to write a recommendation for you because they're busy. They have other things going on. They don't know what it is that you want said, so they never do it.

So, if you really want to get recommendations, the best way to do it is to give them. A lot of times clients will say to me, "But, Donna, I don't know what to write." Well if you don't know what to write, how can you expect someone else to write a recommendation? So, it's also a really good exercise for yourself to really start to think, "Okay. What have I done? What have I accomplished? How have I affected others?"

So maybe now until the end of the year, maybe try to get two recommendations each month and write it for someone, give it to them, and watch it pop up into your recommendations. It's really great. It's great for people to see those testimonials. To me, it's much stronger than the skills

and endorsements area where you just sort of give a thumbs up. When a person really does put in that paragraph, it means something.

**[00:20:35] WS:** So, if we're going to write that for them, I guess we should cater it per individual. If somebody looks at those, they don't just see the same one over and over and over.

**[00:20:43] DS:** Right. Absolutely cater it, especially if you're going to be the one giving it. If you do feel a little like, "Oh! This is strange for me to be asking a person and then giving them that recommendation," you can always give them the help. You can always say, "Look. I know you're busy, and so I've taken the liberty of writing this for you. Feel free to edit or change completely." You'll be surprised at how fast they go up with very few changes. Even that is a little hard. At least just give them a few bullets. I want you to talk about how I'm great at negotiation and how I really turned around that one contract that wasn't really going in our direction through my savvy negotiation – whatever it is. But give them some ideas for what you want them say. That'll also make it a little easier for them.

**[00:21:31] WS:** Great advice. I appreciate that. That's really good. That's really good stuff. A few questions before we have to wrap up. But what's really the hardest part of getting this profile the way it should be, or so it's professional, and so we're connecting with potential clients?

**[00:21:43] DS:** What is the hardest part?

**[00:21:45] WS:** What holds people back from making this happen?

**[00:21:47] DS:** There's a few things. One, and I said it before, it's just hard to write about yourself. I have clients who say to me, "Donna, thank God we're using you to write our profiles, because I've cleaned out my garage. I've rearranged every shelf in my kitchen." The most odious tasks are always much more attractive than sitting down and writing about yourself. So that's one of the things.

Two, I think very few people know what a great-looking LinkedIn profile looks like. A lot of people in their head, it's like, "Oh! It's just a copy and paste of my resume." It's not. Absolutely not that. So, I think it's, one, not wanting to do it; two, not even knowing what a good one looks like; and

three, so many people are like, “You know what? I’ve got five minutes. Let me get this done.” It takes a lot longer than five minutes. This is something that could take hours. It could take days, especially if you’ve had a long career and you’re not moving necessarily in a straight linear type of fashion but maybe you’re pivoting. You’re now embarking upon a side hustle that you started working on, or you’re doing something a little different. It’s how to tell that story in a manner where everything seems cohesive, and it doesn’t seem fractured. It’s interesting, and it creates that relevance. That’s hard for people.

**[00:23:00] WS:** So, what’s a way that you’ve recently improved your business that we can apply to ours?

**[00:23:04] DS:** One way that I’ve improved my business. Oh, my goodness. Well, I will say this. You have to ask for help, and I’ve recently asked a company for help on my website and on some marketing pieces. I’m already seeing a huge difference, and it’s one of those things where I think for most people you get this idea like, “Oh! I can handle it. I can do it myself.” But when your business starts to take that upward turn, you find that you’re in so many different directions, and you can’t always focus in on the places that you need to focus in on. It’s okay to delegate. It’s okay to ask for help. It’s okay to utilize consultants. They’re there for a reason.

**[00:23:43] WS:** That’s wise. That’s very wise. Most people wouldn’t admit to that, but it’s so true. We all need counselors or people who can really be on the outside looking in, because it’s hard to see what we’re doing personally. Even Michael Jordan has what, how many people that were analyzing his shot and says, “Okay. Your elbows are out a little bit,” or whatever, even though he was the professional that he was.

**[00:24:03] DS:** Which goes back to the LinkedIn profile, right?

**[00:24:06] WS:** That’s right.

**[00:24:05] DS:** It’s just hard to write about yourself. It’s hard to see your strengths. It’s hard because they come naturally to you. You sit so close. It’s so hard to gain focus. So, you do, I mean, not only on just the LinkedIn but in all aspects, I think, of people’s lives. You know when it’s time and it’s okay to ask for help.

**[00:24:22] WS:** What's the number one thing that's contributed to your success?

**[00:24:24] DS:** I think it's two things. I know you asked for one, but I think there is an absolute passion and love for what we do. I think it's also the fact that we are so customer-service-oriented. It's all about our clients, wanting them to be happy and taking as good care of them as possible. When you do that, they tell other people who tell other people. Then you've got a Calgon commercial.

**[00:24:48] WS:** How do you like to give back?

**[00:24:50] DS:** I like to give back with veterans. We give all of our products away for free to veterans, active duty, and their spouses. So, if you come to my website, if you know of someone who is a veteran, or if they're active duty or if you're an active duty spouse, because, oh, my gosh, they're sacrificing just as much. We give away our DIY kit, which is a digital e-course that we normally sell, but we give that free of charge to those people, because they deserve it and they need help. So that's really been my real big focus.

**[00:25:19] WS:** I appreciate you sharing though. That's incredible, because I know that took a lot of time, a lot of effort and energy to create something like that and just to give it away to those veterans and support them that way. That's awesome. I appreciate that.

**[00:25:29] DS:** My husband is a Marine. But I was talking to him earlier. This was five years ago. I said, "I think I want to offer it at a discount." He's like, "Discount? Really?" That was when it was for me, it clicked. I was like, "That's just silly. Let's just give it to them." So that's what we do.

**[00:25:48] WS:** That speaks a lot, and I appreciate that, Donna, in a big way. But most importantly, tell the listeners how they can get in touch with you.

**[00:25:54] DS:** Sure. So, you can of course, go to LinkedIn and type in my name into the search. You'll find me there, but you can also visit [linkedin-makeover.com](https://www.linkedin-makeover.com) or [linkedin-makeover.com](https://www.linkedin-makeover.com). We write LinkedIn profiles. We write resumes. We write bios. We write ghost

blogs. We manage people's LinkedIn accounts. We do everything as it relates to professional branding and the LinkedIn realm.

**[00:26:16] WS:** Donna, thank you so much.

**[00:26:17] DS:** All right. Fantastic. Whitney, thank you. Bye-bye.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:26:20] WS:** Don't go yet. Thank you for listening to today's episode. I would love it if you would go to iTunes right now and leave a rating and written review. I want to hear your feedback. It makes a big difference in getting the podcast out there. You can also go to the Real Estate Syndication Show on Facebook, so you can connect with me and we can also receive feedback and your questions there that you want me to answer on the show. Subscribe too, so you can get the latest episodes.

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[OUTRO]

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