# EE Podcast #76 Get to Know #eecms: Anna Brown

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**Lea Alcantara**: You are listening to the ExpressionEngine Podcast Episode #76 with special guest, **Anna Brown**, who is kicking off our new series Get to Know #eecms. I'm your host, Lea Alcantara, and I'm joined by my fab co-host, Emily Lewis.

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**Emily Lewis**: The ExpressionEngine Podcast would also like to thank Pixel & Tonic for being our major sponsor of the year. [Music ends] Hey Lea, how have you been since we last talked?

**Lea Alcantara**: Tired actually. [Laughs] My visiting sisters are all gone now, so I'm a little sad, but at the same time a bit relieved to get back to my routine.

**Emily Lewis**: Yeah. I know the feeling. It was so hard to say goodbye to my sister after our vacation last month, but getting back to my normal work routine feels incredible.

**Lea Alcantara**: [Agrees]

**Emily Lewis**: I think that being self-employed work is always on my mind to some degree or another. But I'm really glad you had a chance to spend some time with family.

**Lea Alcantara**: [Agrees]

**Emily Lewis**: So today we are trying something new on the podcast which is pretty exciting.

**Lea Alcantara**: [Agrees]

**Emily Lewis**: Before we introduce our guest, shall we briefly explain this new series we are launching?

**Lea Alcantara**: Good idea. So when we did our 2012 listener survey, a lot of you just wanted to find out more about who is passionate about EE, how they work, and more importantly, the person behind the @name. So this is an opportunity for those active in the community to stand out.

**Emily Lewis**: All right, let's get this series started. Today we are going to be talking with Anna Brown, known as @mediagirl on Twitter. Anna runs her own business, Media Girl, where she provides front end in EE dev to agencies, designers and clients. Welcome to the show, Anna. Thank you for joining us.

**Anna Brown**: Hi ladies.

**Emily Lewis**: We are glad to have you, and I'm so glad you're going to be our guinea pig today. [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**: [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**: I feel great. [Laughs] Hope I don't mess it up.

**Emily Lewis**: [Laughs] Well, fortunately, today it's really all about you and what you do every day with your job.

**Anna Brown**: Okay.

**Emily Lewis**: So it should be pretty straightforward. So let's just start, in terms of like your job title, do you consider yourself a designer or developer?

**Anna Brown**: Well, I'm not a designer. My skills are developer, really front end development. That's what I primarily do.

**Emily Lewis**: [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**: So I'm more HTML, CSS work and mostly for agencies.

**Emily Lewis**: And when you provide EE development, do you do any custom development like write any PHP or work with CodeIgniter at all?

**Anna Brown**: I don't. I'll hire that out if I ever need it. I rarely do with ExpressionEngine honestly, but yeah, I don't do any custom modules. Maybe I'll tweak existing ones to do what I need, but I never had to do any custom work, and it's not my forte anyway. I leave that to the guys who actually know what they are doing. [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**: [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**: [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**: It sounds good. So you have a project on the go. Can you describe what a typical day, or do you have a different schedule each day? What's your process is like?

**Anna Brown**: Sure. Well, I only work on one project at a time.

**Lea Alcantara**: Okay.

**Anna Brown**: And I do mostly full builds because that's what I prefer. I've done so many projects in the last seven or eight years that I end up maintaining them.

**Lea Alcantara**: [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**: So one of those services that I also provide is just the maintenance of any project I built. So as long as the client wants maintenance, I'll be available to do that work. So mornings, probably for the first hour or two, I'll do just maintenance or any maintenance to do with requests that come in and then full build stuff usually is the rest of the day.

**Emily Lewis**: What do you mean by full build? Are you just talking about the full EE build out, or do you also do the visual comps or anything like that?

**Anna Brown**: Yeah, no visual comps. Just the full build in the ExpressionEngine.

**Emily Lewis**: And all HTML and CSS that goes along with it?

**Anna Brown**: Yeah.

**Emily Lewis**: Yeah.

**Anna Brown**: Yeah. So full build to me is just the project that starts from the beginning when I get markups from the client or agency and I build the rest. I take over and get it until launch.

**Emily Lewis**: How do you handle maintenance? You mentioned that a lot of your clients ultimately need maintenance. Is that something you deal with like as part of the project, or is it like a customer support agreement once the project is launched?

**Anna Brown**: Yeah, I don't do an agreement. I just do hourly. I bill hourly. So if requests come in, I may get one request every six months, or I might get one a week or one every day [laughs] for that matter. I don't do any maintenance kind of contracts. It's just I'm always here if they need me.

**Emily Lewis**: And does that come from the agency or directly from the client that the agency deliver the project for?

**Anna Brown**: I think I have a little bit of both. Sometimes the agencies will just turn the client over to me. Others will want all those requests to come through them so they can still bill the client directly, and some of the agencies that are for full service advertising web whatever will still have that client on as a client for other work, so just every web will go through the agency.

**Lea Alcantara**: If you're working with an agency, are you usually a silent partner. Do they expect you to be sort of invisible, or does the client always know that you're a separate company that's working with that agency?

**Anna Brown**: Yeah, well, I think that sort of up to the agency.

**Lea Alcantara**: Okay.

**Anna Brown**: A lot of times I'm fully present in the conversation, so they know the agency is working with me. A lot of these agencies, well, I don't have a ton of agencies, but the ones I've worked with, I've worked with for a long time. So I'm sort of a hired gun if you will, I guess. [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**: Sure.

**Anna Brown**: So I'm just really responsible and long term partner that they have, and so they are happy to let the client know who I am and that I work with them. So other ones though, I guess more with newer clients, they will just keep me in the background which I'm fine to do too. Whatever the agency wants really, it doesn't matter to me.

**Emily Lewis**: How did you form these relationships with agencies?

**Anna Brown**: Well, I guess it sort of happened a little organically honestly. Well, previous to doing freelance work, previously to that, I worked as a director of marketing for a web hosting company, and we had an agency that we worked with. So my first agency client as a web developer was my account rep at that agency. He left with a couple other guys, a designer and a copywriter, and they started their own agency. So they needed somebody to take on the web work, so they are my oldest clients and they are here in Albuquerque. Most of my clients are out of state though. So just organically they found me or somebody has referred me, or every situation is a little different, but they've just found me really.

**Emily Lewis**: Would you say that the work you get from agencies is like 50% of your work, or what's the mix of just a cold call versus an agency?

**Anna Brown**: I would say it's more like 90%. Honestly, a lot of the cold call projects are not ones that are good fits for me. I like these long term relationships. I mean, you work with an agency, they know you, they know how you work, you know how they work, you have a good rapport with them, so I definitely prefer those projects over projects where I've never worked with a person.

So new agencies, I don't bring on new agencies very often because it's just me. Every once in a while, honestly I'll feel sorry for somebody [laughs] and I'll take on their project. It's usually, "Hey, my old developer left and my project is a mess." And every once in a while I'll take those on and usually it doesn't go well honestly, so I'm learning not to take those projects either. Anyway, so I definitely do more agency work than anything else, and that's what I prefer to do.

**Lea Alcantara**: And was it always with EE when you first started Media Girl? Did you start focusing on EE?

**Anna Brown**: When I first started, well, I've done design work. I don't think I'm a great designer honestly. I'm a much better developer.

**Lea Alcantara**: Sure.

**Anna Brown**: When this first agency here in Albuquerque asked me to build their site, obviously they were going to do the design work. It was a really fit. I really liked it. I didn't have to make the logo bigger.

**Lea Alcantara**: Yeah, yeah. [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**: [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**: I didn't have to change the colors, and that stuff used to drive me nuts. So honestly, it was a really nice fit and I just said, I guess unconsciously, "This is the kind of work I want to do. I don't want to do the full projects." And I don't think honestly after that agency contacted me and I started doing their projects that I did many design projects after that. I've done a couple trades, which as you know as a developer and somebody who can do design, that's a great skill to use in trade. So when I've done those trade projects, then I've done the design, and…

**Emily Lewis**: What do you mean trade projects?

**Anna Brown**: Oh well, I traded the website for new gates on my house.

**Lea Alcantara**: Oh yeah, yeah.

**Emily Lewis**: [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**: It's so nice. [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**: I like to barter. I barter my services when I can and it's really nice. I have beautiful gates because…

**Emily Lewis**: [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**: I wouldn't have wanted to pay $4,000 for them honestly. I probably wouldn't have done it, but to do a nice barter was great, and the guy needed a website and I needed gates and I really liked what he did and he liked my skill so it was a good relationship there.

**Lea Alcantara**: I think that's really interesting.

**Anna Brown**: Yeah.

**Lea Alcantara**: I think more people should do some barter stuff. I know some friends of mine actually bartered a website with a cow.

**00:10:00**

**Anna Brown**: Oh. [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**: [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**: Yeah, so basically, the client has a farm that raises cows and they said, "Do you want a cow instead of cash?" And they said, "Okay." [Laughs] And so they got a butchered cow like essentially the meat…

**Anna Brown**: Oh, the whole cow.

**Lea Alcantara**: Yeah, meat for a year. It's meat fillet.

**Anna Brown**: Wow.

**Lea Alcantara**: And they had so many barbecues that year. [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**: [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**: [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**: Because they are like, "We just really have too much."

**Anna Brown**: Well, the beauty of being a developer is that you do have a skill that you can barter with.

**Lea Alcantara**: [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**: And so if you want something, then you go out and get it.

**Emily Lewis**: How do you bring that up?

**Anna Brown**:  Oh well, I wanted gates.

**Lea Alcantara**:  [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**:  [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**:  I mean, in this case, I wanted gates so I emailed the guy and he had built these gates that I really admired in town.  So I always look at this house and looked at what he had built, and I always wanted those gates.  [Laughs]  So I emailed him one day and I was more looking for a price and my website is in my signature and he sort of brought it up actually, and we sort of brought it up at the same time and he had a pretty sorry website.  For somebody selling essentially a luxury item he needed a much better presence online.

**Lea Alcantara**:  Sure.

**Anna Brown**:  So we brought it up probably at the same time, and it was a great fit.  It was really nice, and I bartered for other things.  I bartered for sort of coach, a business coaching services, where a couple of years ago I had other people working with and I was struggling with that, and just struggling too with finding out what was going to make me happy in my work and so I bartered with somebody in Phoenix who did business coaching and she had family here so she was in New Mexico every couple of months.  So we would meet or do phone sessions and that was nice.

**Emily Lewis**:  That's cool.  I've never even considered something like that, but it really does make sense.

**Lea Alcantara**:  [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**:  Oh yeah.  Well, you could work with their accountant.  You could probably barter services that way.

**Emily Lewis**:  [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**:  You could have had free accounting for a couple of years.  [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**:  [Laughs]  Okay.

**Anna Brown**:  And it's such an easy thing for us to do in our free time really.

**Emily Lewis**:  That's a good point too, especially when you're bartering with something that you know how to do like the back of your hand.

**Anna Brown**:  Oh yeah, absolutely, and they think it's this great skill and you're like, "Oh, well, I can do this in my sleep really." [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**:  [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**:  [Laughs]  So speaking of your experience and your skills, how long have you been working with EE?

**Anna Brown**:  Well, I had to look.  [Laughs]  I guess, it's been seven years now that I've worked full time with ExpressionEngine.

**Emily Lewis**:  Are the majority of your projects Version 2 or Version 1?

**Anna Brown**:  Well, all my new projects are Version 2.

**Emily Lewis**:  [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**:  But a lot of the old maintenance projects are 1.

**Emily Lewis**:  Is that difficult to balance in terms of keeping track of the nuances between the different versions and what's needed?

**Anna Brown**:  No, not at all.  You know what, I have talked about this on Twitter a lot.  I'm miss ExpressionEngine 1's control panel.  For me I don't know, maybe I have a hard time making change or something, but when I go back to the

ExpressionEngine 1 projects, I actually feel like I know where everything is, like it's just so much more intuitive for my brain, and I've worked with it so many years so I think really I'm just struggling making the change, but…

**Emily Lewis**:  Have you ever tried like, what is it, Override CSS from Leevi Graham's agency that sort of reverts the control panel?

**Anna Brown**:  Yeah, I have.

**Emily Lewis**:  And what did you think now?  [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**:  So when I go back to those old ExpressionEngine 1 projects, I'm happy.  [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**: [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**: [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**:  So I don't mind maintaining them at all, and I have some big projects.  My largest project is on ExpressionEngine 1 and it's one of those projects that I could never convert to ExpressionEngine 2.  I mean, there is just such an enormous database that it never can be converted.  So that website is hosted at EngineHosting, and I've told Nevin that he can never ask me to convert that.  [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**: [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**:  I mean, I would probably have to commit suicide.  It would be the most daunting task for me and I just can't even thought of doing it.  So that site will always be ExpressionEngine 1 for as long as it's going to be alive, and it's been up for years, but the database is just enormous.

**Lea Alcantara**:  Well, if it's not broke, right?

**Anna Brown**:  I know.  It works great.  [Laughs]  Nothing is broken on it.  So it's a very solid website at this point, and this is one that I've struggled for years to get stable so I'm thrilled to have it stabilized.  It's great.

**Emily Lewis**:  Do you ever work with any other CMSs?

**Anna Brown**:  I do not.  It makes my life a lot easier too because the other projects will come to me and I can just say, "Nope, I don't do that work."

**Emily Lewis**:  If you get a project like that, do you ever try and convert them to being open to ExpressionEngine, or do you just pass it on?

**Anna Brown**:  Nope, I just pass it.

**Emily Lewis**: [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**:  Because honestly, I guess I'm a really frugal person in my life and I'm not willing to take on work that doesn't need to be done just for the sake of making money.

**Emily Lewis**: [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**:  So like what you just said, if it's not broken, why are you going to change it.  So the project is fine on WordPress.  The client knows how to use it.  Everybody is comfortable with it.  They just need a solid developer who does that kind of work.

**Lea Alcantara**: [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**:  So I mean, I just tell them to keep looking.  I don't really have WordPress people to recommend them too, but if a project comes across my plate that I can't do or don't think I'm a good fit for it, I try to get them to somebody who is.  I mean, I feel that's my responsibility as a developer.

**Emily Lewis**:  Yeah, and speaking is someone who has received those referrals from you.  Well, it's part of the community.  If you do get something that's not a good fit for you, but you do know someone that might be, it's great to get those referrals.  It really is.

**Anna Brown**:  Yeah, absolutely.  I don't want to work exceptionally hard at this stage of my life.  [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**:  [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**:  I don't need to.  I get enough work, it pays my bills so I don't need to make a ton of money.   So if I'm busy I just say no, and I say no a lot more than I say yes, and it just keeps my life in balance because it's gotten out of balance before.

**Lea Alcantara**:  You know what, I think that's a good advice no matter what stage you are in your business.

**Anna Brown**:  Yeah.

**Lea Alcantara**:  I think that's an advice that is really important for those starting a business because there is a little bit of that desperation perhaps when you're starting because you're really worried.

**Anna Brown**:  Yeah.

**Lea Alcantara**:  But saying no is just as powerful as saying yes.

**Anna Brown**:  It is.  Well, it means that you have control over your life, I think, and honestly, it took me a long time to get there.

**Lea Alcantara**:  Sure.

**Anna Brown**:  I mean, I really struggled with it.

**Lea Alcantara**:  Sure.

**Anna Brown**:  My ego is built around my work a lot and I have a very large sense of responsibility when work comes to me.

**Lea Alcantara**:  [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**:  And so I couldn't say no very well, and ultimately, it really started affecting my life where I was working 15- or 16-hour days which is not healthy for my body, at least, then going to sleep and really struggling with in my sleep.

**Lea Alcantara**:  [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**:  Because I had so much going on in my head, I wasn't sleeping well.  It just was out of control, and so a number of years ago, I did hire another developer to work with me and we worked together for about two years and at a certain point I hired a second person, and honestly, it was just more than I wanted to manage.


I'm a little OCD with projects where I just really have to be involved in all parts of it, and I am not going to put out work that isn't acceptable to me.  So my fingers were in all parts of the project.  So if new project would come in, we would all attack it, work it, get it to launch, and then I wasn't doing a good job of making sure the next project was lined up because my head was completely in the actual build that we were working.


So I struggled with that part, and at a certain point I just said, "Look, I can't.  I don't want to do this.  I don't want this stress in my life."  And so I wound that down, which was great.  But I know Emily.  Emily struggled with this too.

**Emily Lewis**:  I'm still struggling with it.  [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**:  Yeah.

**Lea Alcantara**: [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**: We've had some conversations about this, and it's hard in the beginning because you do feel like with this project you've got to do it. There may not be another one.

**Emily Lewis**: Right.

**Anna Brown**: But honestly, there is always going to be another one, and I know that now.

**Lea Alcantara**: Yeah.

**Anna Brown**: And I'm happy to have two weeks off. If I don't have work, I'm happy to go and work in my garden or take a road trip or whatever. I mean, I know the next project is going to right behind it.

**Lea Alcantara**: Yeah, I would say I agree, like I had to let go one of my largest clients this year and I remember being really, really nervous about it. But honestly, ever since I let them go, I haven't really been less busy, if that made sense. It's like I was really worried that it would and I think there was like maybe a couple of weeks of slight lull and then back up again.

**Anna Brown**: Right. Well, that's called vacation. [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**: [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**: [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**: I struggled planning vacations. I don't do that well.

**Emily Lewis**: Do you think what you just described about sort of striking that balance, has that been the best lesson you've learned being self-employed?

**Anna Brown**: No. Well, sure. I mean, that's the lesson with any job.

**Emily Lewis**: [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**: Well, I had that issue working for other people. I would still work 16-hour days or maybe 12-hour days, and I just threw everything into my work. But that's an issue inside myself really. I mean, other people have it too, but like I said, I get a lot of my ego fulfilled by work, and doing a good job and turning over a project that's solid and not dropping the ball, I mean, I really thrive on that.

Well, so I would say my biggest lesson, I was actually on the other end of the spectrum is when I was in that phase of not saying no and taking everything excessively seriously. I had a conversation with a partner at this agency I worked with in San Francisco, and it was a larger agency and I had nice access to the partners. I was a pretty solid partner with them, but I was stressed out about a project.

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**Lea Alcantara**: [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**: I'm very stressed out because I wasn't may be going to be able to fulfill my end or something, and so when that happens I don't hold that in. I communicate that with whoever I'm working with that I'm struggling there or something. We had a conversation and she said, "Anna, take a step back. It's just a website."

**Lea Alcantara**: [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**: It's just a website, and that really is the truth. It's just a freaking website. It's not nuclear science here. We are not…

**Lea Alcantara**: [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**:  We are not saving lives.

**Anna Brown**:  We are not saving lives.  It's just a website and regardless of how the client feels about it as a priority in their life, we have to remind them too that it's just a website, and I do.  I'm happy to tell a client, "Look, hey, back up, it's just a website.  Can we all remember that?"

**Lea Alcantara**:  [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**:  So that was a huge lesson that I learned.  Honestly, I didn't learn it early enough.  [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**:  Sure.

**Anna Brown**:  But I have learned it.  I try to embrace it and live it.  With that, I struggle with that part because it is essential to people's business and so when it's down or there is a problem, it's not just a website, it's sort of a crisis for them and so I try to respect that too, but within my own boundaries.  Then I would say my other lesson is sort of a business lesson, and I think, Emily, you and I have talked about this, but it's just to really set up a business structure right away.

**Emily Lewis**:  [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**:  I mean, if you're going to be a freelancer, set up a separate bank accounts.

**Lea Alcantara**:  Yeah.

**Anna Brown**:  Set up the actual corporation or the LLC or however you're going to do it, and work with an accountant.  For so many years, I struggled with paying my gross receipts tax.  In New Mexico, our sales tax is called gross receipts and I just couldn't get it together and I always thought that the IRS was going to be knocking on my door.  [Laughs]

I got to a point where it was really stressing me out, and I did ask an agency here in town who they would refer as an accountant and they got me the right person.  She has helped me now for years.  She just takes care of all of that.  I don't have to think about it.  When something has to be done, she takes care of it and I can then focus on my job.  So that's a huge thing, I think, from the beginning, or at least as close to the beginning as you can, set up the actual business structure and get the professionals in place who can assist you there.  Because that will leave you the time to grow your business and to focus on what you do best.

**Emily Lewis**:  Exactly.  I remember when you and I talked about that and I actually used the same accountant that you do because you recommended her, and she and her services, it's really made the first couple of years of working from myself so much easier because I don't have to think about any of that.  She just notifies me when something is due.  [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**:  Yeah.  And when you look at the cost of it, it's not that much.

**Emily Lewis**:  No, not at all.

**Anna Brown**:  Where we all bill, well, everybody bills, but if it's $500, for me that's five or six or seven hours of work a year.  I mean, I can afford that, and it's essential to have that for me now.

**Lea Alcantara**:  And it's a write off too.

**Anna Brown**:  It's a write off.  So you don't want to spend $500 when you think of that, but yeah, over the span of a year, it's pennies really.

**Emily Lewis**:  Yeah, exactly.  So actually, sort of shifting back to a little bit of focus on EE, what do you consider your strengths with ExpressionEngine?

**Anna Brown**:  I think my strength as a developer that I guess in ExpressionEngine is just that I worked with it for so long.  On Twitter I find that when I'm watching the EECMS feed, I end up responding to all these help, "What happened?   What's going on?"  And I have just learned what things are.  When a problem happens, I know how to fix it, or I generally know

where to look. So I think just my general experience with it for so long, it doesn't make me afraid of the software, I guess I would say that.

**Emily Lewis**: [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**: I'm not a strong sort of serious developer. I mean, I'm a front end developer, that's what I said, but I'm not a developer. I'm not a programmer in the sense that I'm building custom applications and custom modules. So that's not where my strength is, but my strength is really on the front end stuff, and I would say too that I can jump into any ExpressionEngine project and be very comfortable.

**Emily Lewis**: [Agrees]

**Lea Alcantara**: [Agrees]

**Emily Lewis**: Since you've worked with EE so long, and this is probably a loaded question, but I can't wait to hear what your answers are, what is the best thing about EE, and then what's the worst thing about ExpressionEngine?

**Anna Brown**: Well, I think the best thing ultimately, and I think most people would agree, is just the template flexibility.

**Lea Alcantara**: [Agrees]

**Emily Lewis**: [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**: I mean, the fact that you start with blank templates and you can build anything is amazing. That is what has worked for me over seven or eight years and what has allowed me to build some of the larger projects that I have built. I mean, I've built some really complex stuff, and it has taken some effort, but it's all been doable. So I really commend the software for giving the developer that ultimate flexibility.

**Emily Lewis**: [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**: The worst thing for me, unfortunately, it's sort of the lack of first party innovation in the core software. I'm getting frustrated with that. I know other people are too. For so many years now, I mean, four or five years honestly, maybe four years, a lot of the innovation in ExpressionEngine has been coming from the add-on developers.

**Emily Lewis**: Yeah.

**Lea Alcantara**: [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**: And we've seen amazing things. Amazing things, I am incredibly impressed by what's coming out of this add-on community. I would like to be incredibly impressed about what's coming out of EllisLab, so I would challenge them to really work on that first-party innovation because we are not seeing it, and like spam is a huge issue.

**Lea Alcantara**: Sure.

**Emily Lewis**: [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**: I mean, what's going on with spam? I mean, we are all struggling with it every day. Every project we always struggle with it and I just don't feel like really good tools are coming out of EllisLab for that kind of thing. There are other things too, but I would say spam is probably on everybody's plate with every project.

**Lea Alcantara**: So speaking about the innovation and add-ons, what add-ons can't you live without that you must have in a project?

**Anna Brown**: Okay, yeah. So honestly, my first add-on is such a small add-on. [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**: Sure.

**Anna Brown**: People are going to laugh. Well, I don't even know if other people use this, but my favorite add-on is called EditThis.

**Lea Alcantara**:  Okay, yeah.

**Anna Brown**:  It's just such a simple add-on, but it allows me to build an experience for my clients.   It's so incredibly easy.   So EditThis adds…

**Lea Alcantara**:  Is that the one from Hop Studios?

**Anna Brown**:  I don't even know who makes it.

**Lea Alcantara**:  Okay.

**Anna Brown**:  I just have it as part of my default install.

**Lea Alcantara**:  Cool.

**Anna Brown**:  And I have tweaked it a little bit to work better for what I need.   So for people who don't know what EditThis is, it just creates an edit button within the entries loop, a direct link to the control panel, and a direct link to that entry.   So my clients don't really have to use the control panel to do their editing.   They would use the control panel to set up new entries maybe.   Some projects all build just sort of a quick link thing on the front end where they can get directly to the edit form for what they need, and so I've sort of moved people to the front end to do their editing.

**Lea Alcantara**:  Nice.

**Anna Brown**:  Or to at least initiate the editing.

**Lea Alcantara**:  [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**:  So if you're looking at your website and you want to edit the About page, you click on the edit link right there and it takes right to that entry.   You don't have to go and look for it.   So that's my favorite add-on.   Obviously, Brendon with Pixel & Tonic has done amazing work and Matrix and WYGWAM are my favorites or my second and third favorite.   Probably WYGWAM and then Matrix.  WYGWAM I put on every project.  Matrix, when I need it, but it's pretty invaluable.

**Emily Lewis**:  Excellent.  Well, that brings us to the end of our main questions.

**Lea Alcantara**:  [Agrees]

**Anna Brown**:  All right.

**Emily Lewis**:  But we've got a little sort of concluding set of questions for you.   [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**:  Oh-oh, I don't like that laugh.

**Lea Alcantara**:  [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**:  [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**:  Well, we thought it would be fun to conclude these get to know #eecms interviews by borrowing from Inside the Actors' Studio with our own version of the famous ten questions.

**Anna Brown**:  Okay, all right.

**Lea Alcantara**:  So we are going to try to do this rapid fire.

**Anna Brown**:  Oh gosh.

**Lea Alcantara**:  Are you ready?

**Anna Brown**:  I don't know.  [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**:  [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**: [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**: But I'll try.

**Lea Alcantara**: Okay, so first question.

**Anna Brown**: Bring it.

**Lea Alcantara**: Mac OS or Windows?

**Anna Brown**: Oh, I've been a PC girl forever. I won't ever move to a Mac.

**Emily Lewis**: All right, next one, what's your favorite mobile app?

**Anna Brown**: Twitbird. That's what I use for Twitter.

**Lea Alcantara**: What is your least favorite thing about social media?

**Anna Brown**: I don't know that I have a least favorite thing. I think it all worked for me. Maybe the time waste.

**Lea Alcantara**: [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**: [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**: [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**: What profession other than yours would you like to attempt?

**Anna Brown**: Well, I have two. I would be a police officer or a forensic scientist.

**Lea Alcantara**: Cool. So what profession would you not ever want to attempt?

**Anna Brown**: Bed pan nurse. [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**: [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**: [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**: Or subject cleaner.

**Lea Alcantara**: Yikes.

**Emily Lewis**: [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**: No thanks.

**Emily Lewis**: Who is the web professional you admire the most?

**Anna Brown**: I guess Ryan Masuga. He's been a friend for a long time. I've been very impressed on what he's done with his business, and I help him behind the scenes by egging him on and harassing him. [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**: [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**: So what music do you like to code to?

**Anna Brown**: It depends on the day. Some days it's classical. Some days it's like Latin rap. I don't know. [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**: [Laughs] Oh my goodness.

**Emily Lewis**: [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**: Other days it's country. It just totally depends on my mood, and I'm moody.

**Emily Lewis**: [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**:  So it's always changing.

**Emily Lewis**:  What is your secret talent?

**Anna Brown**:  I can get things done.  I get things done, period.  With whatever I do, I get things done.

**00:30:02**

**Lea Alcantara**:  Cool.  So what's the most recent book you've read?

**Anna Brown**:  Oh, what is it called?  I never remember books.  The Hunter Games, is that what it's called?

**Lea Alcantara**:  *The Hunger Games*.

**Emily Lewis**:  *The Hunger Games*.

**Anna Brown**:  *The Hunger Games*, yeah, yeah.  So I read that.  It's pretty interesting.  I didn't think I'd like a book about kids killing kids, but it worked.  [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**:  [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**:  [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**:  It worked.  Somebody gave it to me.  So I don't read a lot.  I read on vacations, so I read that on my vacation to Keystone, Florida last month.

**Emily Lewis**:  All right, and lastly, the most important question, *Star Wars* or Star Trek?

**Anna Brown**:  Oh, neither.

**Lea Alcantara**:  [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**:  [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**:  I'm not that kind of geek.

**Lea Alcantara**:  It sounds good.  So I think that brings us to the end of our first get to know #eecms interview.

**Anna Brown**:  Great.

**Lea Alcantara**:  Thank you so much for joining us, Anna, and being our guinea pig.

**Anna Brown**:  Yeah, I don't know.  [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara**:  [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis**:  [Laughs]

**Anna Brown**:  I appreciate you guys having me on.  You guys have a great day and thanks to the ExpressionEngine community out there for just being who you are.  I really appreciate it.

**Emily Lewis**:  And in case our listeners want to follow up with you, where they can find you online?

**Anna Brown**:  Twitter @mediagirl and MediaGirl.com or call me.

**Emily Lewis**:  Excellent.

**Anna Brown**:  I'm always near the phone.

**Lea Alcantara**:  Perfect.  So now, we would like to thank our sponsors for this podcast, EE Garage and Pixel & Tonic.

**Emily Lewis**:  We would also like to thank our partners, EllisLab, EngineHosting and Devot:ee.

**Lea Alcantara**:  Also, thanks to our listeners for tuning in.  If you want to know more about the podcast, make sure you follow us on Twitter @eepodcast or visit our website, EE-Podcast.com.

**Emily Lewis**:  And don't forget to tune in to our next episode when Lea and I will talk all about ExpressionEngine search options.

**Lea Alcantara**:  This is Lea Alcantara.

**Emily Lewis**:  And Emily Lewis.

**Lea Alcantara**:  Signing off for the ExpressionEngine Podcast.  See you next time.

**Emily Lewis**:  Cheers.

**00:31:46** [Music stops]