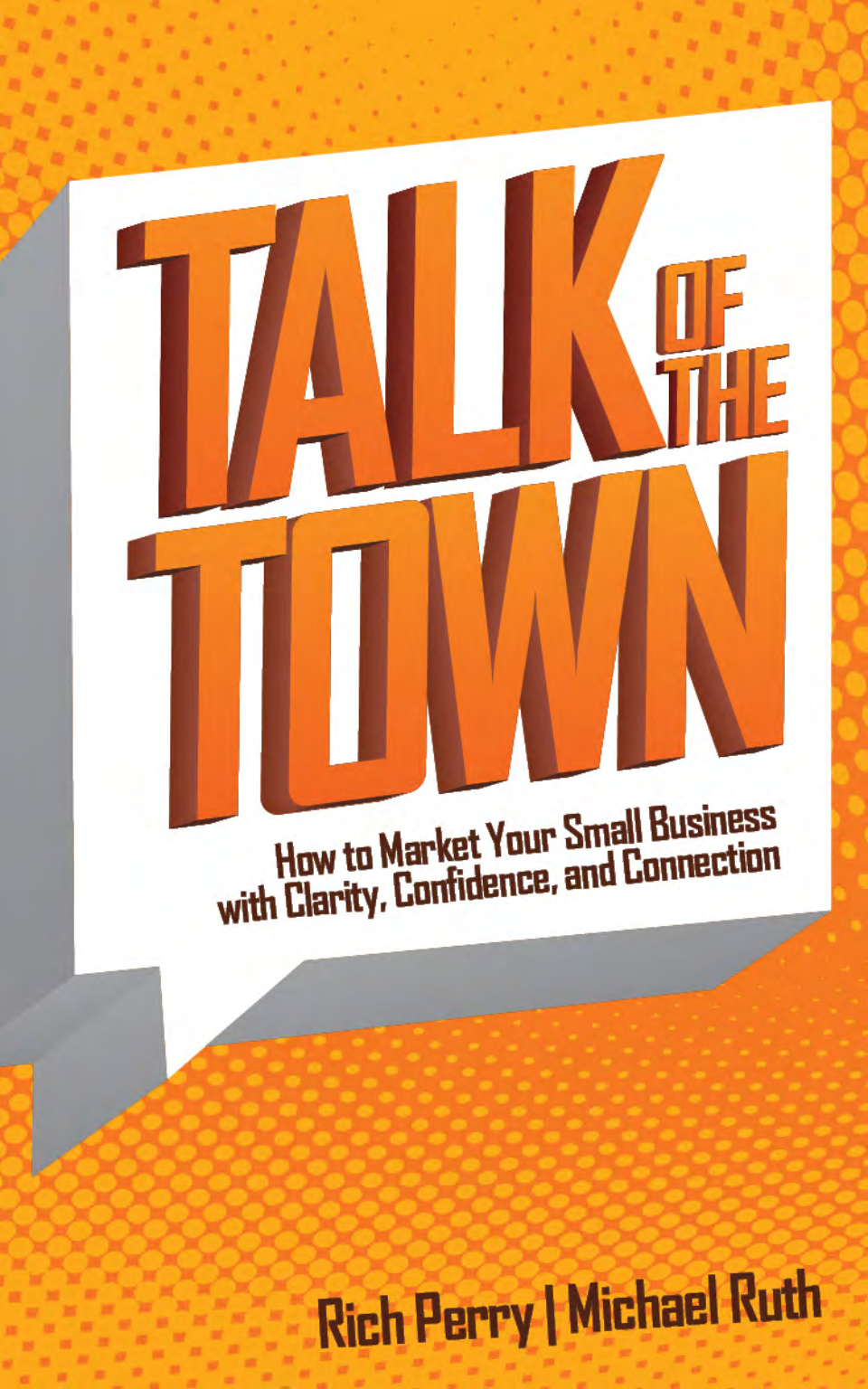
TALK OF THE TOWN
How to Market Your Small Business with Clarity, Confidence, and Connection
Rich Perry | Michael Ruth

SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS JUST LIKE YOU TALK ABOUT RICH PERRY AND MICHAEL RUTH AND THIS BOOK . . .

MAKING IT FEEL LIKE I AM HIS ONLY CLIENT

As a dietitian and new business owner, I KNEW in my core, that nutrition had the power to change lives. I knew the impact a nutrition practice could have in my hometown, I understood the need and recognized the importance of what we do. What I didn't know, how to spread the word. *How on Earth does one start a business unlike anything else in the area and get their target market to show up?*

I thought for sure going to networking events with other local business owners would be my answer. In a way, that worked, but only because that's where I met Michael Ruth.

Michael quickly showed me that there is so much more to communicating your passion, and your offering to the public. Since day one, Michael has worked with me to optimize my branding, fine-tune my marketing, and develop an SEO plan that works.

Michael has taken the time to truly understand my goals for the business, our target market, and the needs of our local demographic to take my ideas and turn them into realistic marketing tools. On top of that, Michael is consistent with his efforts to keep my business on top, of-

ten making it feel like I am his only client (though I am sure that's not the case!).

I could go on and on, but long story short - I'd make this decision again and again, and I'm glad to see he's sharing his gift with the world.

—**Brooke Evans, M.S., RDN, LDN**
Founder, Catalyst Nutrition and Training

I AM THRILLED AT THE WORK WE DID TOGETHER

I am a first time small business owner who focuses on leadership and team development training. I had no idea how to position myself in a market that is as big as an ocean. I had been posting, with no strategy on LinkedIn about my services. I had been working warm leads through word of mouth. Then I saw a post on LinkedIn from Michael Ruth about pulling together your brand story. We had met once before at a local networking event. I reached out to Michael, having no idea what a "brand story" was at the time.

Michael took the time to connect with me 1:1 to understand my business and who I was serving. We met at a coffeeshop and recorded the conversation of why and how I started this business. He met me where I was. No magic format. No forced framework. No AI generated

output. He took my story, the hero's journey, and transformed that into my brand story. He curated custom content for me to share with my audience.

Michael enlightened me to the fact that if people don't know who I am, they most likely won't buy the service I am selling. I am thrilled at the work we did together as a collaboration and the relationship we formed through the process.

—**Dr. Will Ramey**
Owner, Shared Leadership

GRATEFUL FOR THE POSITIVE IMPACT HE'S HAD ON OUR TEAM AND OUR VISION

Michael has been an incredible asset to The Good Drop. As our in-house marketer and office administrator, he wears a lot of hats—and he wears them well. His creativity, organization, and constant drive to make things better have played a huge role in the growth of our business. We're incredibly grateful for the positive impact he's had on our team and our vision.

—**Mara Capozzi, RN**
The Good Drop

ONE OF THE VERY BEST BUSINESS DECISIONS I'VE EVER MADE

1900 Digital Marketing is a refreshing oasis in a desert of too-big-to-care, cookie-cutter, and waaaaay-overpriced marketing agencies. Michael's high-quality content and valuable results are accessible to even the smallest of businesses. The only thing your business can't afford is not working with him. He oversaw the complete overhaul of my website into something I am finally proud to call my own. His compelling copy, which led to sales, will help me claim commercial use of two of my trademarks. Hiring 1900 Digital Marketing is one of the very best business decisions I've ever made.

—**K.B. Johnson**
Chief Cook and Bottle-Washer at 8AC Systems, LLC,
Your Friendly Neighborhood Software Developer

THE LEADS HAVE KEPT COMING

I've collaborated with Michael for nearly two years through our shared work at TOPO Virtual Services,

where he leads SEO and content for our mutual clients. What sets him apart is his approach: he asks the kind of thoughtful, probing questions that draw out the fuller, richer story of a business or individual—and then he writes with that depth built in.

One client of ours is a highly specialized visual artist serving major markets across the country; Michael built out city-specific pages that translated a hard-to-describe craft into content that both ranks in search and reads like a genuine introduction to the work. The leads followed, and they have kept coming.

He's communicative, reliable, and has a grasp of his field that stands out in a space full of noise. Small business owners who work with Michael are getting a marketer who treats their story with the care it deserves.

—**Brooke Carr**
Founder, Dauntless Integrated Solutions

I COULD SEE A DRAMATIC IMPROVEMENT IN OUR RANKINGS

We engaged Rich as our Fractional CMO because I was one of those frustrated small business owners. My team and I are experts in our craft, but I struggled to communicate that effectively to the market. Marketing is not like

solving a computer issue. In technology, if you do X and Y, the answer is often Z. My brain is wired that way. Marketing, on the other hand, felt far less predictable.

As an expert in my own field, I recognize and respect the expertise of others in theirs. That is why I outsourced our website design and marketing to several firms over the years. But whenever we asked for an explanation of how things were going, I seemed to get polished reports without any real understanding of what the data actually meant. Worse, I knew enough to realize our website rankings were poor.

When we brought on Rich, he immediately involved Michael to clean up our website and SEO. Within a few months, I could see a dramatic improvement in our rankings. We also began getting leads through our website and from Google searches.

What has been an even greater relief is the accountability Rich holds for himself and his team. The content creation, strategic direction, and marketing leadership that Rich and his team provide have allowed me to focus on other important parts of my business with greater confidence.

—**Carmine Corridore**
President, Underdog Cyber Defense

WILL HELP YOU COMMUNICATE YOUR MESSAGE MORE EFFECTIVELY

I have known and respected Rich Perry for several years. Rich's authenticity, resilience (Grit), and caring come through clearly in his new book. These values that Rich possesses and that he is now sharing with you, will help you communicate your message more effectively, enabling you to impact others as he has impacted you.

—**Marty Wolff**

Executive coach for business leaders creating legacy businesses, Marty Wolff Business Solutions

A MUST-READ

This book empowers professionals to move beyond flashy ads and complicated funnels to focus on what actually drives growth: human connection. Through the power of storytelling and authentic communication, *Talk of the Town* helps you build the trust and momentum required to set your business apart. It is a must-read for anyone ready to communicate their value with purpose and precision.

—**Dr. Stephanie A. Longo**

Assistant Professor of Corporate Communication, Penn State Scranton

A TREASURE TROVE OF ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS THAT EMPOWERS YOU

Most business owners start with passion but get lost in the overwhelm of modern marketing. Rich cuts through the confusion, proving that effective marketing is simply clear communication that builds trust. *Talk of the Town* is a treasure trove of actionable insights that empowers you to find your unique voice and connect authentically with your audience. Don't wait until you feel "ready"—read this book and take action today.

—**Kristopher B. Jones**
Founder of LSEO.com
Author of *The Entrepreneur's Exit Playbook* and *SEO for Dummies: 9 Books in One*

UNDERSTANDS THE REAL CHALLENGES OF MARKETING

Perry's *Talk of the Town* offers the perspective of a friendly, experienced voice, like your own trusted neighbor,

entrepreneur, and local guide who understands the real challenges of marketing within limits, helping businesses move beyond fragmented marketing activities to consistent brand strategies that grow their legacy over time.

—**Shannon R. Buckley**
Owner & CEO, Master Shot Studios, LLC

STRATEGIES USED BY HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE

Its actionable nuggets of wisdom are backed by a refreshingly practical approach to dealing with strife. *Talk of the Town* is a must-read for anyone looking to take their marketing game to the next (or any) level. Packed with actionable, expert content from cover to cover, this book encapsulates the strategies used by highly successful people to connect with their target audiences and reap the benefits. Ready to unpack the nuts and bolts of online marketing and feel confident doing it? Grab your copy of *Talk of the Town* so you can be just that!

—**Dr. Bridget Cooper**
Leadership Consultant & Author of
Unflappable: How Smart People Quit Overthinking, Ditch the Drama, & Thrive at Work

Rich Perry and I met because both of us understood exactly what he's telling you in *Talk of the Town*. When you have a fire inside you, you hunt and search for ways to get to where you want to be. When Rich and I connected, I instantly brought him into my podcasting and networking world. These days, marketing isn't anything like what they taught us in college. Somehow, stupid ideas still turn into gold, so if I were you, I'd go into this book with an open mind and a good attitude. Rich KNOWS how this game is played, and there's nobody better to say that than a 20+ year veteran who dominated the industry. I've filmed in nearly 50 countries, and Rich acknowledges the ebbs and flows that REALLY HAPPEN in this business. The only thing I don't like is that he wrote this book way better than I ever could. I'll never be mad—game recognizes game!

—**Stacey R. Toy**

COO, TwentyFiveEight Studios, LLC

Executive Producer & Co-Host, *Cedric the Entertainer's FanroomLive.com*

How to Market Your Small Business
with Clarity, Confidence, and Connection

Rich Perry | Michael Ruth

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DESIGNED IN THE UNITED STATES

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Thanks for your help, contributions, and guidance along the way.

INTRODUCTION

CLARITY AND CONFIDENCE THROUGH COMMUNICATION

If you've ever stared at a blank screen wondering what to post next, or struggled to explain what makes your business different, you're not alone. Most small business owners didn't start their companies because they loved marketing—they started them because they believed in what they do. You may be passionate about your craft, your customers, or the community you serve, but when it comes to marketing, you might feel uncertain, overwhelmed, or even a little skeptical about what actually works.

Here's the truth: marketing isn't about flashy ads, complicated funnels, or massive budgets. It's about communication—clear, consistent, and confident communication. When you can articulate who you are, what you offer, and why it matters, everything else begins to fall into place. That's the foundation this book is built upon.

In the current attention economy, marketing is no longer a luxury; it's a necessity. But for many small and growing businesses, marketing feels like a moving target. There's pressure to post on social media, write blogs, create videos, run ads, and somehow keep up with the pace of change. It's easy to feel like you're lagging behind before ever taking the first step. This book is designed to change that. We wrote this book to give you the clarity

and confidence to take charge of your marketing and communications, no matter your background or budget.

Throughout these pages, you'll learn how to build a strong brand identity, write your story with purpose, and communicate in a way that connects with the people you want to reach most. You'll discover how to create relevant content that builds trust, how to use platforms like LinkedIn and podcasts strategically, and how to communicate better with colleagues. You'll see that good marketing isn't about doing everything but, rather, it's about doing the *right* things with intention and focus.

If you're a small business owner handling your own marketing, you'll find practical, actionable steps you can implement right away. And if you're an executive or marketing professional working with limited resources, this book will help you maximize your efforts, sharpen your message, and make informed decisions when working with outside partners. In short, this book is written for real-world businesses, the kind that run on passion, grit, and determination.

The strategies you'll find here are not built for theory; they're built for results! You'll learn how to identify your unique voice and use it to create a connection. You'll see how content marketing works as an engine for growth, even when resources are tight. You'll understand the importance of storytelling, because people don't just buy products or services; they buy into stories and relationships. You'll also learn how to navigate modern commu-

nication channels with confidence, from social media to podcasts to everyday workplace conversations.

But beyond the tactics, there's a deeper message we want you to take from this book: **Marketing isn't something you have to master overnight. It's something you grow into, one clear message at a time.** Each chapter builds on the next, helping you strengthen the way you communicate—first with yourself and your team, and then with your audience. When you communicate clearly, you build trust. When you communicate consistently, you build momentum. And when you communicate confidently, you build opportunity.

Marketing and communication are bridges, not barriers. They connect you with the people who need what you offer most. They help you turn ideas into impact, visibility into credibility, and effort into results. Whether you're writing your brand story, crafting social media content, or exploring the power of thought leadership, you'll see that the most effective marketing doesn't shout—it resonates.

As you move through this book, we encourage you to take notes along the margins, highlight insights that make an impact, and apply what you learn right away. Don't wait until you feel "ready," because clarity often comes *through* action. Every post, every conversation, and every piece of content you create helps you get better. The more you practice communicating your value, the more confident and effective you become.

By the time you finish, you should feel empowered, not by the idea of doing *more* marketing, but by the under-

standing that you can do it *smarter.* You'll have the tools, structure, and perspective to elevate your business with purpose and precision.

No matter the size of your business or the budget you're working with, success starts with communication. When you can tell your story clearly, connect with your audience authentically, and lead with confidence, your marketing begins to work for you—not against you.

So, take a breath. You don't need to have all the answers yet. This book will guide you step by step, from defining your brand identity to building thought leadership that positions you as an authority in your space. By the end, you'll understand not only how to market your business, but how to *communicate its value* in a way that drives growth, builds trust, and sets you apart.

Let's get started.

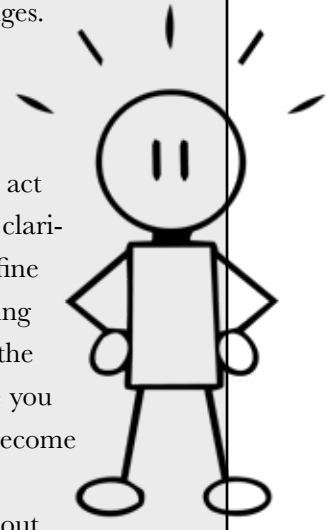
RICH'S NOTE

Over the past two decades, I've had the privilege of working for and with organizations of every size—from large international brands to small, purpose-driven local businesses. While their budgets, audiences, and resources varied, one truth remained constant: the most successful organizations are the ones that know how to communicate their value clearly.

I've seen small business owners outpace larger competitors simply because they understood how to connect

authentically with their audience. I've also seen companies with big marketing teams struggle because their message was inconsistent or unclear. That understanding helped inspire this work. The purpose of writing this book, for you, is to close the gap between *effort* and *effectiveness*.

My goal is to help you build the confidence and capability to take ownership of your marketing. You don't need a million-dollar budget to make a meaningful impact; you just need the right mindset, message, and method. The tools and frameworks in this book come from real-world experience; strategies tested in boardrooms, brainstorms, and day-to-day business challenges.



As you go through the chapters, approach them not as a checklist, but as a roadmap. Each lesson is designed to help you think strategically, act intentionally, and communicate with clarity. Whether you're just starting to define your brand identity or refining an existing strategy, this book will help you bridge the gap between where you are and where you want your business to be—so you can become the *Talk of the Town*.

Remember: marketing is not about perfection; it's about progress. Every small step you take to strengthen your message brings you closer to the growth you're capable of achieving.

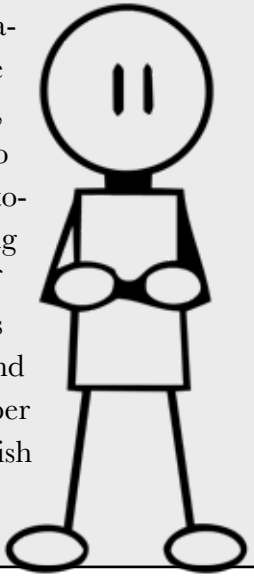
Thanks and Be Excellent!

—**Rich**

MICHAEL'S NOTE

I fell into digital marketing almost by accident in 2018. My sole intention was to keep my content-writing career going after a layoff, and marketing sounded fine to me!

As with anything new you learn, I started understanding digital marketing's big picture before getting down into the nuts and bolts. As the months became years and I got deeper into the industry, I noticed a basic, high-level thread running through all of it: marketing is about communication. The topic generation, the content calendars, the SEO—that isn't actually what matters. It's what you say to customers, and how you say it. That's it.



I tell that story to emphasize the major theme we wove throughout these chapters, which is that everything you do in marketing should move you toward effectively communicating with your audience. If some of the subjects we discuss in this book seem overwhelming and confusing at first, just remember that all you're trying to accomplish is to help your customers understand you.

How you go about that is where you get creative. It's the way you project your brand identity. It's how you plan your content marketing. It's what you say on your podcast. Take what we explain in these pages and apply it to your business. No one knows it better than you. As you progress through the chapters, I believe you'll realize you know more about marketing your services than you thought.

Remember: your business is truly unique. It's the only one like it. Use *Talk of the Town* to show that to people.

—**Michael**

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

BECAUSE EVERY BUSINESS OWNER APPROACHES GROWTH A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY

What you're holding is a collection of practical strategies, real-world observations, and proven approaches drawn from working with businesses right here in our community. These are ideas you can put into motion—quickly, simply, and with purpose.

Here are a few ways to get the most out of it:

START AT THE BEGINNING AND MOVE STRAIGHT THROUGH

If you enjoy structure, begin at page one and work your way forward.

Each section builds on the last, guiding you step by step through the process of becoming more visible, more recognizable, and more talked about in your local market. Taken together, it forms a clear path—one that brings your message, your presence, and your reputation into sharper focus.

FLIP THROUGH AND FOLLOW WHAT STANDS OUT

Sometimes the best place to start is wherever your attention lands.

As you turn the pages, you may find a topic that connects immediately—something that speaks directly to your business or a challenge you're working through right now. Go there. Spend time with it. Put it into practice.

Progress often begins with one idea, applied well.

PUT THE IDEAS TO WORK AND KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

This book is built for action. As you read, you'll come across strategies you can begin using right away. Try them. Adapt them. Make them your own. The more you engage with the material, the more momentum you'll create.

And when you're ready to go further, reach out.

Rich and Michael work with business owners every day to bring these ideas to life—refining them, strengthening them, and helping turn them into real, measurable growth.

Whether you're looking for clarity, direction, or hands-on support, they're here to help you take the next step.

The opportunity is right in front of you.

Let's make you the one people are talking about.

PROLOGUE

THE FACE OF NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Why did we write *Talk of the Town* for small-business owners specifically in Northeastern Pennsylvania?

It isn't just because we live and work here. We also know a little something about the character of our shared region. Understanding the business and economic landscape of any area requires knowing its past. Why do certain types of businesses flourish over others in this city or that county?

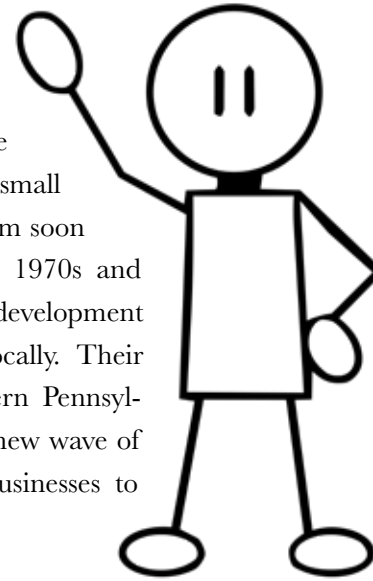
In the case of Northeastern Pennsylvania businesses, let's break down what we're talking about, from large to small:

- About 1.2 million small businesses are located in Pennsylvania, accounting for 99.6% of all businesses in the state.
- The community- and economic-development agency NEPA Alliance reports that the seven counties it serves—Luzerne, Lackawanna, Monroe, Schuylkill, Wayne, Carbon, and Pike—are home to approximately 22,079 businesses in total.
- Of those, 16,029—or 72.6%—employ fewer than 10 people.

So, why do small businesses, as opposed to corporations, make up the overwhelming majority of our economy here in NEPA? It has to do with how our region pulled itself out of the financial straits it was in following the end of the anthracite industry as we knew it.

By the late 1950s, coal-as-a-career in our area had been dying for decades. Oil and natural gas started replacing coal as cheaper sources of home heating. On top of that, coal was getting harder to find underground. This forced mining companies to take more risks, such as digging just under the riverbed in Jenkins Township's River Slope Mine, near Pittston.

That decision, of course, led to the Knox Mine Disaster of 1959, in which the Susquehanna River broke through the mine ceiling and killed 12 miners. That event effectively sealed the fate of any further anthracite mining in the region.



Mining jobs decreased dramatically through the 1960s and 1970s, and the small businesses that supported them soon followed. It wasn't until the 1970s and 1980s that small-business-development centers started appearing locally. Their goal was to help Northeastern Pennsylvania citizens kick off an all-new wave of modern, professional-level businesses to

serve a population still emerging from its tough, coal-dusted past.

There was no shortage of entrepreneurial spirit then, and the tradition clearly continues today with NEPA's 16,029 small businesses. That number highlights the sheer industriousness and grit of our former coal region. If you're a small-business owner, you are one of those 16,029 people who chose to see what they could make with nothing but their wits, to value being their own bosses over receiving guaranteed paychecks.

Think of how few generations actually stand between us and our coal-miner ancestors in Northeastern Pennsylvania. While they used pickaxes and shovels to do their jobs, you might use a computer and smartphone to run your business. The tools may have changed, but we're still the same character. Northeastern Pennsylvania still works hard because that's the only way we've ever succeeded before.

It's you we want to help with *Talk of the Town*. We're NEPA-based small-business owners just like you, and we know the work it takes to pull yourself up and grow an enterprise from nothing.

We also understand you may have spent years perfecting your craft so you could offer it professionally. That likely did not leave a lot of time to study marketing and communications at the same time, even if you knew you needed it to expand.

That's why we're here. We believe in Northeastern Pennsylvania. We know you carry the same hard-working identity that rebuilt this area after coal had faded.

If that's what you're about, too, let us help you grow.

Northeastern Pennsylvania, this book is for you.

SOURCES

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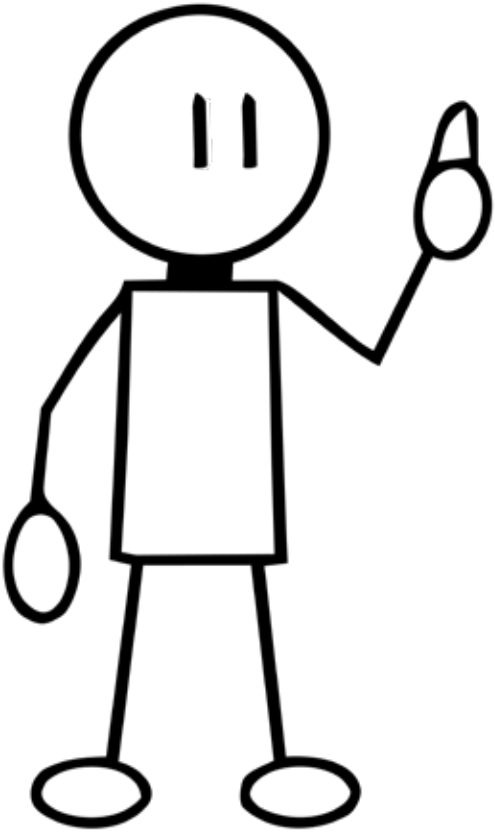


TALK OF THE TOWN

BRAND IDENTITY

YOUR GATEWAY TO SUCCESS IN THE BUSINESS WORLD

To stay competitive in today's business world, it's paramount to establish a strong brand identity. This is true for entrepreneurs, business owners, and business leaders alike. A well-defined brand not only sets you apart from the competition – it directly influences how quickly people trust you, choose you, and advocate for you.

Whether you are a startup founder, a seasoned business owner, or an aspiring entrepreneur, crafting a compelling brand identity can unlock new opportunities, accelerate decision-making from your audience, and build lasting, profitable relationships.

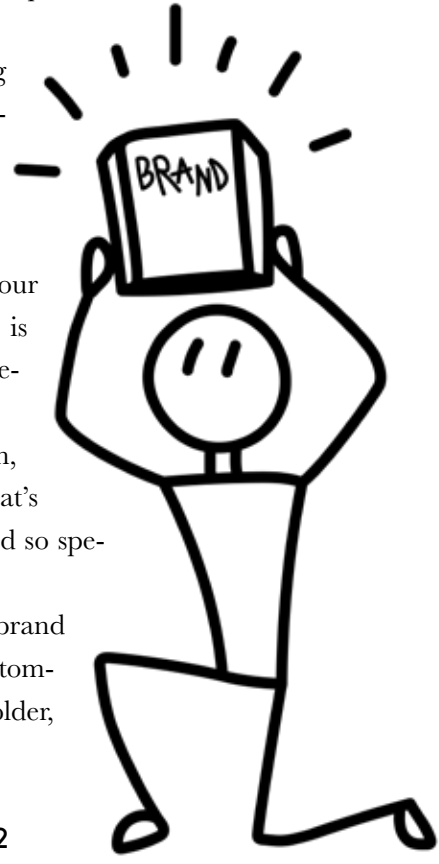
THE POWER OF BRAND IDENTITY

Before we delve into the importance of brand identity, let's understand what it encompasses. Your brand identity is the combination of your business's values, mission, personality, and visual elements such as logos, colors, and design. For individuals, it translates into personal brand-

ing – the way you present yourself (in real life and online), your expertise, and your values to the world.

To fully appreciate the power of brand identity, try this little exercise. Right now, think about one of your go-to brands. This could be your favorite clothing, cosmetic, snack, beverage, or household brand. Picture one brand that is your go-to purchase, no matter what sale or special deal is offered to sway your decision.

Let's take the exercise a step further. Think about what makes this brand so special – to you. There's a specific reason that brand is your top choice. What is it?



Perhaps it's a strong emotional connection or personal bond. Maybe you think no other brands can match the quality. Maybe the brand's values match your own. Or maybe the brand is endorsed by your favorite celebrity.

Whatever the reason, it's important to you and that's what makes your go-to brand so special.

And just as your go-to brand is meaningful to you as a customer, as an executive stakeholder,

you should want customers to have the same relationship with the brand you own or represent.

Listed below are a few ways a strong identity can help your brand.

DIFFERENTIATION

In a crowded marketplace, having a distinct brand identity is critical for standing out. Consumers and potential partners are more likely to engage – and ultimately do business – with a brand that speaks to them on a personal level. By creating a compelling brand identity, you can showcase what makes you unique and memorable.

TRUST AND CREDIBILITY

A strong brand identity fosters trust and credibility among your audience. When people associate your brand with positive experiences, quality products, and valuable expertise, they are more likely to choose your services or products – often with less hesitation and less price sensitivity.

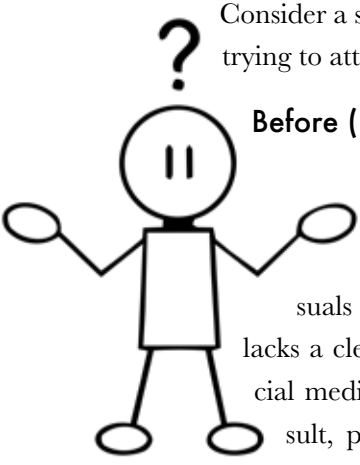
LOYALTY AND ADVOCACY

Building a recognizable brand identity cultivates a loyal customer base and advocates who promote your brand organically. Satisfied customers are more likely to refer your business to others, significantly impacting your growth.

CONSISTENCY

A well-defined brand identity ensures consistency across all touchpoints. This includes your social media channels, websites, and marketing collateral. Consistency builds familiarity, which shortens the path to trust and makes your brand easier to recognize, remember, and choose.

A SIMPLE EXAMPLE: **FROM UNCLEAR TO DEFINED**



Consider a small marketing consulting firm trying to attract new clients.

Before (Unclear Brand)

Their messaging is broad and generic, stating "We help businesses grow." Their visuals are inconsistent, their website lacks a clear point of view, and their social media content is sporadic. As a result, potential clients don't fully understand what makes them different, and they struggle to convert interest into actual business.

After (Defined Brand)

They refine their brand identity to focus specifically on helping service-based businesses generate leads through strategic content marketing. They improve their messaging for clarity and consistency, and their visuals align

across social platforms. Their content speaks directly to their ideal client's challenges and goals.

Now, instead of trying to appeal to everyone, they attract the right clients, those who already see the value in their expertise. Conversations become more productive, trust is built faster, and conversions increase.

The difference isn't just aesthetic—it's strategic. A clear brand identity doesn't just make you look better; it helps you win business!

EXERCISE

Use this exercise to move from abstract ideas to practical clarity:

1) If your brand were a person, describe how they'd show up to work every day? Describe their appearance and how they'd behave in the office.

2) How would you describe the personality of your business? For example, you might describe your business as: friendly, professional, innovative, creative, reliable, trustworthy, bold, caring, sophisticated, fun, expert, approachable, adventurous, etc.

3) A clear voice helps customers recognize and trust you. How would you describe your brand's voice? It might be friendly & conversational, educational & expert, inspirational & motivational, direct & no-nonsense, empathetic & understanding, etc.

BRAND AWARENESS AND BRAND EQUITY

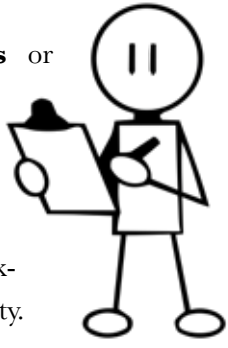
Brand awareness and brand equity go hand in hand and are essential components of a strong brand identity. Let's explore how they intertwine to influence the perception of your brand.

BRAND AWARENESS

Brand awareness refers to how familiar your target audience is with your brand. It measures the extent to which people recognize and recall your brand when presented with your products, services, or content. Brand awareness is critical in the initial stages of building a brand as it helps draw attention to your business and attracts potential customers.

Tips to Enhance Brand Awareness:

- **Utilize social media** strategically. You can do this by showing up consistently, engaging directly with your audience, and sharing valuable content that solves real problems.
- **Collaborate with influencers** or industry experts to expand your reach and tap into new audiences.
- **Participate in industry events**, conferences, and networking opportunities to increase visibility.



BRAND EQUITY

Brand equity, on the other hand, represents the intangible value your brand holds in the eyes of consumers. It reflects how much people value, trust, and are willing to choose your brand – often even over lower-cost alternatives. Building brand equity is a long-term process that stems from consistently delivering exceptional products or services and meeting or exceeding customer expectations.

Tips to Build Brand Equity:

- **Deliver exceptional customer experiences** to foster positive word-of-mouth and repeat business.
- **Stay true to your brand's values** and brand promise, consistently reinforcing them through all communication channels.
- **Invest in branding efforts** that create an emotional connection with your target audience.

ESTABLISHING A PERSONAL BRAND FOR CAREER GROWTH

While entrepreneurs and business owners focus on building their company's brand, business leaders can also benefit significantly from personal branding. A strong personal brand can help executives elevate their careers and open doors to new opportunities.

Use the following items as your starting point**:**

DEFINE YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION

Understand your strengths, expertise, and unique selling points. Craft a clear and concise value proposition that showcases the value you bring to the table.

CONTENT MARKETING

Share your insights and knowledge through thought leadership content, such as articles, blogs, and videos. This positions you as an industry expert and builds credibility.

NETWORKING

Engage in both online and offline networking to connect with peers, industry influencers, and potential employers. Attend conferences, join professional organizations, and actively participate in relevant discussions.

ONLINE PRESENCE

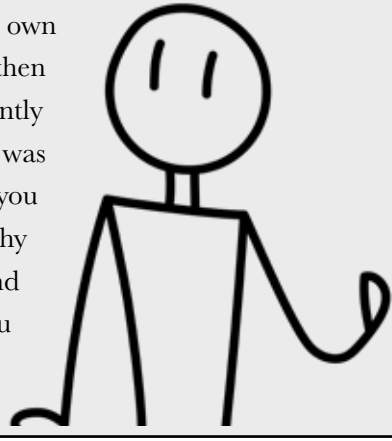
Ensure that your online presence is consistent with your personal brand. Use LinkedIn, personal websites, and social media to showcase your expertise and accomplishments.

One story Rich likes to tell is about the first time he attended Podfest Multimedia Expo. While he'd gotten to know a few podcasters and creators from the community through some of the virtual events, he was attending the conference alone and without any pre-existing real-life

relationships. For his first official session of the conference, he decided to attend a panel discussion on video streaming. One of the panelists (Shelly Nathan - Owner, Shelly Saves the Day) was a content creator he'd become acquainted with online. The room was filling up and Rich quietly found an empty seat near the back of the room. The discussion hadn't officially started yet, and the panelists were casually chatting on stage. To his surprise, Shelly called out from the stage something along the lines of, "I see Rich Perry in the back of the room, Hi Rich!"

After the panel was over, he had the opportunity to greet her personally. He asked how she was able to pick him out from the crowded room of a few hundred attendees. She stated that she immediately recognized him from the beige fedora he was wearing, which, at the time, matched his online profile photos.

This story isn't about a specific article of clothing. It's about establishing your own brand identity and then showing up consistently every day. For Rich, it was a good reminder that you don't have to be flashy to be memorable and make an impact. You just have to be true to yourself.



WRAP-UP & REVIEW

In conclusion, building a strong brand identity is a powerful tool for professional growth and success. By crafting a unique brand that resonates with your target audience, you can differentiate yourself from the competition, foster trust and credibility, and cultivate a loyal customer base. Additionally, business leaders can leverage personal branding to propel their careers to new heights.

Remember that brand awareness and brand equity work together to enhance the perception of your brand and strengthen your market position. Consistently delivering on your brand promise and engaging in effective branding strategies will create a lasting impact, enabling you to achieve your career and business objectives with confidence. When done well, your brand identity becomes a filter, attracting the right opportunities while naturally repelling the wrong ones. Embrace the power of brand identity, and the rewards will undoubtedly follow.

WRITING YOUR BRAND STORY

We're going to continue with branding in this chapter by discussing one vital marketing task you can take on right now if you haven't already: creating and disseminating your business's brand story.

Your brand story is the narrative of your business's reason for existing.

And why does that matter?

Because no matter what industry you're in or what you do, you must know this: you have competition. If you're a business owner here in Northeastern Pennsylvania, you're competing with probably dozens of others for the same local customer base. For context, think of the amount of pizzerias in Luzerne and Lackawanna counties alone!

If you offer the same services, products, or experiences as everyone else, why should customers choose you? What's so special about you?

Your brand story is the place to tell your audience exactly what is so special about you, the place to share the "why" behind your business. And why is that a good idea?

Because people who value what you value will be much more willing to do business with you.

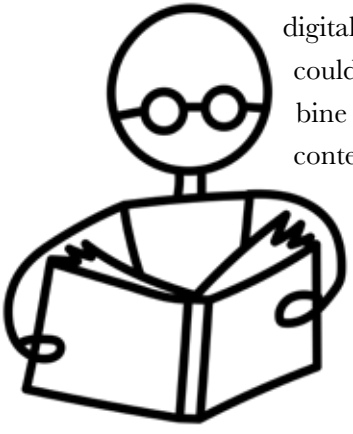
WHAT IS A BRAND STORY?

So, what exactly is a brand story, and what does it look like?

Your brand story is the expression of your organization's mission, values, culture, and ways of working. It clearly tells your ideal customers who you are, why you're here, and how you're different from your competitors.

Michael became interested in small-business brand marketing after spending years in the agency world, where the focus was more on straightforward SEO and content writing instead of helping clients understand their unique positions in their industries.

Over time and a lot of thought, Michael started feeling there was something beyond simply helping small businesses sell their services. What if business owners could market not just what they did, but who they were and what motivated them? What if a local digital marketer and professional writer could help small-business owners combine all that into robust new website content to reach the right audiences?

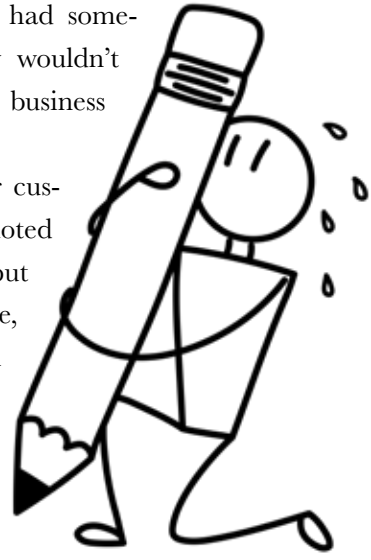


For Michael, this was the entrance of the brand story into his career.

Think of your brand story as a three-dimensional website "About" page. You've surely seen plenty of company "About" pages over the years. A common problem with many of them is that they often don't fulfill their purpose. How many "About" pages have you seen that simply restate what the company does?

That isn't what brand stories are for. Save showcasing your offerings for your website's service pages or the literature you hand out at trade shows.

Your brand story is your "why." We firmly believe that anyone who puts themselves through the stresses of forming a business does so because they believe in something. They thought they had something unique to offer, or they wouldn't have done it. You don't form a business by accident.



Your brand story tells your customers why you're here. As noted in the first chapter, when you put your company values out there, you'll attract customers who feel the same way.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO WRITE YOUR BRAND STORY?

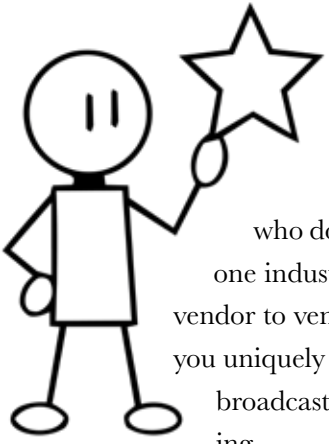
When it comes to writing your brand story, you don't need to be a particularly strong writer. You could work in law

or healthcare or software development and have nothing to do with writing, but as long as you can express your values, what you're passionate about, you can write your brand story.

Right?

Well, here's some quick data from our experiences helping business owners to write their brand stories: more than two-thirds of the CEOs/owners we've worked with have struggled to express themselves on the personal level.

They could talk about their services all day, but when it came to revealing why they started their businesses, they were stumped.



With brand stories, self-revelation is the most important part! Remember, you're trying to distinguish yourself from everyone else who does what you do. Services within one industry can only vary so much from vendor to vendor. The difference lies in what you uniquely bring to your business and then broadcasting that through brand messaging.

Here's what was especially interesting about those two-thirds: each of those individuals had one of just two problems. They either felt too vulnerable discussing their personal values, or they believed they were so close to their own businesses that they couldn't accurately brand themselves.

It was fine that most of these business owners weren't writers; Michael's expertise could stand in for them at that point. But their stories could come from no one but them.

Take one of Michael's earliest brand-story clients, a NEPA-based professional offering in-person, hands-on consulting services. This was back when Michael offered the service for free to grant himself some frontline experience.

The client confessed to Michael that they knew they needed to break into personal branding to set their business apart from others in their space but had struggled so far. They found it uncomfortable to share parts of themselves and their life experiences in a professional setting. By earning the client's trust, actively listening, and asking deep-diving follow-up questions, Michael helped the client find the brand story that already existed but was simply hidden.

That professional is out there right now, using their personal experiences to show the world their passion for their work. Sharing values. Making human connections. Earning new work on that basis.

That's the power of branding. Business success is as much about why you're here as what you actually do.

As in this real-life example, the marketing writer's main challenges are drawing the stories out of those business owners and then presenting that material in engaging ways for their online audiences to consume.

To write your brand story, you have to be willing to do two things:

1) **Write**, or at least work, with a professional writer.

2) **Discuss** your beliefs and values as a business owner.

But can you be vulnerable enough to do it?

WHAT DOES YOUR BRAND STORY LOOK LIKE?

Say you've accomplished the above: you've thought through your personal approach to business and have the writing part figured out.

What should your brand story look like?

There is no singular way to write something like that, and it's simply because everyone has a unique story and way of expressing themselves. In our experiences collaborating with business owners, we've noticed no two stories seem the same, even though each was intended to accomplish the same objective.

EXERCISE

While it's true there's no perfect formula for a brand story, the following are the elements that should be included. See if you can come up with what you would say about your business for each point below:

- ☐ Your mission and values as a business owner
- ☐ Why you believe in those ideals
- ☐ Some personal history if it serves the narrative
- ☐ Why you do what you do

- What kinds of experiences you want your customers to have with you
- Your promise to your customers about what your business really is

There's so much room for creativity with a brand story, so many angles you could take to convey your ideas. There's no limit on how much you should write or where that content should appear. Put it on your website, reference it on social media and in emails, and use it in your content marketing.

This is exactly what Michael's first brand-story client did. The content Michael produced based on their conversations formed the basis of that client's long-term content-marketing strategy. It's an approach that secures work for the client years later.

For you, the business owner, it can be enjoyable to define your business identity in this way and then market that to the public as your great differentiator.

WRAP-UP & REVIEW

In this chapter, we learned why brand stories are important, what they are, how you should prepare your brand story, and, finally, what your brand story can look like.

It takes time and work to get it right, but knowing your own branding front to back can be the deciding factor that helps you

raise your business from good to great, from obscure to distinct.

Of course, knowing your brand story is one thing. Projecting it into the world is another.

For that, you'll have to turn your attention to one of the most powerful business-growth tools you have in your back pocket: content marketing.

WHY YOU NEED CONTENT MARKETING

As a business owner or head of any money-making organization, there's really no end to the number of things you have to think about daily: meeting with clients and customers, returning calls, managing your accounting, taking inventory, ordering supplies, sending invoices, and collaborating with staff.

What about marketing your business online, though? Specifically, marketing your business using strategic, targeted content?

Through Michael's experience as a search engine optimization (SEO) content marketer, he's learned that many small-business owners know they should be producing content regularly but don't always understand why, or how to be strategic about it.

In this chapter, we'll explain why content marketing matters in growing your business's subject-matter authority among your audience and why having that authority matters in the first place.

Don't worry if you know nothing about SEO or creating digital content. We'll cover all the basics.

Let us say this, then, as a lead-in to what you're about to read: your business absolutely needs content marketing if you want to attract a larger online audience, show your topical knowledge in the digital space, earn customer trust, and sell to more people.

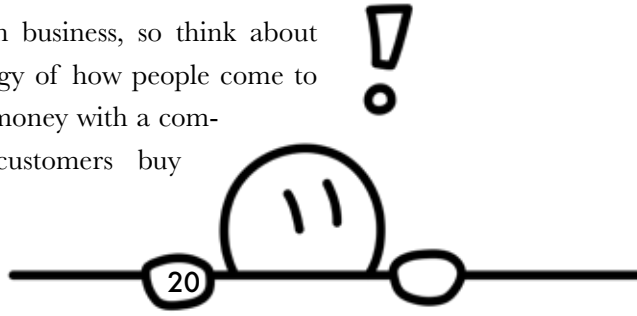
THE PURPOSE OF CONTENT MARKETING

In the digital space, content marketing involves creating and distributing industry information to your target audiences online. It's meant to showcase your expertise on a particular subject so your ideal customers begin viewing you as someone trustworthy in your space.

Here's an example of how content marketing works in practice. You write a post on your company's blog. The post earns some traffic through search results on Google, but you're not done yet. You also promote and distribute the post to your email subscribers list and on social media, hoping to get even more traffic to it. The point of it all is to show relevant audiences that you know your industry well enough to earn their business when they need you.

But how does free industry information translate into profits?

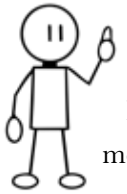
You're in business, so think about the psychology of how people come to spend their money with a company. Do customers buy



from businesses they know nothing about? Do they fork over cash to businesses they don't like or trust?

No and no. Prospective customers must know what's in it for them if they do business with you. They want to know in advance that they'll receive a quality service or product in return. Customer trust matters across the board, too, whether you run an e-commerce store, a brick-and-mortar law firm, or an advertising agency.

Through his own 1900 Digital Marketing, Michael has worked with numerous Wilkes-Barre/Scranton-area clients who say things like, "I know I bring something unique to my industry, and I feel like I'd get a better selection of work if more people knew about me."



That's solid logic, and to those clients, Michael always advises the same thing: *the way to increase your brand recognition is by communicating through content marketing of one form or another*. Otherwise, how would your potential clients know what they're getting into with you?

Content marketing works more simply than you might think. It's through your content—blog posts, infographics, emails, videos, podcasts, social media posts, white papers, and case studies—that potential customers get to know your business and the values that matter to you as the owner. They see your industry expertise and, over time, come to regard you as an authority in your field.

Who wouldn't be willing to spend money with a subject-matter expert, particularly when expertise makes the difference among competitors?

Your content marketing is your vehicle for talking directly to those prospective and existing customers to achieve whatever your aim might be for them. For potential buyers still on the fence, your content shows how your offerings differ from the competition. Or, for existing customers, your content might be more of a branding piece designed to keep your business top of mind. It's all meant to nudge people along until they're ready to buy from you, for the first time or again.

That's the theory of it all. It's how content marketing works in the ideal situation. Now, you may still require some more concrete details on content marketing before you're sold on it for your digital-marketing strategy. Let's go through a hypothetical use case so we can examine some content marketing specifics.

CONTENT MARKETING USE CASE: **LOCATION PAGE**

For this basic example, let's assume the position of one of Michael's clients here in Northeastern Pennsylvania's Wyoming Valley. Say this small-business owner has a brick-and-mortar location in Wilkes-Barre but of course wants the business's website to be found by people in Scranton, Nanticoke, and Berwick, too.

The first, most fundamental tactic Michael recommends to those types of clients is the *website location page*. This is a single page on your website targeted to a specific city or region. Think of a location page as a summary of

your entire business and its offerings condensed onto one page that shows residents of the target geographic area that you care about and want to serve them.

Now, a location page that actually shows up in the online search results takes more than just some keyword-targeting of "X service in Scranton." You could maybe succeed like that in 2010, but to rank well on Google today, your content needs to be genuinely useful and relevant.

To capture Scranton-area SEO traffic:

- **Mention on your page** that you proudly work with clients not only from Scranton, but from Dunmore, Taylor, Throop, and Dickson City.
- If people can drive to your location, **embed a Google Map of your address** so users can click on it to get navigation directions.
- **Write directions in numbered steps** right below that for those who want an overview of how easy it is to get to you.
- **Mention landmarks people would recognize**, such as Interstate 81 or Wilkes-Barre Public Square.

All this content firmly establishes you as someone who doesn't just want Scranton clients and customers, but who cares about helping Scranton residents understand and communicate with you.

When people find that you're a trustworthy provider of what they need, and that you do it in a city near them, they are much more likely to do business with you.

This example of the location page illustrates why your online reputation is so important. That kind of increased local attention and resulting business growth is exactly what content marketing can help you achieve.

WRAP-UP & REVIEW

In this chapter, you learned that the purpose of content marketing is to provide value to potential customers so they trust you and ultimately want to buy from you. You also reviewed a content-marketing use case in which a well-crafted location page shows your audience you're genuinely invested in our area.

If any of this seems a little confusing, don't worry! These are not necessarily the simplest concepts to grasp, particularly if you're more of a chief executive than a dig-ital marketer.

But we're here to help! Next up, we'll learn how to figure out what to write about in the irst place.

FINDING CONTENT TOPICS

Identifying the topics you'll write about in your content marketing requires balancing what you want to say with what your audience wants to hear.

We know from the previous chapter that content marketing sets your business apart from your competitors by communicating what you know and believe to the people you're trying to reach. Since that's the case, you can start finding topics to write about by prioritizing your audience's interests above all else.

What would your ideal clients like to find out about? What will hold their attention? How can you help them solve a problem related to your industry? How can you encourage them to trust you?

In this chapter, we'll look at three methods of identifying topics to incorporate in your business's content marketing.

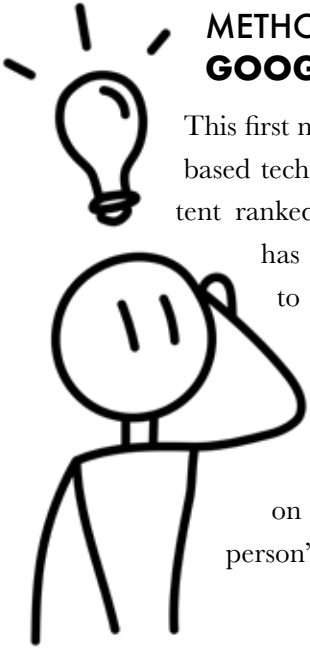
Michael feels he brings a unique perspective to topic generation considering his own professional journey in this area. When he was just starting out, the most he ever did to find a content topic was to look up trending ques-

tions in one of the many data-aggregating SEO tools out there and then address one of those through long-form blog content.

At that time, Michael never considered that more research might have told him whether real people were actually interested in his chosen questions, and if they were, how local competitors were covering that topic themselves.

If anything, learn from Michael's early-career mistakes by always keeping real humans at the center of your topic generation. What subjects would your ideal clients want to learn about, and how can you be the one to help them best?

Remember this as we review three topic-generation approaches below.



METHOD #1: **ANALYZE GOOGLE**

This first method of topic research is an SEO-based technique you can use to get your content ranked on Google. If your organization has a website, and you want customers to find you, looking through Google search results is one of the primary ways they're going to do that.

We could write an entire book on the finer workings of ranking on Google, but we'll give you the layperson's version. Google ranks content on

its results pages in response to the queries users search on the platform.

Example

1) You search for "estate planning lawyer in Wilkes-Barre."

2) Google might show an AI overview first, followed by local map results, and then the web pages of Wilkes-Barre lawyers and probably some paid ads.

3) You select the result that's the most relevant to your intention.

We know Google's one job here is to help you find the result that's exactly what you want to see based on your search query. If we build on that logic, we discover we can use Google searches like this one to find content topics relevant to certain industries!

Think of your industry. Let's say you yourself are an estate-planning lawyer who wants to start a blog on your website. What do you write about? You can get ideas by asking Google a question related to your industry.

EXERCISE

- Search "what should go in a will" on Google.
- The content you see is what Google thinks is relevant to your search. Therefore, you now know that's a topic your audience might care about.

- Localize your content to Wilkes-Barre and the wider region so it gets found by people who could become your clients. You can do this by tailoring your content to speak about your specific area.

Keep searching Google for concepts and questions you're aware of in your local estate-planning industry to see content topics Google already considers valuable. It's an easy and no-cost method of identifying interesting subjects for your content marketing campaign.

METHOD #2: **STUDY FORUMS**

This second method of finding content topics to write about is similar to the first one, but here, you have more of a direct line to what real people are saying on the Internet.

With this one, you can study online forums such as Reddit, Quora, Discord, Slack, and so many others to read what regular folks are discussing amongst one another related to your industry. These platforms are built on people asking questions of those who know more and getting long, detailed answers.

Take some time on the appropriate forums to familiarize yourself with your chosen area of interest. If you're still that lawyer from earlier, read estate-planning threads on Reddit.

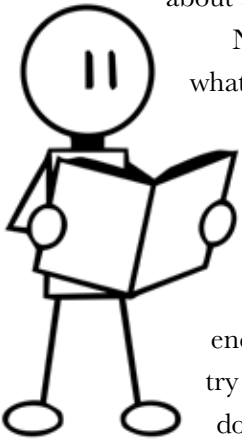
Pore over Quora questions or Slack channels. Take notes in a spreadsheet of what you find.

Once you've built up a decent repository of questions and topics, sort through them to find themes that you can evaluate and incorporate into your website's content strategy. And, of course, always be sure to cater to your local market here in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

METHOD #3: **READ INDUSTRY NEWS**

For this final method, you can check out the latest news stories in your industry to see what's trending among your local, national, or even international colleagues.

You may already know where to find this kind of news, but if you don't, a few quick Google searches can turn up reputable sources. Whether you're in law, construction, healthcare, pest control, or anything else, you can find trustworthy online news hubs in your industry in about 30 seconds.



Now, not every story will be relevant to what you want to talk about in a blog post, but you know your business better than anyone. Sift through what's out there and see if you can provide your own take on it for your Northeastern Pennsylvania audience. Sometimes, the effects of an industry event on the national level can trickle down to more local shops (general con-

tractors out there may remember the plywood price spikes during the initial phases of the COVID-19 pandemic).

The point is, you have rich opportunities here to draw inspiration from trending news and convert the subject into content for yourself.

MICHAEL'S TOPIC TEMPLATE

When collecting topic ideas using the above methods, Michael finds it useful to silo off his planned content ideas by type. And you can do the same! All it takes is a spreadsheet with a few tabs where you can document your content titles and anything else you want to organize about them, such as the intended publication date or target audience.

If you're that Northeastern Pennsylvania-based estate-planning lawyer, think about it like this:

- **Local Google results.** Write about your services and how you've helped the people of our region in the past.
- **Forums.** Address potential client pain points or the questions people have about working with someone in your industry.
- **Industry news.** Follow changes to Pennsylvania law that may affect how you work for your clients in the future.

Gradually incorporating topics from all these areas onto your website and social media channels shows the citizens of this area that you stay current in your industry and are best-suited to help them.

WRAP-UP & REVIEW

In this chapter, you learned three methods of identifying relevant topics for your business's content marketing strategy. By using Google search results, forum conversations, and industry news, you can figure out what your audience talks about and then incorporate that into your published content.

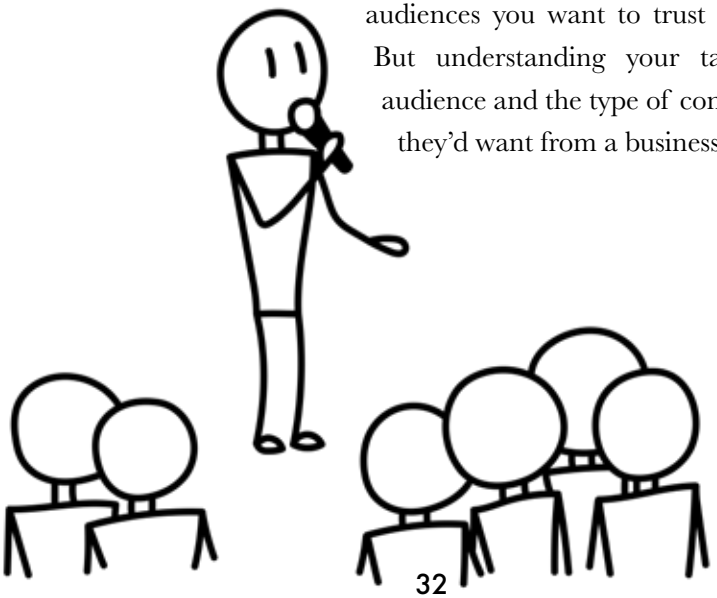
Sounds like you're ready to get writing, then!

Well, not yet. You'll first want to know how to adapt your writing style to different audiences. That's the subject of the next chapter.

WRITING FOR DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

Here's a common-sense lesson for every business owner, nonprofit executive, or any other organizational leader: tailor all your communications to your target audiences.

This is about engagement, capturing and holding your ideal customers' attention in just the right ways. If you use the same language in every context, you risk your message not fitting in with the audiences you want to trust you. But understanding your target audience and the type of content they'd want from a business like



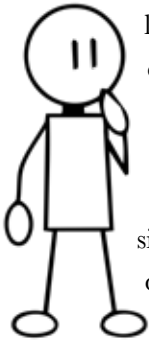
yours means those writing modifications should more or less make themselves.

In this chapter, we'll cover how you can adapt your writing to different audiences and platforms. If you can master this, you'll boost your chances of connecting with the people you want to reach.

WHY TAILORING YOUR WRITING STYLE MATTERS

As a fresh King's College graduate and relatively inexperienced professional writer in his early 20s, Michael approached every writing project at his first job simply by writing as beautifully as he could and moving on. He liked his writer's voice (and still does!) and assumed he should be employing it everywhere.

The problem was this: his employer produced educational content for students ranging from third grade to college, and people in those age ranges have vastly different levels of reading comprehension. He often struggled with writing for young audiences, as he personally preferred higher-level content and found it challenging to write for nine-year-olds.



It took a lot of constructive feedback from his supervisors before he was able to adapt his writing style to match the audiences. Consider what might have happened had he not done that. The company would have had college-aged content going to third graders. It

wouldn't have made sense. It certainly would not have delivered the message they needed to convey, and writers are nothing if they aren't communicating ideas clearly.

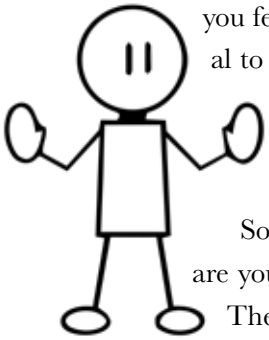
This is why your marketing writing has to fit its platform and intended audience. Content mismatches like Michael created in his early career serve no one. If you don't adapt to your audiences' needs, your marketing efforts are doomed to fail.

AUDIENCE EXAMPLES

Below are examples of three audiences you could market to with your content and how to adapt your writing to them.

BLOG POSTS

The blog-post audience are people who not only like to read but have the time to pore over a 3,000-word piece on a subject they enjoy. That doesn't mean every post you write should be the size of a novella, but where you feel you need to cover a lot of material to address an issue accurately, you can and should go the distance to write it all. That's the kind of content Google wants to show users.



So use the space you have! Blog posts are your place to go long where necessary. There's an audience out there for content of this length.

For example: Maybe you're a Back Mountain-based real estate agent who performed a case study on the statistics of your career over the last decade. You document the details at length in a blog post on your website. You show not only your total sales number, but your properties' days on the market compared to the MLS average, your staging prowess, and your digital-marketing acumen that moves homes faster than anyone else. Finally, market your final content piece as a deep-dive meant for serious buyers and sellers.

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Unlike blog posts, your business's social media posts should be quick snapshots of information that can generate interest using as few words as possible. With attention spans on social media platforms lasting mere seconds, you can't bore your potential clients and customers with paragraphs of dense content.

Your social media posts should be brief, informative, engaging, and fun where appropriate!

For example: You're still the Back Mountain real estate agent, but for social media, all you want to do is publish the quick figures of your case study in an infographic: sales numbers, average days on the market, and number of satisfied clients. And then stop. You can link to the full

case study on your site, but for social media, keep it bite-sized.

EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

Content for email newsletters should stylistically fall somewhere between blog posts and social media posts. In emails, you have a bit more time to communicate a message than with a social post, but you won't get away with blog-length content, either.

An email should say what you have to say, present necessary context, and direct users to take an action, such as clicking a button.

For example: In an email newsletter, present the findings from your case study on Back Mountain real estate with a little more detail than on social media. But here, link your results to the next step. Encourage potential clients to take action. "Looking to sell your Trucksville home? My listings spend an average of five days on the market. Inquire to get started!"

EXERCISE

Here's a fun exercise. Select any topic you'd like in your industry, and write about it in each of the three styles mentioned above. Get detailed and informational for a blog post, short and punchy for social media, and explanatory but quick for an email. See if you can switch between

the needs of each audience type while still conveying the same relevant information across platforms.

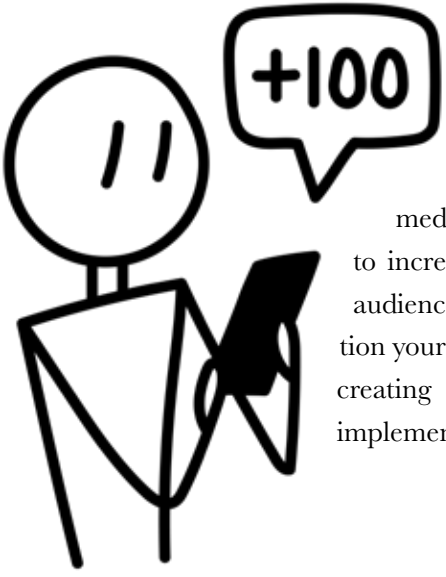
WRAP-UP & REVIEW

In this chapter, you learned why altering your writing for different audiences matters. You also reviewed examples of content platforms requiring different writing styles for the communication to be effective.

This has been a lesson in a mechanical aspect of content writing. In a later chapter, we'll apply the need to write to different audiences to a particular use case: writing for thought leadership.

STAYING RELEVANT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is one of the most powerful visibility engines available to small businesses across Northeastern Pennsylvania. When used strategically, it can help you consistently stay in front of your audience, expand your reach, and create meaningful brand recognition that drives inbound interest. But with all the changes happening to the most popular social media platforms, not to mention new ones popping up all the time, staying relevant can be a formidable task.



In the following section, you'll learn how to use social media more intentionally to increase visibility, strengthen audience connection, and position your brand for growth. From creating captivating content to implementing best practices for

engagement, here's how you can stay relevant and thrive on social media.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

To create content that resonates with your audience, you must first understand their preferences, interests, and needs. Conduct thorough research and utilize analytics tools to gain insights into their demographics, behaviors, and online habits. This knowledge will empower you to tailor your content specifically to their interests, ensuring maximum engagement and relevancy. When done well, this allows you to create content that doesn't just get seen—it gets remembered and acted on!

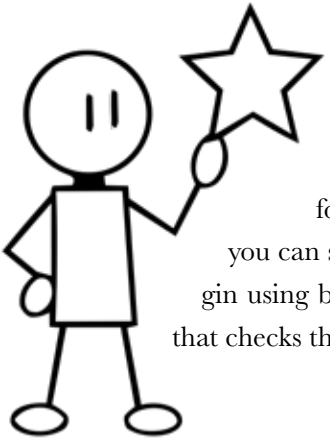
CRAFT CAPTIVATING CONTENT

In a noisy social media feed, attention is earned, not given. Your content must quickly signal value and relevance to your audience. Here are some ways your team can create captivating content.

VISUAL APPEAL

Utilize eye-catching images, videos, and graphics to make your posts visually appealing. High-quality visuals can grab attention and make your content stand out. If you don't have a graphic designer on staff, then consider hiring a freelancer who can help bring your brand's imagery to life.

If your business is in its early stages and you don't have the budget to hire a graphic designer, then you might want to consider two cost-effective options. The first is to contact a local university and request information about implementing an internship program. Building a strong internship program can be a way to acquire an extra set of hands to help manage key office tasks while providing valuable real-world experience for aspiring young professionals. However, it's important to remember that internships should be viewed as learning experiences. Interns shouldn't have the demands of a regular employee unless they are being compensated like real employees, such as offering a paid internship.



A second option would be to use an online design platform to create visually attractive images. Many online graphic design tools offer easy-to-use templates for novice creators. In most cases, you can set up an account for free and begin using basic services at no cost. One tool that checks these boxes is Canva.

STORYTELLING

Craft compelling narratives that resonate with your audience. Share personal stories, experiences, and anecdotes that create an emotional connection. People love stories, and they can help humanize your brand.

Creating an emotional connection can help strengthen the bond with your audience. It can be the difference between passive followers and active advocates who share, recommend, and champion your brand.

EXERCISE

Think about a relatable story or event that made an impact on you.

- How was it a **growing experience**?
- What did you **learn from it**?
- How can the lessons that you learned **be beneficial to others**?
- **Share your experience** through your social media channels!

VARIETY IS KEY

Mix up your content types to keep your audience engaged. Share educational posts, behind-the-scenes glimpses, customer testimonials, and industry insights. Experiment with different formats, such as infographics, quizzes, or live videos, to keep things interesting.

EMBRACE AUTHENTICITY

In the age of social media, authenticity is a currency. Be genuine, transparent, and true to your brand's values. Avoid over-promotion and focus on building meaningful relationships with your audience. Engage in conversations,

respond to comments, answer questions thoughtfully, and overall show appreciation for their support. Authenticity creates trust and loyalty, making your brand more relevant and relatable to the consumer.

A STRONG EXAMPLE: **AUTHENTICITY DRIVING VISIBILITY IN REAL TIME**

In September 2025, Rich lost his Facebook account of over 16 years. He lost access to his personal Facebook profile, as well as the business pages and groups tied to the account. This meant he was losing access to friends and valued business connections that he'd met over the years, thousands of photos and videos would be gone, and tens of thousands of posts and unique pieces of content would be erased forever.

Rather than wallowing in self-pity or starting a futile vendetta against the social media behemoth, he launched a "90-Day Rebound" to build back his presence on the platform. Every day, he shared a video documenting his journey of rebuilding and resilience. Some posts offered business-related tips and strategies, while others were more personal in nature, describing the challenges of having to start over from the beginning. It was a very humbling experience, and he found himself being more open and vulnerable with the content he was creating and how he was engaging with others.

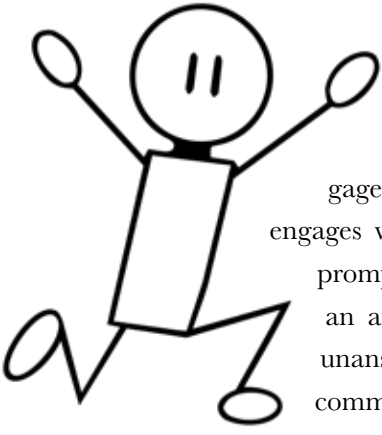
Follow Rich on Facebook: *@RichPerryCoach*

BE CONSISTENT

Consistency is key to maintaining relevance on social media. Develop a content calendar and establish a regular posting schedule. This will look different for every brand. For some, it might mean posting daily content across all social media channels, but for others, that idea could feel quite overwhelming. Determine a posting rhythm that is realistic and sustainable for your brand. Perhaps you'll decide to post 2-4 times per week on a primary platform, or you might scale to daily content across multiple channels. The key is not volume, it's reliability.

Consistency builds familiarity, which in turn builds trust. And brand trust is what drives inbound opportunities, whether that's inquiries, referrals, or sales conversions. When your audience knows they will hear from you regularly, your brand stays top-of-mind when they're ready to act.

BE ENGAGED



After sharing valuable content, monitor your channels for audience engagement. When your audience engages with your content, responding promptly should be a priority, not an afterthought. Having scores of unanswered questions or ignored comments in discussion threads can

reflect poorly on a business. Intentional or not, being unresponsive can give the impression that you don't care about the needs or concerns of your audience. And if you aren't listening (or responding), then those consumers will leave and turn to someone else who is more responsive to their needs and concerns.

MONITOR TRENDS AND ADAPT

Social media trends evolve rapidly, and it's essential to stay up to date. Monitor industry trends, hashtag challenges, and viral content. Embrace new platform features to stay relevant and demonstrate your adaptability. By staying in tune with the latest trends, you can leverage them to boost your engagement and connect with a wider audience. The goal isn't to chase every trend, but to selectively align with those that reinforce your message and increase your visibility with the right audience.

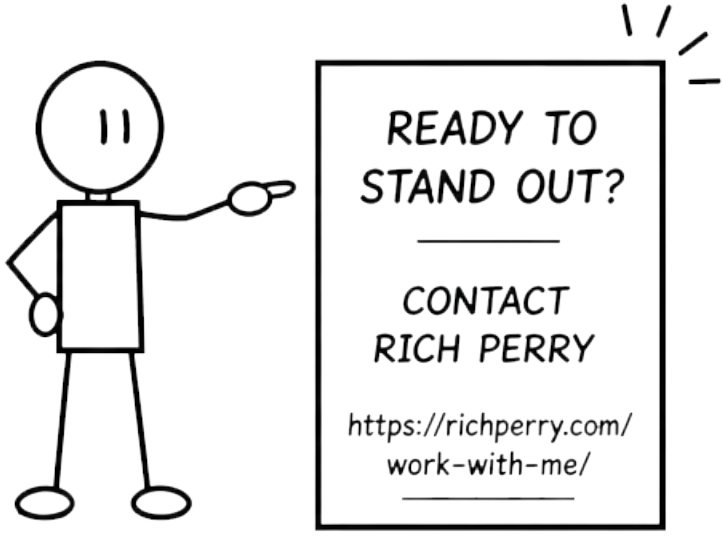
WRAP-UP & REVIEW

In an ever-expanding online world, social media is not just a communication channel – it's a long-term visibility engine that requires consistency, intention, and adaptability. By understanding your audience, crafting captivating content, and cultivating authentic connections, you can establish a strong social media presence that gains atten-

tion, fosters engagement, and propels your brand forward. Embrace the power of social media, and let your business thrive in the digital realm.

Keep in mind that social media isn't a set-it-and-forget-it thing. If you want to stay relevant, then realize it will be an ongoing process. But it's meant to be enjoyable and should never feel like just another task.

Stay current with new trends, experiment with different features, and refine social media activities to improve your overall strategy. With the right approach, social media becomes a compounding asset that increases your visibility, strengthens your reputation, and consistently attracts new opportunities over time.



WHY YOU NEED A LINKEDIN MARKETING STRATEGY

+ TIPS TO ENHANCE YOUR PROFILE

If you're like a lot of people, you were probably told by a mentor or colleague to get on LinkedIn and market yourself as a professional. The only problem is that the instruction likely stopped there. Many professionals we've met, especially young professionals, were never told why the platform is so valuable and, more importantly, how to make their profile stand out.

This chapter explores why LinkedIn is so valuable and why you need a LinkedIn marketing strategy—not just to be visible, but to position yourself for real opportunities such as career advancement, partnerships, speaking engagements, and client acquisition. You'll also get coaching tips to enhance your profile!

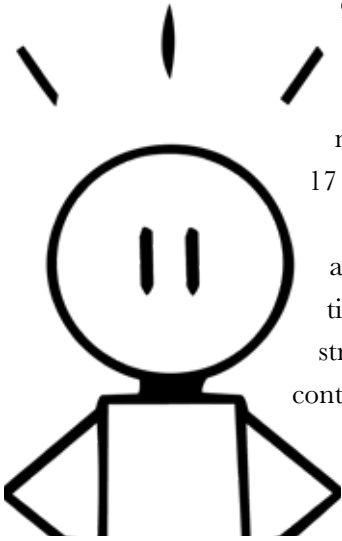
5 REASONS TO BE ACTIVE ON LINKEDIN

#1 PLATFORM FOR FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

Research by the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth showed that 98% of Fortune 500 companies currently use LinkedIn to share important news, feature branded stories, hire new talent, and grow their respective networks.

What this means for you: the companies you may want to work for, partner with, or learn from are already active and accessible—making LinkedIn one of the most direct pathways to get on their radar.

BEST PLATFORM FOR CONNECTING WITH DECISION MAKERS



In 2019, LinkedIn reported that there were 90 million senior-level influencers using their platform for professional purposes. Of these, 63 million were decision-makers and 17 million were opinion leaders.

What this means for you: you are no longer limited by traditional gatekeepers. With the right strategy, you can position your content and profile in front of indi-

viduals who have the authority to hire, partner, invest, or open doors.

RECRUIT TOP TALENT

LinkedIn reports that more than 30,000 companies use their platform to post job openings and recruit top talent. In any given month, over 3 million jobs are posted on LinkedIn, making it a hot spot for career advancement or to find an exciting new opportunity. LinkedIn also reports that 40 million people use their platform each week to search for new employment opportunities and that three people are hired every minute because they used LinkedIn as a hiring tool.

What this means for you: whether you are job seeking or building a team, LinkedIn is an active marketplace where visibility and positioning can directly influence outcomes.

NUMBERS DON'T LIE

The platform boasts a membership of over 1 billion, spanning more than 200 countries and territories around the world. LinkedIn is also home to 30 million companies that know the value of sharing industry news, insights, and information on the largest professional social media network.

What this means for you: your potential reach is global. Even a single post or optimized profile can create op-

portunities far beyond your immediate geographic market.

EMPLOYEES ADVOCATE FOR YOU

LinkedIn reports that companies on their platform see about one-third of their total engagement coming directly from their employees. They also find that employees are 14 times more likely to share the content posted by their employer than any other source.

What this means for you: your team, or the teams you're part of, can significantly amplify visibility. Strategic engagement doesn't just build personal brands; it strengthens organizational reach as well.

Remember, *it's not enough to just have a registered profile on the platform.* If you're looking to attract business opportunities and growth, then you're going to need to develop a LinkedIn marketing strategy. That's the only way to experience all the platform has to offer. In a moment, we'll share a few coaching

tips to enhance your profile and jumpstart your experience.

But before we do that, let's make this practical. What does this actually look like when done effectively?

A marketing professional updates their profile, begins sharing weekly insights, and within a few months is invited to speak on a podcast, which leads to new client inquiries.

A business owner consistently engages with industry leaders and posts thought leadership content, ultimately forming a strategic partnership that opens the door to a new revenue stream.

These are not outliers. When used intentionally, LinkedIn becomes a catalyst for meaningful professional opportunities.

Now, let's look at how you can begin applying these strategies to your own profile.

TIPS TO JUMPSTART YOUR LINKEDIN MARKETING STRATEGY

Use a professional headshot for your profile photo.

Stay away from car selfies, images that require you to crop out other people, or random shots from the family picnic. LinkedIn is a social media platform that connects professionals. Your profile photo is the first thing someone sees when they find you, so you'll want to make a great first impression—one that builds immediate credibility and trust.

Connect with a local photographer and schedule a basic one-hour shoot. This will provide you with a few high-quality images that you can use on your social media channels, in marketing materials, and in media interviews.

Rich's Insider Tip: Many networking events even have photographers on location with a basic backdrop setup, or sometimes floating around the room, providing an opportunity for attendees to get professional headshots taken on the spot!

Fill out all key areas and highlight details that help you stand out.

There are organized areas to write your summary (About Me section), featured work, job experience, education, licenses and certificates, projects you've worked on, published work, honors and awards, organizations and community involvement, and so much more. You may have to carve out a decent chunk of time to list everything, but it will be well worth it.

Keep your profile dynamic.

Once you fill in all relevant areas noted above, remember to keep going back to update your profile whenever you reach new milestones, earn certificates or achievements, or advance in your career. Reject the idea that this profile is only an online resume. LinkedIn has the potential to

be so much more than a static page. It should be a living extension of who you are as a professional.

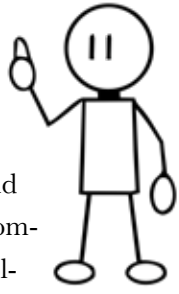
For the past two years, Rich has been an instructor through Johns Hopkins University's Odyssey Program, with one course focusing on using LinkedIn for professional and business growth. The lesson on profile optimization is always a favorite among students because just a few quick edits and improvements can really transform your profile - and presence - on the platform.

Follow Rich on LinkedIn: *@CoachRichPerry*

Include audio, video, and other forms of media.

One powerful way to turn your LinkedIn profile into a dynamic extension of your professional career is to include video and audio elements. This could include video tutorials, presentations, speaking reels, interviews, podcast episodes, or livestreams.

Exchange endorsements and recommendations.



Reach out to colleagues, collaborators, clients, and those who can vouch for your skills and accomplishments. Exchange endorsements for each other's skills, as this will help offer social proof of your talents and abilities. You might also want to collect recommendations (testimonials) from clients and col-

leagues who would be happy to go the extra mile and sing your praises.

Share valuable information with your network.

Post industry news, top tips, insightful articles, employee achievements, and other information that is relevant and would be of interest to your network. Consistency in this area is one surefire way to position yourself as an industry leader.

Grow Your Network.

Be proactive in connecting with leaders in your industry. Offer to stay in touch through LinkedIn the next time you attend a local networking event, seminar, or conference. You could add your profile URL to business cards and link your page to your website and other social media channels.

LinkedIn is much more than a digital version of your resume. It offers incredible opportunities for professional development and business growth. Use these coaching tips to jumpstart your experience and get the most out of what LinkedIn has to offer for your professional growth.

EXERCISE

Here is a quick checklist based on the tips above. Put a check mark next to each item once completed.

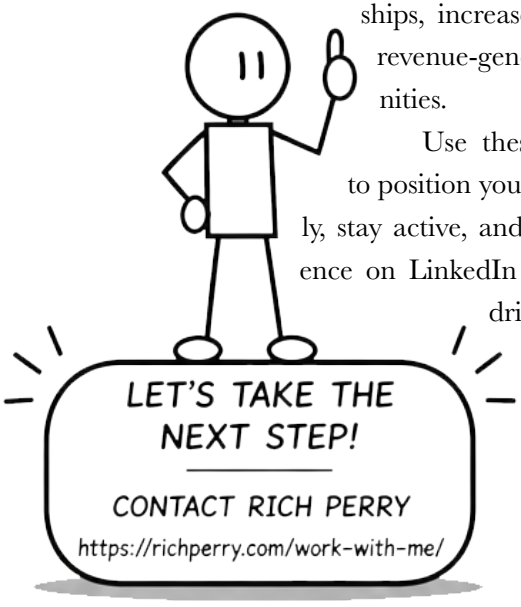
- ☐ **Use a professional looking headshot** for your profile photo

- **Write a thoughtful professional summary** in the About Me section
- **Fill out all Work Experience areas** with key role details, responsibilities, and milestones
- **List at least 20 professional skills** in the Skills area. Currently, you can include up to 100 on your profile.
- **Send a connection request** to five new people today

WRAP-UP & REVIEW

LinkedIn is much more than a digital version of your resume. It offers incredible opportunities for professional development and business growth. When used strategically, it can lead to new career paths, meaningful partnerships, increased visibility, and revenue-generating opportunities.

Use these coaching tips to position yourself intentionally, stay active, and turn your presence on LinkedIn into a powerful driver of professional growth.



HOW TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

15 STRATEGIES FOR BUSINESS OWNERS AND EXECUTIVES

The current business landscape is fast-moving and highly competitive, where effective communication is not just a nice-to-have; it directly impacts revenue, retention, and organizational performance. In our years of experience, we've witnessed firsthand the transformative power of clear and effective communication within organizations, big and small. This chapter shares 15 invaluable strategies to improve communication in your workplace, helping you optimize standard operations and cultivate a positive company culture.

At its core, communication is a business driver. When it breaks down, the consequences are measurable: lost deals due to misalignment, decreased productivity from

unclear direction, and increased turnover driven by frustration and disengagement. Organizations that communicate effectively don't just operate more smoothly—they outperform their competitors.

THE IMPACT OF INEFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Before discussing ways to enhance communication, it's crucial to understand the repercussions of poor communication within your organization. Ineffective communication can disrupt operations and hinder productivity in several ways. Maybe you're already seeing issues begin to surface.

Example in Action: Misaligned Messaging
A sales team and a marketing department operate with misaligned messaging. Marketing promotes one value proposition while sales communicates another. What's the result? Confused prospects, stalled deals, and lost revenue opportunities—all despite having strong individual performance on both teams.

Common problem areas include:

MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Miscommunication often leads to misunderstandings, causing confusion and errors in tasks and projects. This happens when stakeholders send rushed messages, omit

key details whether on purpose or by accident, or incorrectly assume others are operating with the same information or base knowledge.

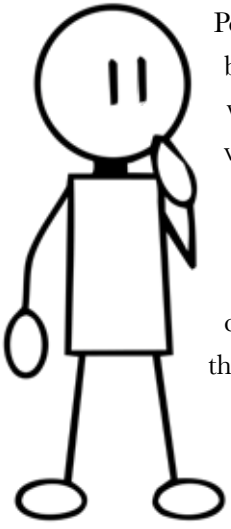
LOW MORALE

When employees feel unheard or undervalued, their morale drops, affecting overall job satisfaction and engagement. Low morale is often an early indicator of deeper cultural issues and can lead to disengagement, reduced productivity, and increased turnover.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Failure to convey ideas effectively can result in missed opportunities for innovation and growth.

CONFLICT AND TENSION



Poor communication can lead to conflicts between team members or departments, which can be detrimental to the work environment. Your employees spend a large portion of their day in the work setting and, while they're on company grounds, they want to feel safe and secure. Conflicts create a hostile work environment and have the opposite effect, making people feel un-

safe and insecure on the job. If this becomes a pattern, then you can expect people will leave.

We should also note that conflict doesn't necessarily resemble an episode of *Game of Thrones* with departments waging all-out war on each other. Hostility can appear as passive-aggressive statements, sabotaging behaviors, or circulating rumors to tarnish a colleague's reputation. Keep an eye out for subtle signs that conflicts and tensions are present before it's too late.

QUIET QUITTING

Employees who are fed up with their employer will sometimes quietly quit before they can line up another job opportunity or finally get the nerve to physically leave. They might be visible at their job site every day, but don't expect them to do anything significant during work hours. These employees often disengage, contributing only the minimum required, which erodes team performance over time.

HIGH TURNOVER

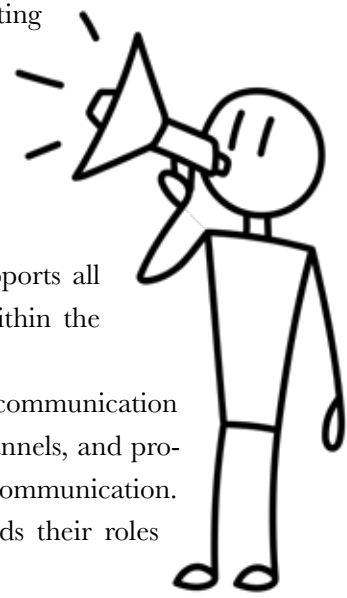
A lack of open and honest communication can drive talented employees away from your organization, making it impossible to grow the business.

15 STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Now that we've established the significance of effective communication, let's explore 15 strategies that can help you foster a culture of clear and efficient communication in your organization. The following communication strategies are listed in no particular order.

While all 15 strategies are valuable, several stand out as foundational for driving immediate business impact. Pay particular attention to the following:

- Establishing a clear communication plan
- Setting clear expectations
- Providing regular feedback
- Leading by example
- Monitoring and adapting communication efforts



1. Establish a Clear Communication Plan

This is the foundation that supports all other communication efforts within the organization.

Develop a comprehensive communication plan that outlines the goals, channels, and protocols for internal and external communication. Make sure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in this plan.

Your communication plan should outline recommended channels for formal versus informal and urgent versus non-urgent communication. This helps inform the recipients of the context of the delivered message. Also, your organization should develop a crisis communication plan to be deployed immediately should the need arise.

2. Encourage Open Dialogue

Create an environment where employees feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and concerns. An open-door policy can go a long way in promoting transparent communication. Encouraging open dialogue is a practice that requires repetition and should never be a one-and-done announcement. The reason is that even the best employees sometimes need reminders to speak up, seek advice, or lean on trusted colleagues for support.

Before making the transition into the business world full-time, Rich spent over a decade as a therapist working in children's mental and behavioral health. While he began in the school system working with young children, he concluded his career in an adolescent partial hospitalization program. In his work with teens, he noticed that while the door to his office was physically open, sometimes students were reluctant to walk in and, if they did, it could be like pulling teeth trying to get them to speak.

He decided to try a different approach. When he noticed a teen struggling to share their thoughts or feelings, he would break the ice by opening with a personal story

of his own. By doing so, Rich showed that the room was a safe space and one that was free of judgment. This helped to lower defensive mechanisms and reduce resistance to having an open discussion.

Encouraging open dialogue is one of those things where you may need to lead by example in order to get the desired effect.

3. Use Technology Wisely

Leverage communication tools like Slack, Microsoft Teams, or project management software to streamline communication and collaboration. Ensure employees are trained in using these tools effectively. These tools can be great for making quick public announcements or keeping teams connected and looped into the latest updates with a given project.

4. Set Clear Expectations

This is one of the most direct ways to prevent costly mistakes and inefficiencies.

Clearly define roles, responsibilities, and expectations for each team member. This reduces confusion and sets the stage for successful collaboration. Don't assume your team members will know what's expected in the role or with an assigned task. Just because something is common knowledge to you doesn't mean it's necessarily common knowledge to them. After all, remember what's said about assumption…

5. Provide Regular Feedback

Consistent feedback is a key driver of performance, alignment, and employee retention.

Establish a culture of continuous feedback. Regular performance evaluations and one-on-one meetings are opportunities to offer constructive feedback and praise.

When implementing performance evaluations, be sure to frame them as opportunities to learn and grow. These should never be framed as consequences and shouldn't cause undue stress or unease in the workplace.

Providing clear and relevant feedback is less of a science and more of an art form. As the business owner or executive in the organization, it's your job to make sure the individuals performing the reviews understand the purpose of these meetings.

6. Conduct Effective Meetings

Make meetings purposeful and efficient. Share agendas in advance, stay on topic, and encourage active participation while discouraging unnecessary meetings. When setting recurring meetings, make sure the time frame between and the duration of each meeting is sufficient.

For example, in a previous role at one time, we were having weekly hour-long meetings to discuss updates on a marketing initiative. While weekly 60-minute meetings served a purpose in the beginning, they eventually wore out their welcome. One week wasn't enough time to get the data we were looking for, and we were spending the

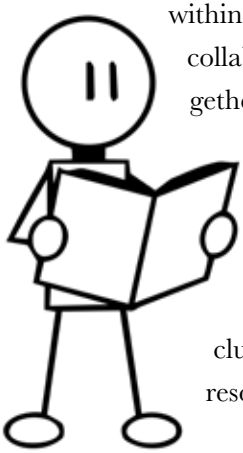
majority of the meeting rehashing the same topics. They were largely unproductive and wasteful of everyone's time. Eventually, meetings were moved to a monthly basis and became more productive and meaningful for everyone involved.

7. Foster Cross-Departmental Collaboration

Break down silos by promoting collaboration between different departments. Cross-functional teams can lead to innovative solutions and improved communication.

This can be as simple as encouraging conversation and the sharing of ideas between team members while on a coffee break or having separate Slack channels dedicated to discussing new projects and initiatives.

You might have one department stuck on a problem that has already been resolved by another department, yet they'd never know because they're working strictly within their silo. Fostering cross-departmental collaboration ensures teams are working together in harmony for the ultimate benefit of the entire organization.



8. Invest in Training

Offer communication training to employees at all levels. This can include courses on active listening, conflict resolution, and effective writing.

By taking an active interest in helping your employees grow, they become more

valuable to the organization. It lets your people know that you care about them and their professional development.

There's a social media meme that perfectly captures this idea. It goes like this:

CFO asks CEO: "What happens if we invest in developing our people and then they leave us?"

CEO: "What happens if we don't, and they stay?"

Investing in the development of your employees is a win/win for everyone. It's never too early to start developing your organization's future leaders. But if you wait too long, it could be too late.

9. Lead by Example

Leadership behavior is often the single most influential factor in shaping communication norms.

As a business leader, your actions set the tone for communication within the organization. When you demonstrate the communication behaviors you want to see in your team, you begin to unlock your potential as an authentic leader.

In our view, one of the worst traits for someone in a position of authority (notice we didn't use the word "leader") is one who rules from the position of, *Do as I say and not as I do.* This approach will sow resentment and distrust among your people and the company culture will suffer because of it.

If you expect certain behaviors in your organization, then be the first to demonstrate them.

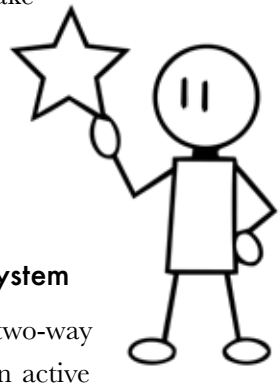
If you expect a certain attitude in your organization, then be the first to communicate it.

If you expect a certain mindset in your organization, then be the first to adopt it.

10. Embrace Diversity and Inclusion

Recognize and celebrate diversity within your organization. Diverse teams bring diverse perspectives, which can lead to more creative solutions.

In addition to having a diverse population in the workplace, it's important to make your people feel welcome and part of the family. This goes a long way in warming the hearts and minds of your most important stakeholders.



11. Implement a Feedback System

Effective communication is a two-way street. Just as you should take an active interest in providing valuable feedback to improve employee performance, you should also seek the same to see how the organization can improve.

Create a system for anonymous feedback that allows employees to express concerns without fear of repercussions. This could be conducted with a simple suggestion box in the HR department or through an online survey. Either way, this is an opportunity for you to gain valuable feedback and ideas for the betterment of the organization.

12. Simplify Complex Messages

Avoid jargon and use simple, clear language in all communication. This ensures everyone can understand and act on the information provided.

If certain communications must contain complex elements, then make sure resources are made available to help recipients understand the intended message.

13. Encourage Team Building

Team-building activities can strengthen relationships among team members, leading to better communication and collaboration.

The best teams know how to work together and can persevere under stressful circumstances. But the only way to get your people to work together as a strong unit is to encourage team-building activities that foster trust, understanding, and cooperation.

14. Celebrate Achievements

Acknowledge and celebrate milestones and achievements, both big and small. This fosters a positive atmosphere and motivates employees.

These can range from huge ceremonies with all the pomp and circumstance down to personalized shout-outs in your weekly team meeting. The methods and channels can differ depending on the level of achievement. The point to remember here is that celebrating victories is an important part of cultivating a healthy company culture.

EXERCISE

Set an intention to celebrate the accomplishments of at least one colleague every day for a week. Again, this doesn't necessarily have to be a grand production. It can be a simple "attaboy," but it absolutely does need to be meaningful and genuine.

- **Decide** who you are going to celebrate
- **What** did they do to deserve recognition?
- **How** did you celebrate the achievement?
- **Reflect** on your colleague's response to being celebrated
- If done publicly, **reflect** on the responses of team members present for the celebration

15. Monitor and Adapt

Organizations that continuously refine their communication approach are better positioned to stay competitive.

Regularly assess the effectiveness of your communication strategies and be willing to adapt as your organization evolves.

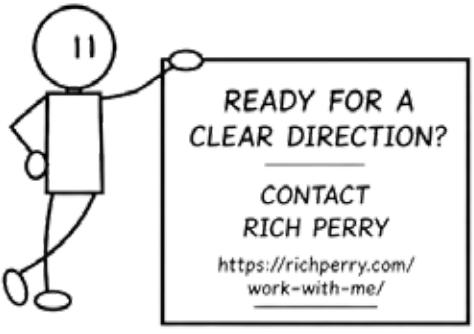
Let technology be your friend and incorporate new channels to improve efficiency and effectiveness. But don't become strictly reliant on digital channels. There's a level of connection and power that only direct human communication can bring. It's important to know which method

and channel to use and when to use them to get the best result.

WRAP-UP & REVIEW

In today's fast-paced business environment, the ability to communicate effectively is a competitive advantage that no organization can afford to overlook. Rather than treating communication as a soft skill, recognize it as a core business function that directly influences growth, efficiency, and long-term sustainability.

By implementing these 15 strategies, business owners and executives can improve communication in the workplace, driving superior operations and a positive organizational culture. Remember that effective communication is an ongoing journey, and the rewards for your organization are well worth the effort.



TAPPING INTO THE POWER OF PODCASTS

ELEVATE YOUR BUSINESS AND BUILD CREDIBILITY

It's no secret that podcasting has emerged as a powerful platform for connecting with audiences and sharing knowledge. Tapping into this influential tool can have an incredible impact on your professional brand, acting as a multiplier that expands your visibility, strengthens credibility, and creates new opportunities across your business environment. Being a featured expert provides opportunities to reach a wider audience, attract more followers, and grow your business.

This chapter explores the key benefits of podcasting and how you can leverage podcast interviews and features in your marketing and business communications strategies.

At its highest level, podcasting is not just a visibility tactic—it's a growth engine. A single podcast appearance

can lead to increased visibility, which builds credibility. Credibility opens the door to meaningful relationships, and those relationships often convert into business opportunities, collaborations, and long-term partnerships.

THE PODCAST GROWTH FLYWHEEL™

To fully understand the long-term impact of podcasting, it's helpful to view it as a continuous growth cycle rather than a one-time activity. When approached strategically, each podcast appearance contributes to a self-reinforcing system that builds momentum over time.

The Podcast Growth Flywheel™ consists of four key stages:

1. VISIBILITY

Each podcast appearance introduces you to a new, targeted audience. Instead of relying solely on your own platform, you tap into established communities that already trust the host and regularly engage with the content.

2. CREDIBILITY

As you consistently show up and share valuable insights, your authority grows. Listeners begin to view you as a trusted expert, strengthening both your personal brand and your business reputation.

3. RELATIONSHIPS

Increased visibility and credibility naturally lead to new relationships. These may include podcast hosts, fellow guests, listeners, and industry peers—many of whom can become collaborators, referral partners, or clients.

4. OPPORTUNITIES

Strong relationships create opportunities. These can take many forms, including client engagements, speaking invitations, partnerships, media features, and additional podcast appearances.

As this cycle repeats, each stage reinforces the next. One podcast appearance leads to another, one relationship opens the door to several more, and over time, your efforts compound—turning a single interview into a powerful engine for sustained business growth.

USE PODCAST APPEARANCES TO MAKE A BIGGER IMPACT

Reach a Targeted Audience

Podcasts have gained immense popularity, and there's a podcast for almost every niche or industry. By being a guest on relevant shows, you can tap into a targeted audience that is already interested in your field. This gives you the opportunity to showcase your expertise, share

valuable insights, and connect with potential customers or clients who are actively seeking the solutions you offer.

Establish Thought Leadership

Appearing on podcasts positions you as an industry expert and thought leader. As you share your knowledge, experiences, and unique perspectives, you build credibility and establish yourself as an authority in your field. This enhances your personal brand and elevates the reputation of your business, making it more appealing to your target audience.

A few years ago, Rich was invited by Winnie Sun (Managing Partner, Sun Group Wealth Partners) for a special back-to-back booking on her popular weekly tweetchat followed by an appearance on her livestream Level Up. The livestream's discussion would center around using podcasts for visibility and audience growth. The other expert guest was John Lim (Host & Executive Producer, Moving Forward).

During the broadcast, Rich and John realized a synergy, which led to follow-up conversations and future content collaborations. John would go on to become an instructor with Johns Hopkins University's Odyssey Program, and later referred Rich to the

program as an instructor. Those collaborations, professional introductions, and growth opportunities were all possible from understanding the power of podcasts and leveraging authority. What began as a single appearance led to increased visibility, which fostered a valued relationship, ultimately resulting in tangible business opportunities, demonstrating the compounding effect of strategic podcast engagement.

Increase Brand Visibility

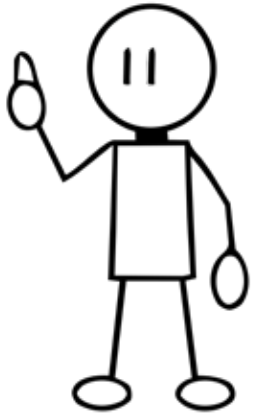
Podcasts often have a loyal and engaged audience who tune in regularly. As a featured expert guest on popular podcasts, you gain exposure to a wider network of listeners who may not have been aware of your business previously. This increased brand visibility can lead to new followers, subscribers, and potential customers, expanding your reach far beyond your existing audience.

Authentic Connection with Your Audience

Podcasts offer a unique medium for entrepreneurs to connect with their audience on a more personal level. The conversational nature of podcasts allows you to share stories, insights, and anecdotes that resonate with listeners. By showcasing your authentic self, you can foster genuine connections, develop trust, and cultivate a loyal following.

Repurpose Content for Marketing

One of the most powerful aspects of podcasting (and one that Rich strongly advocates for) is its ability to serve as a content multiplier through a strategic repurposing system. Transcribe the podcast episode or key sections to write informative blog articles, use the subject matter to create videos, and pull quotes for graphics to be posted across social media channels. If you have enough material that covers a range of core topics, then you might want to consider turning the content into an e-book or program. This could help you reach an entirely different audience segment while also bringing a new stream of income. Repurposing podcast content allows you to extend the lifespan of the original source, reach different platforms, and attract diverse audiences. When approached systematically, a single podcast interview can generate weeks—or even months—of consistent, high-value content across multiple platforms.



HOW TO LEVERAGE PODCAST FEATURES AS A MARKETING MULTIPLIER

Research and Select Relevant Podcasts

Identify podcasts that cater to your target audience and align with your industry or niche.

Research the podcast's format, topics, and audience demographics to ensure a good fit. Reach out to hosts with a rock-solid podcast pitch highlighting your expertise and the value you can bring to their show.

EXERCISE

- Identify three podcasts geared toward your industry or niche focus
- Listen to a few episodes and reflect on the discussion topics
- Based on your specific experience, what can you add to the conversation?
- Pitch the show host/producer to be considered as a future guest. Be sure to highlight what you bring to the table and, more importantly, the value you will provide to listeners.

Prepare Engaging Content

Before appearing on a podcast, familiarize yourself with the show's format and prepare talking points that resonate with the audience. Share practical tips, insights, and stories that educate and entertain listeners. Remember to be authentic, engaging, and passionate about your topic.

Promote Your Podcast Appearances

Maximize the impact of your podcast appearances by promoting them across your marketing channels. Share snippets, quotes, or key takeaways on so-

cial media platforms, include links to the episodes in your email newsletters, and embed the podcast player on your website. Encourage your audience to listen, subscribe, and share the episode with their network. Don't expect the podcast host to do *all* the work when it comes to promoting the episode. The podcaster will absolutely promote the episode within his/her network. But you should also do your fair share of the promotion. Remember, you're the featured expert. Be proud of the episode and share it with the world!

Build Relationships with Podcast Hosts

Podcast hosts often have their own networks and platforms. By building a strong relationship with hosts, you can unlock opportunities for collaborations, guest blogging, or future appearances. Engage with hosts on social media, provide feedback and support, and nurture these connections over time.

As you implement these strategies, keep the Podcast Growth Flywheel™ in mind. Each step you take is not isolated, but part of a larger system designed to build momentum over time.

WRAP UP & REVIEW

Leverage the power of podcasts as a strategic multiplier to expand your impact. As a featured guest, you'll have opportunities to reach new audiences, establish brand visibility, and position yourself as a credible expert. It's also

a terrific way to generate high-quality content and build your thought leadership platform.

When incorporating podcast appearances in your overall marketing strategy, research related shows that would be a good fit for you and your message. Pitch the host, providing clear and concise reasoning as to why you are an ideal guest for the show. Remember to focus on how you can provide value-based information for the listener.

Once your booking is confirmed, it's time to prepare for the upcoming show. Get your speaking notes in order, provide relevant marketing details to the host, and make sure to promote the episode before and after the recording! This can help earn the host's favor as well as possible return appearances.

Over time, these consistent efforts don't just build visibility; they create momentum, positioning you and your business for sustained growth.

WRITING FOR THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Your reputation is everything as a small-business owner. Particularly in a close-knit region such as the Wyoming Valley, it's the industry experts who tend to earn clients and customers by virtue of their breadth of experience. People want to work with professionals who can solve their problem as deftly as possible.

But even if you are a true industry expert, how do you let people know it? What would you even say? This is the utility of thought leadership, that form of public communication where you offer unique perspectives that draw from your professional experience. This is to show you're not just here for the invoices; you're actively engaged in your field of work and want people to know how you feel about the issues.

Forming and expressing original thoughts on your industry requires self-knowledge. What is your place in your chosen market? What makes you different? What kinds of clients do you want to attract?

You can reflect on your experiences and major business decisions to learn the answers to those. Examine the ups and downs of your career. Seek to understand what has worked for you, where you may have gone wrong, and where you see your field headed based on the time you've spent in it.

Once you've done the heavy mental work, all that's left is to communicate it. Turn to those behind you who are still learning and offer them your personal wisdom. Doing that would make you a thought leader, someone who isn't just an expert, but a publicly known one who takes stances on matters of interest to your fellows in the field.

Thought leaders relay their stories and insights to mass audiences. As a thought leader, you use the hard-learned lessons of your career to get people asking questions, stoke the embers of further learning and innovation, and present yourself as an authority whom customers can trust with their business.

To do all that, you have to know how to communicate effectively through writing! We're not talking about straight content marketing here. This is different. Writing for thought leadership is about getting personal. Being real. Sharing human stories.

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

Knowledge comes in many forms and can be found everywhere. People can go online and easily learn how to

create a website or build a birdhouse. They can look into a company they're considering working for or predict how the stock market will behave based on historical trends.

Harder to come by, though, are those time-tested industry experts who are ready and willing to share not just their knowledge but their wisdom with others in their spaces. People know they can't simply go to their favorite AI chatbots to hear stories and lessons from those wizened veterans who have been through it all.

Through his own 1900 Digital Marketing, Michael has helped numerous business owners in the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton area to work out what makes their professional voices different.

This is why we say that general knowledge about something has its place, but at some point, human experience must fill in the gaps. An instruction manual couldn't possibly account for every issue people will encounter in the real world. Eventually, industry beginners need to seek advice, and they can do so from thought leaders who have endured their own hardships and come out wiser on the other side.

It's the human element people want, to hear those true

stories, ask questions, and get personalized answers. You can be that resource for them! In doing so, you will build public trust in yourself and your business. It takes knowing how to communicate your expertise cohesively, personably, and honestly.

This is where many business owners struggle.

REACHING WITHIN

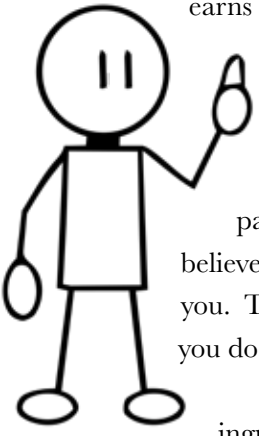
We've worked with experts from across industries who know they need to market their personalities as well as their services if they want to stand out, but they either don't know how or are uncomfortable standing in that spotlight.

And yet, writing for thought leadership is, by definition, sharing personal insights with audiences to shape conversations around industry topics. Your opinions are precisely necessary here! Your perspectives come from your past: your life, your career, your successes, and, perhaps most crucially, your failures. You know as well as anyone that your career mistakes will make for much more substantial and interesting stories and lessons, even if the memories bring up some tough feelings for you.

Take Michael's 1900 Digital Marketing, for example. He knew quite well when he founded the business in 2023 that NEPA-based professionals had their choice of digital-marketing agency. But Michael wasn't trying to be like anyone else. He made it clear on his website and external thought-leadership content that 1900 was about showing

the humanity behind the businesses. It was a nimble, almost renegade agency that would work directly with business owners to start up digital campaigns, try new things, pivot quickly when necessary, and grow alongside its clients.

1900 is still proudly that. It's current in its SEO and content strategies. It's traditional in its emphasis on active listening and keeping marketing bloat out of the roadmaps. On this basis alone, 1900 Digital Marketing earns business from Northeastern Pennsylvania entrepreneurs who hold the same values.



That is the value of thought leadership, of drawing your own personal line in the sand and holding to it. The best part? Being clear about what your business believes tends to inspire clients to go all-in with you. They feel you understand them, because you do.

Becoming a thought leader takes a willingness to reach inside and extract those nuggets of wisdom that can become valuable teaching moments for your colleagues and clients. You really have to know yourself.

Do you have what it takes?

CREATING YOUR CONTENT

Once you've done the necessary introspective work to develop your professional views on certain topics, it becomes

time to create your thought leadership content. What that looks like for you depends on several factors, including your:

- Industry
- Level of experience
- Audience
- Communication skills, written and oral
- Chosen communication platforms, such as social media sites, email newsletters, and websites

You'll know what type of content to create based on your familiarity with your industry. A lawyer might know that the perfect audience for legal thought leadership content can be found on LinkedIn, while a podcaster might know that the best place for their particular niche is YouTube.

Let these examples get you thinking about the format your content should take.

EXERCISE

Consider each of the following questions in the context of your business's potential content strategy. Which ones are the hardest to answer? How can you discover the answers?

- Where do my ideal clients go for industry information?

- Which competing brands are creating thought leadership content well?
- What formats is that content in?
- Of those formats, which is the most popular, and why?
- What kinds of topics from my competitors do audiences most engage with?
- How can I make my unique voice stand out?

Whatever form your thought leadership content takes, you'll need to write it down at some point. That's how you'll get your thoughts out and prepare them for sharing. That piece of writing needs to accomplish several goals at once: hook your audience with a unique view, clearly display your industry expertise, and offer education based on your experience, all while relating to your audience as a fellow human being.

Most experts we've helped write thought leadership content have told us the same thing: the content seemed easier to create with a writer because, on their own, they felt too close to their business experiences to talk about them in detail.

We understand that. Details can overwhelm us and keep us from seeing the big picture. Sometimes, all it takes is a fresh set of ears to make sense of something.

Your content should ultimately draw from your professional knowledge and experiences to comment on relevant issues in your industry. This is where you need to take a stance; no walking the middle line. Thought leaders

speak their minds and start conversations. If you believe successful businesses should give back to their communities, show the public what you do on that front. If you're passionate about charitable causes, make a donation while inviting your clients to join you.

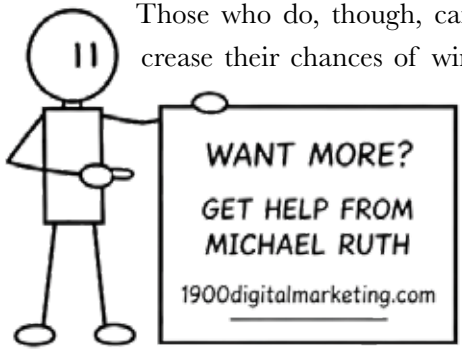
Some people will disagree with your views. That is perfectly fine. That's the nature of opinions.

The point is that you got people talking. There's no other way to learn. Your audience will remember you for your unique views, no matter how they felt about them.

WRAP-UP & REVIEW

In this chapter, we covered what thought leadership content is and how it can benefit your business. We talked about how thought leadership requires you to dive deep into your experiences and emotions to mine for educational moments. We also reviewed questions you can ask yourself when first developing your thought leadership voice.

Not all business owners engage in thought leadership. Those who do, though, can significantly increase their chances of winning business by already holding their audience's trust.



BUILDING BRIDGES, NOT BARRIERS

NETWORKING STRATEGIES FOR NEWCOMERS

There's a reason seasoned business leaders encourage newcomers to attend networking events. When properly implemented in your professional growth strategy, networking events can have a transformative impact on one's career and trajectory. They provide a unique opportunity to connect, learn, and grow from others in your industry and business community—often leading to new clients, strategic partnerships, career opportunities, and long-term professional relationships.

But when you're new to the game, they can also be intimidating.

The coaching tips in this chapter are simple to implement and will help you make the most out of every networking event. Use this lesson to build business bridges that will allow you to explore new horizons and create

bigger growth opportunities. When approached with intention, a single conversation at the right event can lead to opportunities that reshape your business or career trajectory.

THE ART OF THE ICEBREAKER

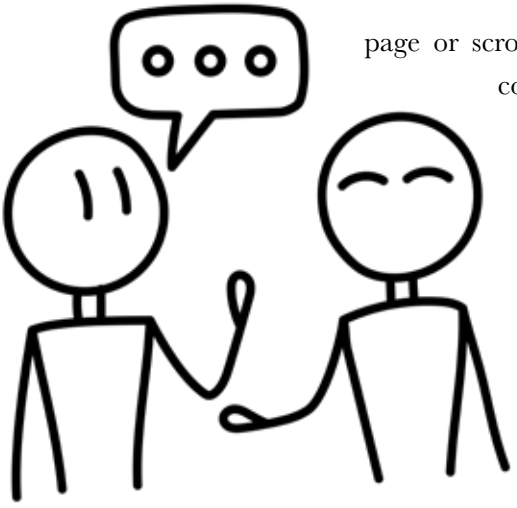
Starting a conversation at a networking event is often the most daunting task. Believe it or not, a simple "Hi, I'm [Your Name]" goes a long way. Confidence is key, so practice your introduction before the event. Remember, even the most successful professionals were once newcomers.

Rich's Insider Tip: Visualize yourself succeeding. Picture yourself holding enjoyable conversations with fellow professionals. That's what networking is all about. A positive mindset is a powerful tool for overcoming social anxiety.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Before attending an event, research the attendees and the event's theme or purpose. Knowing who will be there and what's on the agenda will give you valuable conversation starters. For instance, "I noticed you work in [their field], and I'm interested in learning more about [a related topic]."

If the networking event has been posted on LinkedIn or Facebook, then look through the virtual event



page or scroll through the comments and see who's attending. Check out the profiles of attendees to learn a bit about them beforehand. This will provide basic background information, so you can ask relevant questions when you meet face-to-face.

For example, a first-time attendee at a recent Wilkes-Barre POWER! event reviewed the attendee list beforehand and noticed a business owner in a complementary industry. Instead of approaching the event aimlessly, they introduced themselves with a specific point of reference. That initial conversation led to a follow-up coffee meeting and eventually a referral partnership that generated consistent new business within a few months.

Rich's Insider Tip: Always be curious. People love to share their expertise; all you have to do is ask. But remember, it's genuine interest that counts, so don't try to fake interest in someone or a topic if you don't mean it.

EXERCISE

- **Research networking groups** and organizations for professionals in your area. If you need help, refer to the resources section of the book.
- **Find five events** that are happening in the next 30 days
- **Consider why** you selected these events and what makes them interesting
- **Choose at least one** that fits your schedule. Then add it to your calendar and make a plan to attend.

THE POWER OF ACTIVE LISTENING

Engage in active listening when others are speaking. Make eye contact, nod in agreement, and ask open-ended questions. This not only shows that you're genuinely interested but also helps steer the conversation naturally.

Rich's Insider Tip: Use the "3 Whys" technique to dive deeper into a conversation. If you've never heard of this technique, it's fairly straightforward and one that 5-year-olds around the world perform masterfully. All you need to do is ask "Why?" three times during the discussion. Essentially, you're probing deeper into the conversation to uncover valuable nuggets hidden just below the surface.

However, to show that you were actively listening, you may want to put some extra meat on the bones of your

"Why?" questions. For example, if an executive is talking about an innovative solution her company is developing, then you could probe deeper by asking, "Why did your company decide to move in this new direction?" This further opens the doors of conversation by giving the executive the opportunity to explain more of the backstory, specific market research, or progressive leadership that cultivated a pioneering attitude within her company.

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

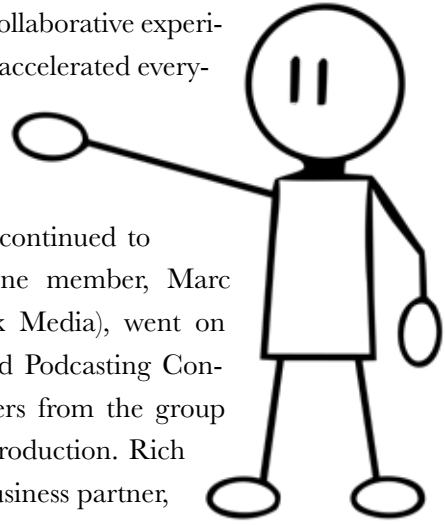
It's not about collecting as many business cards as possible; it's about forming meaningful connections. Focus on building a few quality relationships rather than trying to engage with everyone in the room.

Rich's Insider Tip: Set specific networking goals, like connecting with two or three people deeply, rather than vague objectives like "meet everyone." A few strong professional relationships can yield more opportunities than having many superficial connections. Remember, people do business with the people they know, like, and trust.

Earlier in the book, Rich recalled his first time attending Podfest Multimedia Expo, where he arrived not knowing anyone. Rather than trying to meet as many people as possible, he focused on building a few meaningful relationships with creators he genuinely connected with.

That decision quickly paid off.

Within weeks, several of those new connections organized a group video call, which led to the creation of a weeklong immersive workshop. Each member took turns hosting sessions and facilitating trainings designed to help the others grow personally and professionally. What started as a handful of conversations at a conference evolved into a powerful collaborative experience—one that not only accelerated everyone's development but also built lasting trust among the group.



Those relationships continued to create opportunities. One member, Marc Ronick (Owner, iRonick Media), went on to found the Empowered Podcasting Conference and invited others from the group to play key roles in its production. Rich later joined Marc as a business partner, helping to grow the Empowered Podcasting brand.

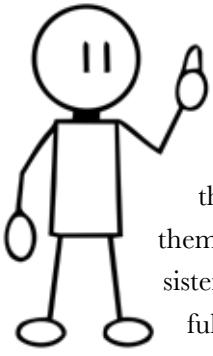
PRACTICE THE ELEVATOR PITCH

Create a concise and engaging elevator pitch that describes who you are and what you do. A well-crafted pitch can pique interest and open doors to further conversation. It doesn't have to be long, and don't focus on selling your product or service. The idea is to provide quick and inter-

esting tidbits that can get the ball rolling into more meaningful discussions.

Rich's Insider Tip: Practice your elevator pitch in front of a mirror or with a trusted friend to fine-tune it.

FOLLOW UP

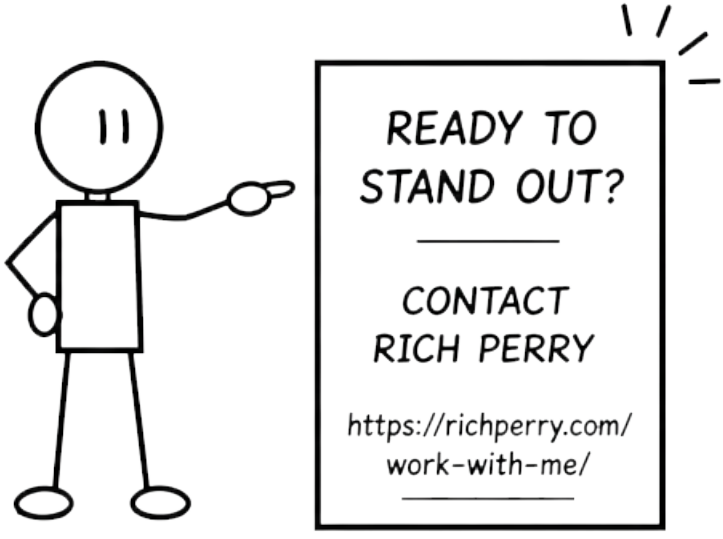


Networking doesn't end when the event does. In fact, this is where most of the real opportunity begins. The follow-up is the single greatest differentiator between those who simply attend events and those who generate tangible results from them. Most professionals fail to follow up consistently, which means even a simple, thoughtful message immediately sets you apart.

Rich's Insider Tip: Be prompt with your follow-ups. A timely message, sent within 24 to 48 hours, positions you as professional, intentional, and genuinely interested in building a relationship. If you misplaced the business card or forgot the person's full name, then refer back to "Do Your Homework" and revisit the organizer's online event page or photo gallery. Chances are, the person you're looking for can be found in the photos or comment section.

WRAP-UP & REVIEW

Networking events can be powerful stepping stones to professional growth, opening doors to new clients, collaborations, and career-defining opportunities. As you take these tips and coaching strategies to heart, remember that every expert was once a beginner. Approach networking with an open mind, a willingness to learn, and a desire to connect, and you'll soon discover the immense potential that lies within these events. Networking is a skill, like any other, that can be cultivated with practice and patience. The more intentional you are—before, during, and especially after the event—the more consistently you will turn conversations into meaningful business outcomes.



TALK OF THE TOWN

EPILOGUE

We covered a fair bit of ground in this book. Brand identity, podcasts, LinkedIn, writing for thought leadership - there's lots to chew on here.

You may recall how Rich mentioned in his author's note that *Talk of the Town* is best used as a roadmap to your marketing success rather than as a checklist. This point will be critical to your marketing strategy. Don't feel that your business has to be everywhere to get its message out. Managing multiple social media accounts, a blog, and a podcast all at once may not be in the cards for you at this early stage, and that's okay. Start with what you're able to manage, and grow your marketing tactics from there.

If the challenge ever seems overwhelming, remember the point Michael raised in his author's note: your focus through all of this should be communicating your brand to your audience. Always keep sight of that ultimate goal. Let it guide you through the logistics of topic generation, LinkedIn marketing, and networking with other professionals. Knowing the purpose of something often helps us understand how it works.

You now have a multitude of new tools to work with as you continue growing your solo operation or small business here in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Use them well, and you, too, can become the *Talk of the Town*!

RESOURCES FOR GROWTH

NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA NETWORKING GROUPS & ORGANIZATIONS FOR PROFESSIONALS[1]

WILKES-BARRE POWER!

Professionals Organized and Working to Enrich the Region. This nonprofit organization hosts monthly networking events and promotes local business growth, professional development, and community enrichment.

NEPA NETWORKERS

A community organization whose mission is to connect the talent of NEPA through a forum of online and live networking events.

BUSINESS NETWORK INTERNATIONAL (BNI)

Valley, NextGen, Referral Central, & Horizons Chapters. The mission of BNI is to help members increase their business through a structured, positive and professional referral marketing program that enables them to develop

1 Organization descriptions taken from the owner's website or social media page.

long-term, meaningful relationships with quality business professionals.

NEPA BUSINESS NETWORK

The mission of NEPA Business Network is to build long-standing business relationships through virtual and in-person networking. The group's goals are to share quality referrals, foster creative ideas, and offer ongoing support and education to each other.

HAZLETON AREA NETWORKING ASSOCIATION

HANA is a business referral organization. Its goal is to generate business among its exclusive membership and promote the economic growth of Hazleton and its surrounding community.

BACK MOUNTAIN SMALL BUSINESS NETWORK

A free small business networking group located in the Back Mountain. The group also welcomes business owners and professionals from surrounding areas to attend their events.

LOCAL CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

- Greater Wyoming Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce

- Greater Pittston Chamber of Commerce
- Chamber of the Northern Poconos
- Pocono Chamber of Commerce
- Wyoming County Chamber of Commerce
- Back Mountain Chamber
- Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

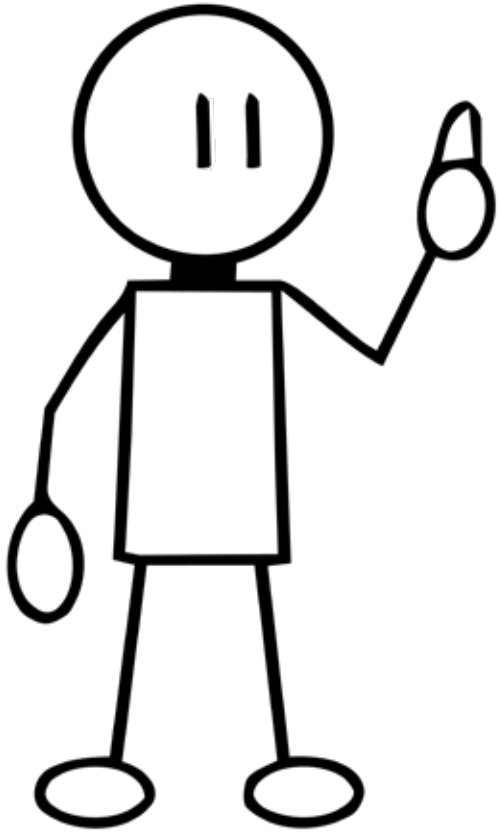
AMERICAN ADVERTISING FEDERATION OF NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

The AAF NEPA chapter represents solopreneurs, educators, corporations, creative leaders, small businesses, nonprofits, and students in the future-facing world of advertising.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

THE LUZERNE FOUNDATION

Established in 1994, this organization works to enhance the lives of Luzerne County residents by evaluating and addressing community needs through strategic grantmaking, promoting responsible philanthropy, and connecting donors to causes that matter to them.



MICHAEL RUTH

Michael's writing career started at 13 years old, when he began dreaming up adventure stories in a little blue notebook for his family to read together. The Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, native further developed his creative-writing skills at Bishop Hoban and Holy Redeemer high schools before turning to professional writing at King's College, graduating in 2013.

Following a long stint in educational publishing, Michael discovered he could finesse his growing writing expertise in the dynamic field of digital marketing. He spent years learning how search engine optimization (SEO) and content marketing go together to help small local businesses speak to their unique audiences and grow.

Michael founded 1900 Digital Marketing LLC in 2023. The brand-focused micro-agency strips away the industry's bloat to offer agile, straightforward SEO, content marketing, custom websites, social media content, and creative visual services to solopreneurs and small businesses in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

RICH PERRY

Rich Perry helps purpose-first entrepreneurs make a bigger impact. He guides clients towards greater clarity with messaging, improving confidence with communication, and increasing brand visibility to maximize business growth.

He is a partner and the chief marketing officer of Empowered Podcasting, co-host of Empowered Podcasting Live, and host of Purpose First Entrepreneur and 10-Minute Mentor with Rich Perry.

He co-authored Bankroll Your Mind (International #1 Best Seller), was a contributing author in four books, and has written for Entrepreneur among other respected online publications.

Rich graduated from King's College (BA, 2003) and Southern New Hampshire University (MBA, 2023), and is a member of the National Society of Leadership and Success. Rich serves as an instructor through Johns Hopkins University's Odyssey Program and is recognized as a top-rated instructor for continued excellence.

He is currently serving a third term as president of Wilkes-Barre POWER! and sits on the board of directors for the American Advertising Federation of Northeastern Pennsylvania.

THE END . . . OR JUST THE BEGINNING?

OKAY. THAT WAS A LOT.

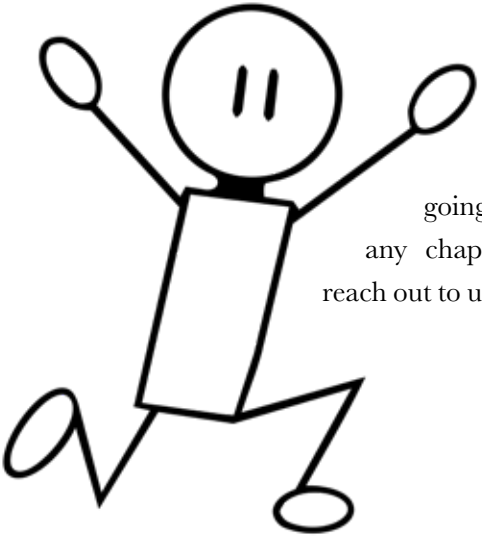
We packed a good deal into these pages, and we appreciate you sticking with us.

Whether you read every word or skipped around looking for the good parts—honestly, both are fine.

If any of it sparked something, we'd love to hear about it. We're both pretty easy to track down.

Rich Perry
richperry.com

Michael Ruth
1900digitalmarketing.com



P.S. We know some of you looked at this page first. This is for you—welcome, you're going to like it in here. Pick any chapter, start reading, and reach out to us when something clicks.

Marketing doesn't have to feel overwhelming, and it doesn't require a big budget to be effective.

The content creation, strategic direction, and marketing leadership that Rich and his team provide have allowed me to focus on other important parts of my business with greater confidence.

Carmine Corridore | Underdog Cyber Defense

Talk of the Town helps you build the trust and momentum required to set your business apart.

Dr. Stephanie A. Longo | Penn State Scranton

Talk of the Town is a treasure trove of actionable insights that empowers you to find your unique voice and connect authentically with your audience.

Kristopher B. Jones | LSEO.com

Perry's Talk of the Town offers the perspective of a friendly, experienced voice, like your own trusted neighbor, entrepreneur, and local guide who understands the real challenges of marketing within limits.

Shannon R. Buckley | Master Shot Studios, LLC

Michael has taken the time to truly understand my goals for the business, our target market, and the needs of our local demographic to take my ideas and turn them into realistic marketing tools.

Brooke Evans, M.S., RDN, LDN | Catalyst Nutrition and Training

RICH PERRY

Connect with Rich:
RichPerry.com

1900 DIGITAL MARKETING

Connect with Michael:
1900DigitalMarketing.com