



# The New Rainmaker

## Why Building Your Own Digital Media Platform Is Smarter than “Marketing”

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**BRIAN CLARK** began publishing online in 1998, and by 1999 he had his first successful business built by what is now known as content marketing. Between 2001 and 2005, Brian went on to launch two additional businesses, which attained even greater success. In January 2006, he started a one-man blog called *Copyblogger*, which quickly evolved into an influential digital trade magazine for the online industry and became the catalyst for the multimillion-dollar software and training company he heads today as CEO. [www.Copyblogger.com](http://www.Copyblogger.com)

### *In this Chapter, You'll Discover:*

- ▶ How to create marketing that people actually want
- ▶ What a personal media brand is and why you want one
- ▶ How to give away what you're selling for fun and profit
- ▶ Why leadership is the key to lead generation
- ▶ How to maximize your marketing wealth with new media
- ▶ The reason you'll likely succeed (big), if you start now

Without a rainmaker, you're in trouble.

This was true for the Native Americans living on sun-bleached plains. When the life-giving rivers began to dry up from lack of rain, life became hard.

The plants withered, the animals weakened, and the tribe despaired.

It's also true for businesses trying to survive and thrive in any economy. The rainmaker is the one who brings in the clients and customers, the revenue, and the profits. It's the rainmaker who saves their own "tribe" from the withering despair—and dire consequences—of failure.

In all cultures, the rainmaker is a powerful person. Secure, respected, and paid in full.

Ultimately, *the one who makes it rain makes the rules.*

The traditional business rainmaker typically enjoyed some unfair advantage outside of standard channels; this is how *they* made it rain. The right family, the right Ivy League connections, the right country club membership. Privilege perpetuating more privilege.

The new rainmaker enjoys a different kind of unfair advantage, except in this case it's now available to anyone who understands—and, more importantly, acts on—how new business generation works today. This unfair advantage is now built on the principles of attracting and engaging an online audience, not the circumstances of your birth.

## **An Improbable Run at Entrepreneurial Success**

In my past life, I was an attorney. I didn't much enjoy the practice of law, but looking back now, I realize that I learned two fundamental rules of smart business while doing my time in the big law firm environment.

In addition to realizing that the practice of law often had little to do with the actual law, I found out that success as an attorney often had little to do with technical proficiency. In other words, the best lawyers weren't necessarily the highest paid or most powerful attorneys.

The lawyers with their name in the firm title were the most powerful, because they had the clients. Other attorneys worked for them to handle these clients.

Another type of attorney had a different form of power, in the form of a great life. They came in late and left early, often heading to the golf course. These people also had an almost magical knack for bringing in new business, and maintained relationships while worker bees like me racked up the billable hours.

These were the *rainmakers*. And they made the rules that worked for the life they wanted to lead.

Call me naive, but this was a revelation to me. Especially since I absolutely hated the practice of law. I realized that what I had to do was learn how to bring in business, not grind out more hours, if I wanted to succeed.

The other foundational lesson I learned came from observing the firm's business clients. Contrary to stereotypes, I discovered that the key to smart business was not trying to screw the other side. It was giving them the best deal—the absolute highest value possible—while also achieving your own goals.

The idea of the rainmaker, combined with the understanding that you serve others to succeed, would form the basis of my improbable run as an internet entrepreneur.

## **The Rise of the New (Media) Rainmaker**

Historically, the magical knack of making it rain was predetermined early on. For Native Americans, future rainmakers were chosen to become apprentices at a young age, after showing an innate gift for a relationship with the weather.

In business, future rainmakers were often chosen even earlier: by birth. Being born into the right family under the right circumstances opened up a lot of doors. You had an innate gift for a relationship with *money*, and those who had it.

Our friends the old-school rainmakers of generations past could never imagine in their wildest dreams that such a machine of communication, connection, and commerce could exist.

But it *does* exist, and it's turned "business as usual" on its head with the shift of power to the prospect, not the provider. It was in this new context that I learned the ropes.

In 1998, I took the leap. I quit my promising law firm position, and vowed to make a living on my own terms or starve trying. It took a bit to get going, but between 1999 and 2005 I started three successful businesses powered completely by online marketing and the internet.

I went from someone who was absolutely clueless about marketing to a scholar of advertising, direct marketing, and copywriting techniques dating back to the 1920s. The underlying fundamentals still applied (and they still do), but the context of the internet makes the application very different.

In January 2006, I started a blog called Copyblogger to share what I knew, which quickly evolved into an online magazine that became the centerpiece of the multimillion-dollar company I run today.

I didn't have a particular product or service to sell in the beginning, but it didn't matter. I knew that *building an audience* was the crucial thing, and that the audience would reveal what it needed.

I had found my rainmaker magic. And it was *media*, not traditional concepts of marketing.

## Media, Not Marketing

If you've been following Copyblogger for any length of time, you know I've been teaching people online marketing for over eight years—specifically, something that is now known as content marketing.

Here's the main thing you need to understand about content: It's different from traditional marketing, but it accomplishes what marketing is supposed to do. It's those differences that cause so many people to struggle with content.

At this point, I've come to the conclusion that the terminology is part of the problem.

First of all, there's the word *content*. What a horrible term to characterize what are essentially creative works, whether articles, audio, movies, books, and music. It's all technically "content," like something that fills a bucket. Apparently, the Louvre in Paris is filled with "content" that just so happens to be surrounded by frames. Let's face it: It's a bad term we unfortunately have to work with.

But even worse, I think, is the word *marketing*, especially the way most people use it, which is as a euphemism for selling people crap they don't want.

Like I said, what we're talking about here does what ethical marketing is supposed to do, but it operates in a way where people actually seek it out, instead of trying to avoid it.

Once you tell traditional marketers it's "marketing," though, the traditional practices creep right back in, and customers start running away. And that's the problem.

Let me give you a few examples of why I now say media, not marketing.

## Marvel

I was a Marvel kid growing up. Spider-Man, X-Men, Captain America: These were the characters that fueled my imagination. So when these same characters came back into my adult life through blockbuster films, I was thrilled—and even more thrilled that they were really well done.

But did you know Marvel was in the throes of complete failure 20 years ago? The iconic comic book publisher was bought and turned around, emerging out of bankruptcy in the late 1990s with a new plan.

The X-Men movie franchise began in 2000. But things really cracked wide open in 2002 with the first *Spider-Man* movie, which did a combined billion dollars in ticket and DVD sales.

Contrary to what you might think, Marvel only received a tiny fraction of that haul. They had neither the cash nor the expertise to produce a blockbuster film of that caliber, so they took their characters to the big studios. While they only received a small licensing fee, they also laid out zero cash and took zero risk related to the films.

So what was the strategy?

Marvel was in the business of merchandise to produce revenue: comic books, video games, T-shirts, toys, and scores of other consumer products—you name it. Marvel relied on partnering studios to create multibillion-dollar "commercials" for its characters.

These commercials are called *movies*.

Notice that these “commercials” were not in the form of advertisements that people wanted to avoid. To the contrary, people paid good money to watch the amazing stories that fueled Marvel’s business model. *Because they were well worth watching.*

In 2009, Disney acquired Marvel for \$4.2 billion.

## Love It or List It

How about another example, one that doesn’t involve iconic superheroes?

There’s a cable reality show that my wife watches. It’s called *Love It or List It*, and it’s a Canadian production that airs in several places, including the home and garden channel, HGTV.

Each episode involves a home that is simply not working for the owners. Usually it’s too small for a growing family, poorly configured, hopelessly outdated, or all of the above. The show’s stars are Hilary Farr, a designer, and David Visentin, a real estate agent.

Hilary takes the budget the owners can manage and works up a plan to redesign the home so it will work again for the family (this is the “love it” outcome). David, on the other hand, looks for other homes that work as-is within the purchasing budget to convince the owners to sell and move (this being the “list it” scenario).

So Hilary and David are full-time TV stars, right? Uh, no . . . not on a niche reality show on basic cable. Both continue to be practicing professionals.

Let’s take a closer look at David, who works alongside his father Nick Visentin as a Canadian Realtor for Country Living Realty in Barrie, Ontario. David actively sought out the role on *Love It or List It* by auditioning for it, and likely won the part not only because he knows his stuff, but also because he’s not afraid to be himself.

Do you think David gets plenty of new business thanks to the show? You bet.

Do you think those new clients feel like they were marketed to, such as they might if they chose a Realtor based on—I don’t know—the postcards that stuff the mailbox each month, or the glamour shot

on a bus stop bench, or the cheesy magazine ad claiming to be the “Number One Realtor”?

You get my point. David *demonstrates* his expertise while reaching prospective customers via a media production that people actually enjoy watching.

Now, let’s look at one more example, where the exact same dynamic is at play, but no television show or audition is required.

## Gary V

Gary Vaynerchuk owns a wine shop along with his parents in New Jersey. To grow the business, Gary built an online platform called WineLibrary.com, which is an educational resource for wine buyers that naturally helps move product.

Vaynerchuk then took the next step with Wine Library TV, a self-produced video show starring just him, from a table in the corner of the office above the store. Gary turned traditional “wine talk” on its head, dispensing with elitism and opting for plain-spoken advice and even bombastic commentary on his wine recommendations.

Gary’s DIY wine show grew to an audience of 100,000 people. More important, his wine *business* grew from \$3 million to \$45 million.

From each of these three examples, a media platform performed the role of what marketing is supposed to do, but rarely does anymore. And in each case, a rainmaker emerged.

There’s something that Spider-Man, David Visentin, and Gary Vaynerchuk have in common, and it’s a *personal media brand*. This is what works to generate a flood of business in the age of media, not marketing.

And yes, it will work for you as long as you’re known for value, instead of something more dubious, or worse—nothing at all.

## Why a Personal Media Brand Beats Marketing Every Time

Picture this.

A young lady from a well-known family pouts in dissatisfaction. Despite fantastic wealth, she feels she’s not getting enough attention.

Suddenly, scandal emerges.

An illicit recording has leaked to the public. The sex tape presents our princess in several compromising positions. The corresponding scorn, ridicule, and—most important of all—attention of the world is the result.

But the young lady does not retreat in shame, oh no. To the contrary, she's suddenly everywhere, starring in reality television shows, appearing in films, and landing lucrative endorsement deals.

Now ask yourself: *Is he talking about Kim Kardashian here, or is it Paris Hilton?*

Next question: Do you actually care?

Welcome to the world of being famous for being famous—a term for someone who attains celebrity status for no real reason—instead of for talent, or leadership, or just maybe creating some value for the world.

This crowd generates their own fame by exploiting their existing privilege. And yes, they have an audience. But let's face it: Calling someone *famous for being famous* is an insult, and rightly so.

It's the separation of fame from greatness, from talent, from quality, and from value itself.

Hey, maybe it works for Kim and Paris. But unfortunately, there are plenty of people who think this is the path they should follow to promote their business online. Maybe not the sex tape part, but the misguided notion that all you have to do is become known via the internet.

In other words, they've got the media part down, but their efforts are not functioning as good marketing. They're *known for being known*, and that doesn't translate into economic success.

Let's talk about personal branding, a term I've never liked. It's all about presenting an image, not necessarily value. And in line with the example set by Kim and Paris, it promotes the idea that *being known for being known* is enough, and it's not.

Any fool can become *known*. And they often do.

After all, we all watch the online train wrecks pile up, and we get plenty of opportunities, right?



But do you want to do business with a train wreck? I don't, either.

You need to be known for something more. And that's why the new rainmaker develops a *personal media brand with a solid content foundation*. This is what beats simple personal branding and traditional concepts of marketing any day.

## **A New Rainmaker Is Known for Being a Valuable Resource**

Rule number one for the new rainmaker:

*You must be a valuable information resource via your own media platform, with a key emphasis on providing value.*

As a natural consequence of that, you'll also demonstrate the value of your paid solution.

What does that mean? First, you have to show that you understand your potential customer's problems and desires. And you have to begin to satisfy those problems or desires *before* you stick out your hand for payment.

Here's a great example:

A really nice Australian guy named Darren Rowse created an online resource called Digital Photography School, which provides an immense amount of free information. He makes his money selling ebooks on the very same topics.

Isn't he shooting himself in the foot by giving away his "product" for free? No, because people happily pay for a well-organized, comprehensive treatment of the topic they need help with, even after they've had a free "taste."

The quality of the free information is why Digital Photography School is so well-known and well-respected.

But it's more than that. You sell a lot more books (or any other product or service) when you can demonstrate value upfront. It's a

sharp contrast to what everyone else is doing—claiming authority and value using ordinary “marketing” tactics.

Book-selling entrepreneurs since at least the 1960s have known that giving away the best part of a “how to” book leads to much higher sales. The internet just made it work better.

You sell more, not less; that’s the goal, right?

Now imagine if you’re selling something other than information, like a service.

Wouldn’t demonstrating that you know what you’re doing work better than claiming to be the number-one whatever?

## **A New Rainmaker Is Known for Being an Expert**

It’s absurdly obvious: There’s more information on the internet than any of us will ever be able to consume, on just about any topic you might be interested in studying.

That sounds like a good thing, and it is.

But we also know how incredibly hard it can be to find *good* information and media on the topics we care about.

That’s where the opportunity lies for the new rainmaker: The one who is willing to become an expert in her field, to generously demonstrate that expertise for all to see, and to execute it in an authentic way.

We want to do business with someone who knows what they’re doing and talking about it. Just common sense, right?

The power of expertise, though, goes much deeper than that.

People have problems and desires, and they want solutions. They want you to be the person to help them with those problems and desires, so they can stop searching and begin the process.

When you use your media platform to *demonstrate* that your expertise can help, something very powerful happens.

It’s just like David Visentin in our example from the show *Love It or List It*. Every episode allows David to demonstrate that he knows what he’s doing and knows what he’s talking about. And that opens the door to a powerful psychological mechanism in a very noncreepy, nonmarketing way.

That mechanism is called *authority*, and its effectiveness cannot be overstated. All you need to take away for now is this:

*A personal media brand makes you into a likable expert, and that sets the stage for the rain to fall. That's because media allows authority to be demonstrated and earned, rather than just claimed.*

## **A New Rainmaker Is Known for Being Generous**

Business success through generosity is much older than the internet. Giving first to get later is a timeless reciprocity strategy, which we'll talk about more later on.

The thing about generosity, though, is you have to give without expectation of getting in return—that's the definition of the word.

In my experience, I've always been rewarded for being generous, even though what comes back to me often ends up being pleasantly unexpected. That's also part of what makes generosity-powered business so interesting.

In fact, it's surprising how often the "return" hugely outweighs the original generosity. It truly never ceases to amaze me.

Back when I was giving away valuable information to sell legal and then real estate services, I made a killing, even though I was far from the most experienced or traditionally connected choice.

And maybe most astonishing of all was all the *resistance* I heard from those who did have more experience, when I suggested they try generosity, too.

Think about it. The legal and real estate professions require a license from the state and specialized training. But somehow there was this silly fear that if professionals gave away information, people wouldn't need them! Others just plain hated the idea of giving anything away to people who might not ultimately hire them.

This is what's known as scarcity mindset at its ugliest, and it's completely limiting.

Here's the thing: When you freely share your expertise, perspective, and experience, you're not giving anything away. *You still have it.* Rather than losing something, the sharing leads to more people knowing you and hiring you than would have otherwise.

Again, that's the goal, right?

## **A New Rainmaker Is Known for Being Authentic**

Countless studies show that human beings instantly judge others based on two primary types of social perception: *competence* and *warmth*.

I talked about competence already in the context of expertise and authority. Simply put, you have to actually know what you're doing, so you can help your audience solve its problems.

I also touched on warmth with generosity, but it's more than that.

People want an authentic, relatable human being involved when they buy.

What does that mean?

According to the book *The Human Brand*, countless social psychology studies show that warmth is characterized by people who are:

- ▶ Helpful
- ▶ Honest
- ▶ Trustworthy
- ▶ Generous
- ▶ Fair
- ▶ Understanding

All of this is accomplished by an online media platform, which creates your personal media brand. And that last point—understanding (also known as empathy)—is the key.

Your prospects have problems and desires. You are a trustworthy resource, because you can show that you understand those problems and desires, and that you're here to help.

Is that marketing? Or is that something stronger that accomplishes what marketing is supposed to, except better, and does a whole lot more in the process?

Authority without warmth makes people envious and suspicious. But add in your relatable nature as an authentic human being, and the people you're looking to reach are magnetically attracted to you.

## **Know + Like + Trust = Belief**

You've likely heard it said that selling just about anything comes down to you and your solution being known, liked, and trusted. And it's true, but what's really happening here?

We've seen that being known alone is not enough. But once you are, and you add in a couple more powerful ingredients, you're well beyond just being known for being known.

The first extra ingredient is liking. We simply prefer to do business with people and brands we *like*.

And then we get to *trust*: We have to trust the integrity of the provider as much as we trust that our problem will be solved.

At that point, the result is something magical; it's the special something that makes it rain, even for the Native American shaman:

*Belief.*

Notice the language we use to talk about these behaviors.

We hear about product *evangelists*. We refer to people taking the actions we want online as *conversion*. It truly is a process of transformation . . . from a nonbeliever to a member of your audience.

I'm not going to tell you that it's easy, but it does boil down to a simple structure:

Know + Like + Trust = Belief

Now you're ready to make it rain at will. And enjoy the freedom that comes with it.



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