

CEI 014: Better Content (with C. C. Chapman)

Opening

Hi there and welcome to episode #14 of Connect Engage Inspire, the Firepole Marketing Podcast with Danny Iny, creator of Firepole Marketing and the bestselling author of Engagement From Scratch. Online entrepreneurs like you tune into this podcast every week to learn how to build and engage an audience that connects with humanity and drives their business to success.

Today's episode is part of our old favorite series, where we republish a really good piece of content that has disappeared into our archives; in this case an excellent interview with C. C. Chapman about his book Content Rules. Let's get on with the show.

Danny

Hi C. C. It is a pleasure to speak with you and I want to thank you for taking the time to do this interview.

C. C.

It is nice to be here. Thanks for having me.

Danny

For the benefit of our listeners, C. C. Chapman is a blogger, author, speaker and entrepreneur. His blog is at cc-chapman.com. He is the founder of Digital Dads and is the co-author with Ann Handley from Marketing Profs of a book called Content Rules. C. C. Where did all of this start? How did you get into marketing and entrepreneurship in general?

C. C.

Well it is funny because I graduated from Bentley University outside of Boston and always had a business streak in me. I went to school for mainly computers but, Bentley is a business school and so I always had the business side going on too.

My first experience was I did theatre for a long time with my first love and a friend of mine was making movies. She was going to film school and we were always the actors and then also we started a small production company. The web was just blossoming. It was just happening and I had to teach myself and we had no money. This was pre YouTube and so we kind of did our own marketing and did it ourselves. I just fell in love with the guerrilla style, yknow, I didn't know any rules. I didn't know any rules and just went and did what I needed to do.

And fast forward, I grew up with the web, fell in love with it and spent a lot of time on it and started realizing I could help people embrace technology. I had this interesting niche where I understood the coding and the programming side, but I also had the business and the practical side and realized that not a lot of people had both sides or used both sides of their brain. I can come in and help people do it. I just started doing it on my own and then later started to help companies do it. I ran my own agency for a while and then sold the agency. I have really been blessed and with a lot of hard work and a little bit of luck once in a while it all kind of paid off.

Danny

That is really cool. Something that I sometimes wonder in speaking to some of our audience members, I have heard them voice the same kind of question. You see people who are as busy as you are. You've got your blogging. You've got your Digital Dads company and the book. There is tons of stuff going on. How does your time get allocated? Where does time go?

C. C.

It is difficult. It is a constant struggle, but I think it helps too that I've worked from home, whether it was, yknow on my own or with an agency- I've work from home for five years now. That takes a lot of discipline and you have to plan your day out. Honestly I try every morning to sit down and figure out what are the tasks that have to happen every day and allocate my time that way.

The other side of the coin too is I am a very dedicated father and love and value my time with the family and time away from doing work and so I try to always make time for all of that. It is a lot of planning. It is also a lot of I don't sleep a lot. I am a night owl. I am up late doing stuff and that is when I am the most productive. I guess the key is figuring out what has to be done and not overburdening yourself. I do turn away a lot of things because I just don't have the time. I realize there is nothing worse than overburdening yourself and then being so far behind. Granted we all have those moments and deadlines and what knot. At the same time I try to keep a nice healthy balance. Otherwise I would go insane.

Danny

That is a huge challenge though in maintaining that balance. There is a quote from Leonardo Da Vinci that I really like that really stuck with me years ago. He said that when fortune approaches grab her firmly by the forelock because I swear she is bald in the back. I think the idea behind that is when an opportunity comes you jump on it because you only get the one chance. How do you square that with the reality that you can't take on too much and if you do over commit yourself nothing gets done properly?

C. C.

I'll give you a new quote. Derek Sivers, who is now an author too, but I've

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been a friend of Derek for a long time. He ran a company called CD Baby. He created it and he always had a great outlook on life and I try to follow one of his topics that he talks about, it's the Hell Yeah Approach. If an opportunity comes and I don't go hell yeah I want that then I say no or I pass on it. Now granted sometimes you can't. You need money. You need to make a living. There are other factors, but when it is something that you truly have the choice of saying yes or no to; if I can't say hell yes to it then I try not to say yes at all because there are so many other opportunities out there. It is one of those philosophies I think most people need to think about is that you do only have so many hours in a day and once you get past the making a living and taking care of your family, those type of things you have to do; once you get past those everything else, adding on too many things that you dread doing or you are doing just because of the opportunity, once you start getting a certain number of those things you kind of have to filter them out. That is how I have been approaching it lately and it has been working great. It is hard. Saying no is the hardest thing in the world. It is so much easier to say yes, but it is dangerous too because if you say yes too much it hurts you in a big way.

Danny Yeah there is I think it is *The Beginning Of Enchantment*, Guy Kawasaki's new book. He's got a quote there. I don't know who it is from. He says, "The big challenge with books is that it takes so much less time and energy to buy one than it does to read one."

C. C. Yeah that is very true.

Danny It is the same thing with projects and opportunities right? Saying yes is easy, but then that commits you to days, weeks, months and sometimes years of stuff that you've got to get done and that is a huge challenge.

C. C. Yeah it is difficult. I just had breakfast with a friend a couple of days ago and we were discussing how we both got really busy Septembers because we both do a lot of speaking and we said yes to different commitments, but now I am like oh man; we are going to be on the road a whole bunch in a couple of months. It is not dread because I enjoy speaking, but woe. Did I stretch myself too thin and am I doing too much? It is a constant struggle and I don't think anybody totally masters it. You just kind of tame it for a little while.

Danny So how does that work for you. For example if you are going to be on the road a lot and you are functionally a stay at home dad. I guess that is not exactly the same thing as being a dad who works from home, but it is very similar.

C. C. I try not to be gone any longer than I need to be. I mean like I don't know

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how people do it where they go from city to city to city and they are gone for two weeks at a time, but I could never do that. It also helps that my kids are a little bit older. My kids are in middle school now and so they are older. If they get home from school and need to be alone an hour there is not any problem. That is not a big deal. Our neighbors all have kids and they are around. My wife does work full time. It is one of those things where we figured out the balance and my wife and I, God bless her and she is a saint, but we have a very open communication and so we talk about everything. If it slows to where things are getting kind of sketchy then I've pulled back on things too or if it is getting too stressful. We've made it work and it is never easy. While I love traveling I am a total home body too. I love nothing better than just curling up on the couch with my wife or spending time with the kids. It is a constant battle.

Danny

Okay C. C. I have a question for you about the whole stay at home dad and being with your family aspect. I do work from home myself and not just because I love the commute. It is a lifestyle that works for me. At the same time it raises a lot of questions and I read, I think this was on Penelope Trunk's blog probably a couple of years ago. She was saying how her argument is basically that guys don't do too well as stay at home dads with very few exceptions and she says that in most cases people who are "stay at home dads" are actually either kind of lost or they are figuring out what to do with themselves. They are not in a good place or they've got like half a dozen projects on the go, in which case they are not really stay at home dads. They are dads with flexible schedules. What do you think about that?

C. C.

I've never classified myself as a stay at home dad ever. I don't see myself in it and so I guess I kind of agree with her. I've never told anyone that I am a stay at home dad. I just happen to work out of the house. My kids are gone all day at school and so they are not at home. My office just happens to be in my house and so I think she's right. I work for myself, but I do have plenty of projects going on, sometimes too many. Yeah being a stay at home dad, if you are a true stay at home dad you are a stay at home dad. Your kids are first and foremost and you are there. I think most stay at home dads and most stay at home moms too for the most part are there when the kids are younger and when they need that constant attention. I don't classify myself as a stay at home dad. I know plenty of stay at home dads and they are awesome, but I don't see myself as one.

Danny

What is a Digital Dad?

C. C.

A Digital Dad, it is funny. It is one of those names where I was starting a website. I wanted to start a website where I could focus my energy on being a dad and I found it and bought it and really wanted it. Digital Dad,

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the website, focuses on the fact that there is more to being a dad than just the parenting side. You are a guy first. You still like sports or you like cooking or movies. We like all these other things besides just the fact that we love being a dad. That is what we focused on with the website. Back 20 or even 30 years ago dads were out in the workforce for the most part right? That is what they were doing. They were working first and foremost and then they came home and were dads.

Digital Dads today, we are doing different things. We are actively involved in our families, but we are also working hard to bring money home. We can connect in ways we were never able to do. Technology allows us to stay connected to our kids. Our kids are more technical than we ever were before too and so it is a lot of things.

Danny

A lot of the people in our audience are parents. How would they, and a lot of them are men also, a certain proportion are men and parents so dads; how would someone know if Digital Dads is a good fit for them? Tell me a little more about what you guys do and what is there.

C. C.

If you are a guy, parent or otherwise, if you are a guy then digitaldads.com is for you. It really is. Every Thursday right now because it is football season we have a big NFL thing. Saturday mornings we have our cooking. On Fridays we have video highlights. On Mondays we have Digital Dads TV, which is curling on a hiatus. Our tag line is, “where a dad can be a guy.” It is funny because there is very little parenting writing going on. Someone called us the man cave of the internet, which I think is way too big a praise because I think there are other sites that do that better than us, but it is really a place where men and women come. We have a large number of women readers too, but it is focusing on the things that and all of our writers focus on writing about things they like doing. We have someone who writes about fashion and we talk about sex or business or this morning I wrote an article about Apple Camp when I took my daughter to Apple Camp. That was kind of interesting on multiple levels as a marketer and as a parent.

I think anybody, check it out! We have so much different content that you never know what you are going to get.

Danny

Well everyone you heard him and you’ve got to go check it out. Let’s talk about Content Rules. Actually I will share. We connected just a few weeks ago by email about something unrelated and I was like hey let’s do this interview and you agreed to do it. Then I realized that ok crap. That book that has been sitting on my to read list for the last six months I’ve got to read it. I have been reading it nonstop for the last week and I’m almost done and it is fantastic. I am a fast reader. I can usually get through things pretty quickly and yours is the kind of book that you really

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can't read, like you can't speed through it because you want to read a section and then take notes about what you are going to do. It is all about all of these ideas for action steps.

C. C. I love hearing that.

Danny Where did this come from? There is tons of research in there and tons of ideas.

C. C. Ann Handley from Marketing Profs, my co-author, called me up and said C. C. I want to write this book. I want you to write it with me. What do you think? It is funny that my first reaction was who would really need this book? Do people really need to be convinced that content has to be a part of their marketing no matter what they do? It is funny because that mantra kept coming up the whole time we were writing the book. We kept saying do people really need this book. Nine months after publishing it we realized yes people do, but we had no idea.

Yeah there was a lot of what we kind of broke out what we wanted to do and we attacked it. One of the biggest things we wanted to do with the book was we wanted to make sure that not only was it a book that we hoped would inspire people and that would help get them excited about, oh wow I hate those books that make you so excited that when you get done you go well now what. What do I do now? So we really wanted to make sure that we wrote a book that inspired people, but then also getting them to say well here is what you can do. Rather than just us saying you could do this or you could do that we wanted to make sure that we pulled in a variety of different companies from every budget and every size and every industry to say look. Here is how they are doing it. I think no matter what you are in, if you read this book you are going to find at least one example, probably a lot more, but at least one that you can go oh wow! I can do that. And when we did the case studies at the end we made a very big point. We called them success stories because case studies can be boring and we actually have a bulleted list on every one of them and we labeled ideas you can steal because we want people to take this and go look you could do this too.

Hearing you say things like I have to stop and I want to take notes; that is perfect. That is what we wanted to hear from people because we refused to write a book that was going to be all technology focused or would be out of date as soon as it was printed and it has been really rewarding to talk to people and hear how they are using the book and hearing how the examples have helped inspire them. It never gets old to hear that.

Danny I can imagine you do it very well. My criteria when I am reading in terms of can I skim or do I need to keep going is this. If I am reading something

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I think to myself well if someone asked me basically the question that this is the answer to would I be able to figure this out on the fly. If the answer is yes then I don't need to write anything down. I can just move on and trust that when the situation comes up I will work it out myself.

You've actually got tons and tons of useful information where I want to say okay there is this idea and that idea. You give ideas rather than recipes and so it has only taken just photocopy a page and go put it into practice and then I've got it and we'll see. Then how am I going to customize this to my needs and for my audience? There is actually a lot of work coming out of the book. So I guess to the listeners of this interview, if you don't like homework the book isn't for you, but if you like results then the book is for you. Figure it out.

C. C. I like that. I like that one a lot.

C. C. No not at all and I don't think people are just thinking of content as just writing. They need to really open up their brains. The way we define content in the book is it is anything that you create and share to tell your story and so that could be writing. It could be photography. It could be video. It could be newsletters. It could be a lot of different things. It is anything you create.

I will tell you some of the best examples of content are the small zero to ten employee businesses because you know your business better than anybody. You've got that unique voice. Trust me. Bigger companies may have bigger budgets, but they also have legal departments and red tape and hoops to jump through. I think this is one of those things where you can start tomorrow for sure.

Even if you are not a writer, if you say you don't have the time that is a poor excuse because I would argue if you don't have the time to market your business then you've got issues. I would imagine most people listening live and breathe their business and so they will find the time if there is a value in it. I think you need to realize that there is value in content. If you are going to be online in any capacity and in today's world you do have to be online in some capacity then you've got to create content that is going to break out and get people's attention, show up in search results and all that stuff. It can be something as simple as, if you don't have the time or the skill you can bring in a freelancer or bring in what we call brand journalists. Bring in somebody who is good at writing and create ten pieces of writing that you can put out over the next several months. There are lots of ways you can do it. There are plenty of freelance writers out there who will work with you if you want to put up some writing and there are freelance photographers and videographers. Bring them in and interview the staff and interview your customers and

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get them to say why they love your product or your service. There are so many different things that can be done on so many different channels.

Don't just think it is writing. Don't just think it is setting up a blog and Facebook and Twitter because it is not. You can set up all those things, but if you are not saying and sharing stuff that actually matters and engages with the customers nobody is going to care. If you are a restaurant and all you do is tweet out the special every day is that a good idea? Yeah it is a good idea, but if that is the only thing you are doing then it is not enough. I think that is one of our rules is embracing your publisher. It is really a mindset and you need to get into the fact that you are going to be sharing stuff and sharing your business and your story on an ongoing long-term basis. Content is not a short term play. It is not a get rich quick scheme. It takes time and effort to really get there. We like to tell it as it is. I wish I could sugar coat it and tell you there is a magic formula, but there is not. It is different for every single one.

I do a lot of consulting for companies of all sizes. It is difficult and it takes time and everyone that I talk to is a little bit different. Don't be scared of it. Take your time.

Danny

I completely agree with you when you say that I don't have time is a poor excuse. My partner Peter likes to say if you don't have time for marketing pretty soon you'll have lots of time for marketing.

C. C.

Very true!

Danny

You definitely have got to make the time and I think you said something really important. If you are not a writer or if content creation is not your expertise then get someone for whom it is. Maybe you could talk through a little bit how would someone go about doing that? Let's say I acknowledge that content is important. I am on board with in bound marketing. I recognize that is not going to have returns right away, but I am not in business for the next three weeks. I'm in business for an extended period of time and I want to create something smart and sustainable and I can't do this myself. I have a certain amount of time, but my skills are not suited to be able to produce good content within that time frame. Who should I get? Where should I find them? How does that work? Should I just go on like Elance and find someone who will write me 50 articles for \$10 each?

C. C.

It is a slippery slope here because you can post a job opening just like if you were hiring someone to help you do another task. You are hiring someone to help you. Now could you hire someone just to write you ten articles and publish them? Yeah you could and that might work depending on your industry, but at the same time it is more than that

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because to really be effective you want this person, whoever you bring on board, to really have your voice and to understand your business and your customer. Just to say hey I'll pay you \$10 for an article is not going to capture that at all. It might get you some good temporary results and get you on the radar and get you started, but the long term you have to start thinking about well what if my customers talk back to me good or bad? What am I going to say to them? How am I going to say that? You've really got to, this person you want to hire, think of someone like a journalist almost. They are going to come in, spend time with your company, get to know you, get to know your voice in order to be able to write on your behalf. I am not a big fan of ghost writing. I am not a big fan of that at all. This having someone else write and then slapping the CEOs name on it as being the writer, I am not a big fan of that. I know it happens all the time, but you want to bring somebody in who is really going to be able to work with you as part of the team. It can't just be off on a silo where you just say hey go make some content magic happen for me. It doesn't work that way.

Danny

How can you do that in a cost effective way? Let's say I am a small business and I am willing to put some time into this. I am willing to even put some money into this, but I can't afford to hire a full time staffer to do this. What are some options that are available to me?

C. C.

You could bring somebody in short term for a few hours a month just to get you started or spend a few grand. It depends on the quality and all of that of course, but I mean spend some money. It is going to cost you money. If you are not going to do it internally it is going to cost money. Yeah you could probably get an intern to help you do something, perhaps a journalism major or an English major who is good at writing if that is what you are looking for or a film student. There are ways to get interns and to have the help, but that only goes so far.

If you do this right, if you are not going to do it internally yourself you are going to have to pay money plain and simple, but it doesn't have to cost you a lot. Bring somebody in and do a series of lunch and learns so that your team does learn how to do this stuff. Hire somebody to come in and create some video pieces for you to get you started. Just like you budget for print ads or radio ads or anything else you do it costs money. There is nothing to say either, especially if you are a small business, maybe you can work out some sort of barter agreement with somebody. I know I've done that with companies before and there are always ways you can get creative with business. Maybe there is something you can do to help them. Never be afraid. Small business owners are some of the most creative people I know as far as making things work on a small budget. There are a million ways you can make this work. Find a local college if you are really strapped. There are plenty of people out of work right now. There are

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plenty of people you can find who would be more than willing to help you for less than they might have in the past and so there are lots of creative ways to do it.

Danny

We are getting close to the half hour and I want to be respectful of your time. Whenever we do an interview there is a question I try to end with. We have just done this interview. People have spent half an hour listening to everything you have to say and you have been spectacular. You have been persuasive and they are like yes content rules. I have to do something about this. I have to integrate content into my marketing plan and into my business strategy. You know how impressed I am with this? I am so impressed that I am going to clear my afternoon. I am clearing three hours this afternoon to get the ball rolling. My question is what should they do with those three hours? Now the first 15 minutes they are going to go to Amazon and buy your book, but then they've got two hours and 45 minutes. What should they do with that time?

C. C.

The very first thing you should do is I would advise you to go and look at what your competition is doing. See what they are doing in this space if anything at all. If your competition is not doing something then look at your industry as a bigger or larger picture. Spend the time seeing what other people are doing and engaging in and if you find nothing in the first half hour; if you find nothing from your competitors or your industry as a whole then you've got tons of opportunities. If you are not finding it there branch out and then do you know what you do? Go with something you are passionate about. I am a big photographer, the big outdoors guy. Figure out what you are passionate about and go find content just being out there and I think you will start seeing the different variety of what people are creating. You will start seeing companies making videos that you never thought would be making videos or maybe people are blogging and you had no idea they were doing it. Everybody is trying to figure this out right now, even people who are doing it really well and doing it long term on an overall basis. This is difficult and so spend that time researching, seeing what is out there.

Then also spend the last half hour looking at yourself. One of our rules is play to your strengths. Figure out, I've looked at all this really cool stuff, budget notwithstanding so forget your budget for one second. What kind of stuff would I enjoy creating? At the end of the day you are going to have to create some of this yourself. You can't just outsource it all. Nobody has the budget to outsource everything. Figure out what you enjoy doing. Do you enjoy photography? Are you comfortable having a conversation or maybe Twitter is good for you. Do you like taking pictures? Me I hate video editing. I love making videos, but I hate video editing. It is why I don't do a lot of videos, but I can take a picture like

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there in this business. I love doing it.

Spend that last half hour figuring out what it is that you enjoy doing and what are some things you could start creating content with just brainstorming a list. Don't worry about the budget. Just put it down. If I could create anything what kind of stuff would I be creating and go from there. That is a great last question by the way. I love that.

Danny

Thank you. I am glad to hear that. And I am really glad to hear your answer because that is just fantastic advice. I think all of our listeners are going to get a lot out of doing that for two hours and 45 minutes and they really should spend the first 15 minutes buying the book. Everyone is here long term. You know that we don't use affiliate links or anything when we are promoting books. It is a great book so go buy it if you want a road map to inbound marketing and content marketing strategy.

On that note I want to wrap up. C. C. I want to thank you very much for taking the time to do this. It has been fantastic and a lot of fun for me. I was actually feeling pretty tired earlier and I feel all energized now, which is great.

C. C.

I love that. I love doing that to people.

Danny

Well thank you. Thank you very much. I want to wish you tons of success with the book and with your business and with Digital Dads, with your blog and with everything you've got going on. I really do encourage our readers and our web listeners not just to buy the book, but check out your whole digital footprint because there is a lot of really interesting stuff there.

C. C.

Thank you very much and thanks for having me. I love doing stuff like this and so it was a lot of fun.

Closing

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