

CONTENT MARKETING AUTHORITY BUILDING, ONE ANSWER AT A TIME

Cindy: Earl, it is so fantastic to have you here on the show. For people who are just listening, who are tuned into [7 Figure Furnace 00:10] today, who haven't heard about you, why don't you just tell us a little bit about Earl Flormata?

Earl: I'm known on the internet as the Evil Marketing Genius, everyone hires me to sell all sorts of random thing for them, from software to memory foam dog beds, that's probably the weirdest thing I've ever sold. Smiley faces and ring tones probably are up there, too.

Cindy: Oh my gosh.

Earl: Can you believe it?

Cindy: That's crazy. I think the most random thing that I've sold was a piano, via ... It was a piano and it wasn't just a piano, it was a piano and about a three-year supply of supplies for a survivalist bunker.

Earl: Was that the same offer? That'd be one hell of a thing ...

Cindy: It was the same customer, it was via Amazon and I can just see someone sitting around playing piano and eating their little supplies.

Earl: Survival stuff and here's my piano that I play with my knife.

Cindy: Oh dear. Today you're going to be talking to us about content marketing, which I'm excited about hearing, because I want to learn more about this. First of all, how did you get started in content marketing?

Earl: Dragged, kicking and screaming. I didn't want to go, actually, I just fell into it. My background is, actually I'm a programmer, and then I became an IT guy. Then someone said, "Hey, Earl, you'd be really good at marketing." To prove them wrong, I went and did it. I was just going to say, "Hey look, I failed. It was miserable, it didn't work out." Ended up making more money in a month than I did in a year and I'm like, "I think I'm in the wrong industry." Then I switched gears. Literally, dragged, kicking and screaming, I didn't want to go. Now here I am.

Cindy: That's like when you ask your husband to do the laundry, your husband has to do the laundry and you throw in a red sock just so that you screw the whole thing up, you actually made it work.

Earl: I tried to screw it up, I actually did, I honestly did. I did everything that I thought that you probably shouldn't do and then, who knew, it worked. I'm like, "Well damn."

Cindy: Oh gosh. What is, for out listeners, what is content marketing?

Earl: Content marketing is really just exposing what you know, as an expert, putting it out there on the internet, being helpful and useful to people. Answering their questions before they ask them, and in doing so, you set yourself [inaudible 02:49], everyone else charges for all this extra stuff and the hilarious thing is you give it away during coffee meetings anyway. Why not systemize it to give it away properly?

Cindy: Okay, so how do you go about doing that?

Earl: Structuring it. There's a couple of different frame works that you want to look at for putting your content in, such that it makes it easier to put it out there. Content marketing is a daunting thing, people look at it and they go, "Well, I don't want to make my own Wikipedia, that's a lot of stuff."

If you start building things correctly, you end up making, literally funny enough, your own Wikipedia on your particular subject matter expert. Before you know it, these little steps toward thought leadership end up becoming thought leadership. How about going there.

There's a couple of different frame works that I utilize. One of them comes from Micheal Cannings, from ages and ages ago, from a system that he used to exploit the video systems. Where people would put a bunch of videos up on the internet and that would just rank like crazy. This was circa 2000, holy crap, 2000, so sixteen years ago. I'm still using his frame work and it's called the 10 X 10 X 4, it's a bunch of questions that you answer, prior to the customer asking them.

Everyone's got the frequently asked questions, then you've got the should ask questions, those are the meat ones. The frequently asked questions, I'll give you an example. A good example is the poor guy who works at the front of Disney Land. He gets asked the same question a bajillion times a day and I'm surprised that he doesn't go postal and start killing people. It's the question, where's the castle?

Everyone's got this question that gets asked thirty thousand times a week, where's the castle, where's the castle, where's the castle? All he needs to do is answer it on a video on the internet. Then, hilariously enough, that ranks like crazy because people are actually Googling that thing. What people don't realize is You Tube is the second biggest search engine in the world. Nobody wants to read anything so they put it on You Tube, put the answer in, and if you show up guess what? You're the new expert.

Cindy: Do you mainly do video? Is that your thing?

Earl: No, we actually do all of the above and the reason why I say do video first is because video gives you multiple ways to strip that video out and turn it into more things. A video gives you a video, obviously. If you work out the audio, now you have the audio. If you take that audio and transcribe it, now you have an article.

Cindy: Okay, yeah.

Earl: Take the video, take still shots of the video, overlay a couple of screens and do some text, now it turns into a slide show.

Cindy: That sounds pretty easy then. For people that are putting things together, it's not that hard, then you've got a whole bunch of different content that you can just spit out there.

Earl: Precisely, and you have no idea what your readership or listenership wants to do. You have no idea if they want to watch a video. You have no idea if they'd rather listen to it in the car on the way to work, to the office. You have no idea if they're a reader.

For example, everyone tells me video is the best converting thing in the universe, but not for me, I actually hate the video. I don't like watching video, because it goes at the pace of slowest listener. That's what people are supposed to do, you're supposed to pace it out so that everybody can benefit. I read like a demon, apparently. My dad beat me into speed reading as a young child, so I speed read everything. If I read something I can absorb that content faster and this is why we do video. You do the video, you do the audio, and you do the text so that people can consume it the way they want to consume it.

Cindy: How do you find which niche, maybe we could talk a little bit about how ... If you're going to build, maybe an authority site or something, how do you determine what's going to work?

Earl: The funny thing is you can find what's going to work just by asking Google. Google trend is your friend. You can look at Google trend and it will actually show you what's working, what's not working, et cetera, et cetera.

I'll give you an example, I published some books at Amazon and I had no idea what the hell to publish, I'm not a writer, I decided, literally, outsource the entire thing. All I did was I looked up, what's trending? I found out what was trending, I got in front of that and I just pushed that, and answered the questions that people particularly ask.

One of the books, for example, was on diabetes. I'm not a doctor, I have a hard time spelling diabetes. What I ended up doing was ...

Cindy: You can read it really fast though.

Earl: I can read it really fast, but if you ask me to spell it I'll be like blah, blah. What happened was I just looked up ones they weren't asking about these things. The hilarious thing is there wasn't a collection of answers on the most basic of things like, once you get diagnosed, now what? Do I have to change my diet? Do I have to change the way, can I not drink soft drinks anymore? How many times will I have to stab myself with that thing and check my blood? All those questions that people have, there's not one little collection of them all.

The hilarious thing is once you've got this going, you can then leverage it. Yahoo Answers, Quora, there's a million question sites out there, they're all asking the same thing. What happens is you build this content frame work of a base, and then you push it out there. Then you just answer people's questions with the answers that you've already pre-recorded, and you look like a genius.

Cindy: That's awesome. I'm trying to find a website that I stumbled across the other day. You can actually put a word in, and it pins what, how, who, where. It creates an entire ... Do you remember what it's called?

Earl: I know what you're talking about, but it's on the tip of my tongue, too. I don't remember what it's called.

Cindy: Okay.

Earl: I have seen it and I used it a week ago.

Cindy: I will find it, I will find it. I don't know. I will mention it later on once I work out, oh, here it is. Here it is, we're getting really close. Sorry, here you go if you're listening. It's worth it, seriously, it's really, really cool. Nope, so close, nearly there. Answer The Public, that's it, Answerthepublic.com.

Earl: Answer the public, yes, yes, yes.

Cindy: Answer the public. I think that will work in perfectly with what we're talking about here, because you can put it a word, and then it creates a bunch of questions relating to that. It actually searches Google and it finds questions that people type into Google, then pulls them. You could take those and build an entire website around those, or a print out or something.

Earl: Yeah, totally. Auto Google, Auto Complete is also your friend, if you start typing something and Google suggests a bunch of stuff, that means people are searching for it because that's what people are typing in t the search query.

You can also look at, Quora was a good one, mosaicHUB is another good one. There's all sorts of these places, even LinkedIn. On LinkedIn, on the boards, people ask questions all the time. If you answer these questions and the neat part is because if you've done it through video, audio and an article and you point to this website blog or whatever else, they like you right away. Because they get to see you talk and see you speak and see you move and do your thing. You magically build a report with a gajillion people over night.

The secret sauce was taking that one video, pointing them to a landing page. The landing page goes, "Hey, you want to see nineteen more of these?" They're like, "Well, yeah." If they want to know about that thing, they want to know as much as they possibly can. They put in their email, once you have the email, you're a marketer, too, you know what to do with that.

Cindy: Yeah, but if you're answering a whole bunch, you've already created the content, haven't you? You can just use the content that you're answering all these other questions, on your blog and around the place, and then turn it into a give-away thing and get people on your mailing list. Then, is that where you start to monetize it, how do you actually monetize, where do you make your money?

Earl: Typically you make it on, well, evil marketing guy, you do it everywhere. What happens is that, if I wanted to do it everywhere, I would monetized the site.

Number one, after entering the twenty questions, I also would ... A lot of sites don't explain what all the jargon in their place means. There's three letter, four letter, five letter acronyms that are normal common place in the place that we might work, but the outside has no idea what the hell that means. Explaining that stuff in plain English goes a long way, too. I actually make a dictionary, depending on the type of client that I work with. We literally have a letter from A all the way to Z, with one term in their space and they just shoot these things out again.

Monetizing this is simple, you put Google Ad Words, AdSense on the pages where you have all this free content and then if they want more, they type in their email address. They get the whole thing all bundled up in a a pretty looking PDF or video or whatever, what have you. Once they've got that, then they want to see the rest of your stuff because you've given away what more than most people charge for, in a single swing. They're like, "If this guy's giving this stuff way, what the heck is he selling? I need to buy this guys stuff." Sometimes it's just a reciprocity thing, you've given them so much, they just want to buy your stuff as a way to thank you.

You give them that trip wire, that five dollar, seven dollar item. "Hey, this is awesome, five bucks, for the whole collection? Yeah, wonderful." If you want to see a really good example of this, there's a site called BabyPips, Babypips.com. It teaches people how to trade on the foreign exchange market.

The hilarity of the entire thing is that they give away the whole course for free, whole course is for free. If you just sit there and hit the next button the entire time, you can get the whole course for free. If you want it in one happy looking PDF that you can actually reference, it's ten bucks or whatever it is. Instead of sitting there and going like this and pushing the button a million and hitting print screen, you just give the guy ten bucks and it looks nice, as opposed to a webpage.

Cindy: It's easy, you can just flick through it, you can refer to it without having to go back X number of pages. People don't mind paying for it, if it's going to be an easily digestible format.

Earl: Most definitely.

Cindy: Do you do affiliate promotions as well? Do you promote other people’s products if it ties in with what you're doing? Or do you generally try and keep the sale in with your products?

Earl: Oh no, we monetize it every way possible. What happens is that sometimes, depending on the site or whatever else, we'll allow sponsors to come on board and they can advertise as a banner. We can affiliate, if there's no sponsor at that given point in time, we do Google AdSense. You monetize this thing like crazy. Here's a bunch of recommended resources, guess what, they're pointed to Amazon. Guess what, they're all my affiliate link. Even if you don't buy something from me, I've just cookied you. If you buy a lawnmower, I make money, yay.

Cindy: Or a piano and three years supply of survival ...

Earl: Right, and a dog bed, so there you go.

Cindy: Right. That is awesome. Do you have any other things that you can share, as far as content marketers go? People are starting, what other things do they really need to know?

Earl: People think that you have to make so much content, it's crazy, actually, no you don't. Funny, it's never the thing, it's the thing that sells the thing.

Cindy: Can you hear that? I hope this isn't too loud, but there's a big helicopter going right ...

Earl: It sounded like a helicopter.

Cindy: We're not going to war or anything. It's flying really close. Sorry, guys, carry on.

Earl: I remember Frank Kern and John Reece were harassing somebody with a helicopter once and that was hilarious. Maybe they're bugging you. Anyway, other things that you can do is keeping top of mind. There's another campaign that I run called 365. What happens is that you actually come up with three hundred and sixty five interesting facts about your subject.

Cindy: Oh wow okay.

Earl: For example, I used to be a chief marketing officer for a very large app company. What we ended up dong was putting out funny facts about apps. One of the funny facts was more people in the world own a smart phone than a toothbrush. Which is very unfortunate, but it's a funny fact that, top of mind, people are like, "Well, that's cool." You just drop these things out through social media.

What happens is you feed these things out. Day one, you push it to the blog, day two you push it to Twitter. Wait two days, push it to Facebook, wait another two days, push it to LinkedIn. The reason for doing these things, if you can tie those things in with the video that you made earlier, all the better.

What happens is that you can just recycle, reuse the same content over and over and over again because you have no idea what's going to trigger somebody's interest. You write these seven hundred, eight hundred, thousand word articles or whatever content type you create, but there's lots of little gold nuggets in there. The funny thing is, everyone's finding ...

Cindy: Not everything is going to apply to everyone, or appeal to everyone.

Earl: Right. You have no idea which gold nugget will attract people. There's an article that's three years old, but it's an evergreen and you look at a couple of different angles and you push out those angles through, even the funny facts that you push out, you can get the funny facts yourself. If you pull them out of your articles, you push them out in social media. The toothbrush thing for the mobile app might be the thing that gets you the hundred thousand dollar client. You have no idea what gets their attention. On some day someone has an app idea, they've always wanted to act on it, they finally see the toothbrush thing and they're like, "That's freaking hilarious, I'm going to call this guy." That's legit happened.

Cindy: That is cool. With the toothbrush and phone thing, you're grateful that they're on the phone and not face-to-face.

Earl: Right, exactly. A lot of the clients I don't actually meet. The funny thing is the joke has come up, the clients actually admit that they haven't brushed their teeth yet. I'm like, "Thank you for meeting me on the phone."

Cindy: Wow. That's beautiful. For people that want to just get started, we've discussed it. A lot of what you can do, just go start finding questions, answering them. Create videos, use those videos and then apply them. Can you think of any little bits and pieces that we might have missed? That seems pretty straight forward for anyone to just come and pick up and get happening, right?

Earl: That's all there is to it. The funny thing is I've told this to countless, countless people. Only a handful have taken me up on it as clients. People who do this and then the funny thing is they become a celebrity in their industry.

There was one guy in the financial services industry. Everybody in the financial services wants marketing and nobody wants to do everything. The hilarious thing is he took my words to heart, actually shot a bunch of these things. The funny thing is did it all wrong, he screwed up the structure, he screwed up everything. Still, he made a bunch of these videos, he did it with bad lighting, he looked like he was in a cave, he looked scary. I'm like, "Dude, that was horrible."

The funny thing is he went to a convention, I kid you not, three months later and everyone there knew who he was. Everyone there knew his name and everyone was mad because he was giving away stuff that they charged for. The customers now love him ...

Cindy: The funny thing is most of the content that you can present is already on Google, you just have to go and find it. You don't have to be an expert. Knowing something about a topic makes it easier, but you don't have to be an expert to begin with.

Earl: No, not even. You can instantly become an expert. Remember the definition of an expert is just some guy who knows more stuff than you. If they read thirty five articles on something, guess what? They probably know more about it than you do. Immediately they can answer the most basic of questions because they've seen those same facts presented over and over and over again. They've had that repetition, they can now say it with a air of confidence saying, "Hey, I've seen this a billion times. Guess what? This is the answer to your question, boom."

Cindy: Yeah, absolutely.

Earl: Just give yourself the confidence. If you know more than somebody else and you're willing to share, then they're happy to give you the business.

Cindy: Do you do these for your own websites or do you find clients and then you build them out for clients? Can you recommend, if you're doing it for clients, can you recommend any way to go and get clients, if our customers are interested? We don't want to steal your clients.

Earl: There's so many clients, it's insane. This is like shooting fish in a barrel, in terms of building out a content marketing strategy. There aren't a lot of people who are doing this properly. Even the guys who claim to be content marketing specialists, aren't doing this properly, there's a lot of people out there. The funny thing is this is the basis of all SEO, search engine optimization needs good content. If you're not making good content, I don't care, you're not going to rank for long. If you're racing somebody with a good content plan, they'll beat you. That is why this is so important.

Search engine marketing, if you're paying for your traffic and all that kind of stuff. Doing this stuff builds a quality score base, Google sees you as relevant. If you have all this stuff on your landing page, all of a sudden your clicks are cheaper.

The same thing goes with Facebook relevancy, I like this, I like that, da, da, da. They look on your page, they find stuff that they like and all of a sudden you're more likable, you're more relevant, you're more giving than everybody else. This stuff feeds right into social media, too. You answer the questions and people respond back and if you take that engagement then you ask them, what else do you want to know? They give you the next set of questions that everybody's going to ask you anyway. Then you answer them all ...

Cindy: Then you save their time, yeah, and you have a whole bunch of extra content.

Earl: You have to answer the question anyway. Someone's going to call you, they're going to ask you about this stuff, you might as well turn it into a content piece. Now, the shy people who are too afraid to ask you in person, I need to know the answer to this. You've given it to them in a nice easy, friendly way, if they're weird and they don't want to talk to you. They can watch the video and "Look, this guy said this. That's awesome, let's do this." That's how it goes.

Cindy: Awesome. Thank you so much for sharing a whole bunch of actual actionable content. I think our guys are going to get a real kick out of this. Do you have last minute bits and pieces that you might want to share with our 7 Figure Furnace listeners?

Earl: Sure, once you have all this stuff down, believe it or not, you actually have enough for a book. Once you'd done all these steps, you actually have enough for a book. Here's the hilarious thing, if you want to beat your competition to whatever contract or client or whatever else, publish that book. Publish it on Amazon, now all of a sudden you're an Amazon publisher, and you're like, what?

When you want to go beat out the competition, this is the evil marketing trick, print out a legit, print out a copy of the book, have one physically done, hard copy. When you go to the client to make your pitch, after your presentation, ask them to whom you should you make out the book to. No one's going to read your damn book, okay, no one's going to read the book. In the back of their mind, everyone will be like, "Wait, that guy wrote the book on that subject."

Cindy: Mm-hmm (affirmative), instant authority. Then it ends up on their bookshelf, too. People will come and see that.

Earl: Then you get hired for the gig, and then other people will go hey, whatever, and they pass the book along and you get another gig. It's crazy, how much was that book? Eighteen dollars to print or something like that? You win five figure contracts with this kind of stuff. That's exactly how you use this content to get ahead.

Cindy: That is fantastic. Well, thank you so much for joining me, Earl. It is great to have had you here. I appreciate all the input that you've had.

Earl: Cheers, no worries. Thanks, Cindy, for having me.

Cindy: Take care. Bye.

Earl: Bye for now.

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