

Blue Penguin Development

HOW TO BE A LEADING EXPERT



Michael: Hi, it's Michael Katz with Blue Penguin Development and welcome to "How to Be a Leading Expert." Let me tell you a quick story. This is my son, Evan. When Evan was about 12 years old, this is when we took this picture. We went on vacation in a town called Northampton, Massachusetts, which is this funky little town about 100 miles west of Boston.

It's the kind of place where in the summer they have really big sidewalks down the main street and you have all kinds of people playing music and selling crafts and paintings. We're walking around and I kind of jokingly said to Evan who had only recently learned how to juggle. You know Evan I bet if you did some juggling here that you could make a little money.

Much to my surprise because back then he was kind of a shy kid, he said okay and so he takes his beanbags out of his pocket, which at the time he carried with him 24 hours a day. He throws his baseball hat upside down on the ground and he starts juggling. Meanwhile, my wife and our other two kids stand back like we don't know him.

We're watching and maybe 30 seconds into it, somebody walks by and drops change into his hat and then another minute goes by and somebody drops a dollar into his hat and then another minute another dollar. I started thinking juggling on the street is better than actually being a consultant.

Then something really interesting happened. This older man stopped and looked at Evan for a while and then he said to him hey kid how long you been a professional and Evan all the while juggling said well you know I'm not really a professional. I'm just starting out. I've got a lot to learn, blah, blah, blah and the guy – I'll never forget it, like holds his hand up and says kid if you're making money you're a professional.

I remember that really clearly because what Evan learned at that point was that you become a professional as soon as somebody's willing to pay and the interesting thing is that this applies not just to 12 year old jugglers. It also applies to people like us – adults who are selling a professional service. The thing is many of us have a long time before we actually feel comfortable with saying we're professionals let alone experts.

The thing is the day will never arrive where the *New York Times* calls you up and says you know we've been studying you and you are now a professional. There's no certification saying you're qualified for this in particular and so you have to sort of pick this up for yourselves and believe it.

Now, I'm not saying you need to be arrogant and I don't want you to become arrogant, but for many people it's this lack of confidence and belief in their own skills regardless of how long they've been doing what they've been doing that keeps them from really moving ahead. So, I want to save you six months of anguish if you're just starting out and let you know that you are perfectly skilled enough to call yourself both a professional and an expert in your field and that's what we're going to be talking about in the next few minutes.

One of the questions I get and throughout this presentation I've got a number of questions that I received from actual people related to this topic is how do I maintain my confidence that I'm in fact a leading expert when there are people who have more degrees, more experience, more pedigree, more celebrity. Let's talk about that a little bit. Do you know who this guy is? Don't worry – I didn't know either.

Does this help – Miroslav Raduljica, I think is how you pronounce his name. He is a professional basketball player. He's 7 ft. tall, 250 lbs., he plays for the Minnesota Timberwolves, and he is arguably the worst player in the National Basketball Association. His team, the Minnesota Timberwolves, is the worst team and he has played the fewest number of minutes the entire year, but here's the question.

Is Miroslav an expert? See, I would argue that he absolutely is even though when he looks around at his peers on his own team let alone the rest of the NBA he may feel like ah, geez, I'm not really that good, but he is part of the elite of the elite. There are only 450 people who play in the National Basketball Association.

There are probably 40,000,000 men, between the ages of 20 and 40, who theoretically could play in the United States alone so he is a part of the top, top, top. He is absolutely an expert. He could write a book on basketball. He could coach basketball. He could give classes on basketball – expert. See, you fall into the same kind of category.

You may look around at people who do something that's similar to you. Other freelance writers, other consultants, other recruiters, other attorneys who think well, there's some other people out there who are way better than I ever will be, but see that's not really the issue. You're not selling your services to them.

You're selling your services to people like me. People who don't know anything in your field – we have a very narrow view of the things we understand and you are I guarantee it way over the bar in terms of being expert enough as you'll see as we talk about a few things today. That's not really the issue. Your capabilities are not really the issue in positioning yourself as an expert.

So, there are three things I want to talk about – one is the idea that it's important to be narrow in how you market yourself. The second is that visibility matters quite a bit and the third is the idea that it is important to look expert. So let's talk about these three things.

Another question I received – how do I position myself ahead of my competitor with the same qualifications? Let me tell you a quick story. Not long ago I was looking for a coach – a business

coach. And so, what I did was I sent an e-mail out to maybe I don't know 50 people I knew. All I said was I'm looking for a business coach – can you recommend anybody?

Within about 24 hours, I received probably a dozen recommendations of potential business coaches. I took those. I went to their respective Web sites. I looked around. You know I probably threw out like two-thirds of them. Either I didn't like what was on the site or they didn't seem appropriate or whatever. I called maybe three. I think two of them, or one of them never got back to me. I spoke to two. I hired one. That's not her.

Here's my question though for you. In this process of hiring a professional where is capability, what I mean is in this whole process, and this is, I bet, how you hire people and how people hire you. There's no time throughout where I actually touched capability.

I couldn't really tell before I hired my person whether she was good or not. I had some sense – recommendations, Web site, how she responded, but I wasn't actually working with... see the issue of capability while it's important obviously you have to do a good job or you'll have a terrible reputation and nobody will share you with other people.

The problem is relative to your competition is that most people are pretty good. The differentiator is really this – how do you get on this list of who do you know because that's how it all begins and I argue that it's not really about how good you are. Again, you have to be good, but you want to stand out from all the other competitors who are also good. That's really what we're talking about.

Think about this – you don't actually know technically how skilled your doctor or plumber or attorney, you know I threw spouse in there just as a joke, but the truth is you don't know how good your spouse is relative to other alternatives either. The same thing with most people you hire. Unless you're getting a heart transplant or you're on trial for murder, I don't think it matters that you have the best doctor on earth or the best attorney.

So when people are looking to hire you, they're not trying to differentiate around who's the best because it's not really possible. You can't tell this kind of stuff and neither can they. That's not what's going to get you hired. Let's talk about what will. So, the first of the three – get narrow. That's me in the middle.

This is a woman named Roslyn Jaffe. I first met Roslyn Jaffe in about 2002, I think. She hired me to help her do a newsletter. She is a life coach and so we were working on a newsletter for her business and we were trying to figure out what made her different. The problem we were coming to was there really wasn't anything we could put our finger on.

She was experienced. She had training and certification. She was good at what she did. The problem is in Boston where she and I live you're like you can't open your car door without hitting a life coach. There's so many of them we weren't sure what to do. Now, in the process of working together at some point Roslyn happened to mention to me that she had two chronic

illnesses – multiple sclerosis and something else that I don't remember and it just sort of came up. She mentioned it and that was it.

Then at some point I asked her... well, she had told me that she would often hear from other people especially young women who have been diagnosed with a chronic illness who would come to her because Roslyn was diagnosed with MS when she was in her 20s. She continued to work and run a business for decades, despite having an illness that she had to learn how to work with and manage.

Other people would send people to her – young women in particular for advice. I remember asking her so do you like that or do you find that kind of annoying? She said oh, no, I really like it because when I was that age there was no Internet and I really felt lost and alone. So, I really like helping people with that. In the next two weeks, we took Roslyn's coaching business and made a slight, but important, change.

We made her... oops... the chronic illness career coach. Instead of just being a coach she focused on people with a chronic illness. Within six months, she was on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal* quoted. She was interviewed on Sam Donaldson's national radio program. She has a book. She's international. She had done an important thing related to being narrow. See, before she was a person.

This is what I love about the Roslyn Story – she didn't get any smarter. She didn't change her capabilities. She didn't get any more experience. All she did was take two things that in her life before were parallel – chronic illness and that she was a coach. She put them together. The amazing thing about this is she took what at best was a neutral aspect of who she was having a chronic illness.

She turned it into a competitive advantage because if you were to focus on this niche if you're a coach you could, but if you don't have the life experience Roslyn has as having chronic illness, it's not nearly as compelling. This concept of combining something you are particularly good at, something you have lived through, something you have a passion for and narrowing down your focus is really, really powerful. You can't compete with Roslyn Jaffe on this topic.

It also leads to people coming to you. When the *Wall Street Journal* wanted a quote from somebody on this topic, just a little bit of Googling brought them to Roslyn. If she was just a coach, I suppose they could have picked her, but it's like winning the lottery – once in a lifetime, one in a million kind of thing.

Narrow puts you ahead of other people who do a similar thing. Another question I got – I guess the most obvious question is what do I say that translates into expert and how do I express that in a very short amount of time and to a complete stranger? The short answer is you can't. See, one of the questions I love to ask people when I meet them in some type of business setting is what makes you different from the other people in your field?

This is the kind of things people say and then they say this. Now, here's the thing. I know it's true in your case. The problem is everybody says the same stuff. Even the people who are no good say the same stuff. Nobody says well, to tell you the truth, you know we're kind of dopes around here. We don't work 24/7. It's like 15/3. Everyone – good, bad, in the middle claims this same stuff.

When you say this about yourself as a differentiator whether it's on your Web site or you say it out loud or it's in the things you write, it doesn't do any harm, but it has no stickiness to it. It goes in one ear and out another because everyone says the same thing so some examples of people who truly are a differentiator.

Here's a guy named Phil Fraley who and I love asking people what do you think these are? People usually say ginger. They are actually dinosaur feet. What Phil Fraley does is his company disassembles, cleans and maintains and reassembles dinosaur exhibits for museums of natural history.

I assume when they put it back together that there's always like an extra piece that they can't figure out where it goes. Incredibly narrow niche – I bet you never heard of anybody who did this, but think about this. If you were on the Board or you're the director of a museum of natural history, you need maintenance on your dinosaur exhibits, and you hear about this guy, doesn't he rise to the top?

The thing about being narrow is there's an expectation that expertise goes with it. Now, it's partly illusion because maybe you decided to focus on this yesterday, but in very short order it becomes reality because when you focus in a particular area, you learn the ins and outs. You learn the issues. You very quickly rise above all the people who do a more generic kind of thing. Let me give you another example.

A couple of years ago I got a call from this guy – I forget his name. Playground inspection professional – what he does is he goes to towns, he inspects their playgrounds, and he does an assessment. Now, I'm pretty sure he does it for free and then he tells them what's wrong with them and offers to fix them.

It's really interesting because you know the problem is these towns assemble this stuff and they make all kinds of mistakes because they don't do it a lot. Maybe they build it too close to you know a bench nearby or the cushion beneath is not deep enough or whatever. Very, very narrow focus and again I bet he's the only one you've ever heard of and it's the same thing here don't you assume he knows everything there is to know about playground equipment? Narrow equals expertise.

A few more examples – this is a woman named Nancy Latady. When I first met Nancy Latady, she was a marketing consultant. A few years later she narrowed it down a bit and started focusing in the area of health care. She's an occupational therapist, by training, and she got an MBA so it seemed reasonable. That was okay. Getting narrower, but still wasn't really getting attraction.

Finally, after several years, we become good friends and so I know her well enough to have prodded her for literally years. She focused on a very narrow thing. Helping doctors transition to concierge practice so you may have never heard of this, but if you were a doctor you would have.

The concept of concierge practice is it's like a red carpet sort of health care where people pay actually a subscription annually to a doctor as part of their health care program and they get better service and all kinds of things like that. Very scary for a doctor because it means having way fewer clients and it involves a complete shift in the way you do business now and how you market it.

Well, the last time I talked to Nancy she said to me my phone is ringing off the hook. Again, she did nothing to get smarter, more experienced, better – all she did was tweak her focus. When you do that, expertise comes with it. This approach unfortunately is what most of us do. We say we do anything, you know floors, paintings, fences – whatever house leveling is. We'll do anything that someone will pay us to do it and while this is an exaggeration, it's not really that far off.

People are reluctant to be narrow because there's a concern that being narrow will mean I'll have less... I'll have fewer clients. This question that I got from people or comment that I got from somebody is sort of typical. I'm terrified of marketing exclusively to one population because I'm concerned about limiting my work options and of course I need my business to be financial successful so let me be very clear.

I'm not suggesting you be narrow because it's cool, although it is cool. I am suggesting you be narrow because it's an effective way to differentiate yourself. See there's this concern that I'm narrowing my choices, but you are not narrowing your choices. What you are doing is eliminating your competition.

You can't compete with Roslyn Jaffe if you want to coach people with a chronic illness. You can't compete with Nancy Latady if you want to help doctors transition to concierge medicine and on and on. Now, this concept that I'm going to have fewer opportunities is an illusion. First off because in hiring people like us they don't pick names out of a hat. It's not a question of how many tickets are you holding.

People decide who to hire through a very narrow, often word of mouth based approach and so you want to make sure that you're at the top of the list when somebody's considering whom to hire. It doesn't help to be in second place a thousand times. Only first place gets hired so yeah, you may reduce if you're Nancy Latady the potential base of clients from I don't know let's call it 5,000,000 doctors out there down to even 500,000 if you'd go that narrow, but so what.

How many clients can she help in a year? How many clients can you help in a year? It doesn't matter if there's 5,000,000 potential clients, what we need are real clients so by narrowing your focus you do decrease significantly the pool of people who could hire you, but because you're much more likely to be at the front of the line you get hired a lot, lot more. Narrow equals expertise equals traction in the market.

So, here's what I want you to do and here's a good test because a lot of times people say well, how do I know if I'm narrow enough? I like this little test. Could you be described in a way that somebody would call you the something something man or woman? So looking at Roslyn Jaffe, the chronic illness coach, my friend and client, Kathy Rowe, the healthcare data chick – now, not that people necessarily attach these labels to them; however, they often do, but it's not only enough that you could be the best something something.

You'll never be the coach or the attorney. You could be the attorney for female small business owners in Arizona though. Narrow enough that I could attach a label to you with the word "the" is a good gauge of whether you're narrow enough. I have to say I've never run into somebody who is too narrow.

It's theoretically possible and that is a concern. I mean you don't want to narrow it to the point where there's no market, but people are almost always way too broad again in the hope that it gives them more chances. I've found narrow is a key to making a difference and standing out and being seen as an expert. Okay, the second thing is get more visible.

Let me tell you a quick story. I used to live in this house and we moved here in, I think it was 2002. Great house, but the problem was where I took this picture was the road and even though the property was great, the road was this country road where people were driving by like 45 mph. I have three kids and once my oldest got old enough to want to sort of wander the neighborhood, he couldn't leave because we wouldn't let him cross the street, and there was no neighborhood behind us. It was woods.

So we decided to move across town. Now, when we had bought this house the man who helped us was terrific. He was this kind of older gentleman. He grew up in our town and he was like 3rd generation in the town. He knew everybody. Really helpful, great guy all that. Over the course of the next two or three years between when we bought it and we decided to move to another house in the same town.

He was really good at staying in touch. I remember once just before 4th of July I'm out there in the driveway and he pulls into the driveway, gets out of the car and hands me a bottle of barbecue sauce and a brush, you know, because the barbecue for 4th of July and said Michael have a great holiday. I once ran into him in another town like a year after we had met and I was walking by in a restaurant and I know he didn't see me first.

He just looked up, saw me, and said hi Michael. I was amazed that he was able to remember who I was after all this time. See, he was terrifically good at these kinds of human touch things and yes, when it came time to decide what broker to use to sell our house and buy a new one he was absolutely on the short list of people, but we didn't hire him.

The reason we didn't hire him is because the market was tough. This is 2006 when the bottom of the real estate market had just fallen out in the Boston area and we were really concerned that we have somebody very capable.

What we realized was even though he kept in touch all that time he had done absolutely nothing to convince us of his value as a real estate broker. So, the lesson here is that staying in touch is important. That puts you ahead of a lot of people and absolutely he was on the short list, but it doesn't make you an expert.

You need to do things and this is where this visibility idea comes out that help people see how you think and believe that you know what you're talking about. So, fellow liberal arts majors, this is the most complicated graph, don't work. Here's the idea. Now, you may differ on where you place these things, but this is my graph of things you can do related to content.

So, over here you've got expertness so the further to the right you are the more experty is the thing and over here you go well, how hard or easy it is to do so the higher up you have the easier. So for example publishing a book is about the most experty thing you could do. You hand somebody a book with your name on it, they assume wow, she knows what she's talking about. The problem is it's hard. It's a lot of work.

On the other side here, I would put Twitter. Twitter is really easy to do. The problem is it's not really experty. It's sort of like barbecue sauce. In fact, I think barbecue sauce delivery like this guy did it's a little harder because you sort of have to show up. In deciding how to create content for yourself if maybe you've created nothing before, you want to pay attention to this because optimally you're up here.

You want the thing that's kind of easiest to do, but has the most bang for your buck so you want to move as far to the top right as possible.

Now, I really love newsletters and blogs. The problem is you have to keep doing them. They take a certain amount of work and so if you've never published content before, if you just kind of walk off the cliff and do newsletters can be hard. A special report is similar, but it's a one-time thing that shows people – it's an example of something you can give to people as a download on your site or whatever that demonstrates how you think and who you are.

This is a company called Phillips DiPisa – two guys who own a company that's maybe 25 people. They are recruiters in the health care industry. I help them maybe three or four times a year write a special report and these are on particular ideas related to what they do. They're big sports guys so we tend to have a little sports angle with that and they produce maybe like 250 of them – hard copy and mail them to sort of their house list of people and other people that they want to influence.

What's nice about a special report is you don't have to keep doing it and you can publish it yourself. You don't need any kind of help or approval the way you would with a book. Easy to do, highly recommended so here's what I recommend because that too can be like well, what do I write about? I'm not a great writer and all that so first off you could hire somebody. These guys hire me to help them so you could hire somebody – a freelance writer to help you write.

One thing I find that people can access pretty easily is write this report – 7 Biggest Mistakes Made by Your Target Audience When Attempting to Solve a Problem. I find that's a pretty easy list for people to come up with so it could be like if you were a travel agent – 7 Biggest Mistakes Made by Seniors When Going on Safari.

If you were someone who was a financial advisor for college, for parents in college, you could be 7 Biggest Mistakes Made by Parents When Trying to Save for College. You get the idea. You make a list. In fact, I bet given your expertise you could already come up with seven right here. Then you just sort of explain each one. Maybe it's one or two pages. You have that ready.

Now I say one more thing because we find it's good to have like two things that you can give away. Find something else you can write or again hire somebody. Now, you've got two special reports that you can give out when you speak. You can make them available as free downloads on your site. You can offer them in exchange for people who sign up for something whether it's a class or a newsletter or whatever.

Having some content that you can give away like this is really helpful. Now, a few guidelines – make sure it's evergreen. What I mean is you want something that you're not going to have to throw out in six months. So, if you write about something like the upcoming Olympics or something, well, once that comes and goes your special report's no good anymore. Write something that will be good in a few years.

Second, of course, related to your expertise. Then finally again something that's prominent that you give away. Don't worry about selling it or how hard is it for people to get. Make it easy. It's a way to market yourself without you being present. That's why creating content is so great. And then once you've done that, all right, if you want to do some kind of ongoing thing like a newsletter – great, but I recommend you start with this, again, if you have not produced any content at all yet.

Okay, quick question – do you remember... no cheating. Who ran for president in 1992? Now, it depends how old you are, but if you're old enough to have been an adult at that time you can probably come up with Bill Clinton and George Bush, Sr., but there's one other guy people tend to forget – Ross Perot. Now, the thing about Ross Perot is during that election and I remember this very clearly, even though the Clinton and Bush supporters outnumbered Perot by I don't know 20 to 1 it felt like he was everywhere and that his supporters were everywhere.

You'd see people wearing those buttons – ask me about Ross. The thing about Perot was either you loved him or you were scared to death of him. There was very little middle ground. Now, that's not a way to get elected president because getting elected president is much more about I like him better than the other guy. It's a little bit over the bar.

Perot's problem was there were too many people who hated him even though a lot of people liked him and since every vote counts as one, you know assuming we count them at all, it didn't help that people loved him anymore than someone who liked Clinton or Bush. The thing is

Perot's point of view is the way to create content. Now, I find people like us are afraid to take a position.

I'm not talking about crazy stuff. I'm talking about saying something in either the things you write or speak about that will show you have a point of view. Maybe you disagree about certain things in your industry. Maybe you don't like something that's going on. Maybe you love something that's going on. People are concerned that someone's going to disagree with them and so the content that we tend to create and the sort of position that we tend to take in hopes of being seen, as an expert is so bland and so whitewashed that it doesn't stand out.

This is an example of the guy named Robert Hendrickson. Now he runs something called the Garden Center Group. It's like a trade association for people who operate garden centers and he's the head of it. He puts out a newsletter. What I love about Robert is he takes a position. Look at this – what he's written here. It's just an excerpt from something he wrote.

He's talking to his own clients and he's saying stuff like you know don't try this market up, market down, lump of coal kind of stuff. He's very animated and opinionated about the right way to operate a garden center. As a result, people see him as expert. Yes, when you take a position some people are going to disagree with you, but that's the price you have to pay to have some people love you. It's the Ross Perot thing. You need that because you're not running for president.

You're trying to get clients and what you want are that people hear you talking or read what you've written and say you know what I like him or I like her. Yeah, some people will say I hate that guy. That's okay. You need to find fans more than just people who are willing to tolerate you. That goes with being an expert – experts have opinions.

Number three is look like an expert. So, it's important that the things you do help people see you as expert and some of that is positioning. Let's talk about this a little. There are many reasons I don't like this guy starting with his wonderful hair, which I don't have any of. Let's talk about looking like an expert.

This is Judy Clark. Now, she is a law professor at Washington and Lee University and you may have heard of her. Her name may sound familiar. It actually depends when you're listening to this because she's sort of in and out of the news. Now, if you look at Judy Clark's bio, so let me just blow this up for you – this little section here.

This pretty much accounts for what she's been doing since I assume she got her BA in 1974. It's kind of her... the list of places she worked, what she's done since then, and this is pretty typical of what people have as a bio. The thing is Judy Clark, if you were to Google her instead of finding this; you're going to find something like this.

Clark is a former federal public defender in San Diego and Spokane. She served on the teams that defended the Oklahoma City bomber, Timothy McVey, and Susan Smith, the Unabomber,

most recently she defended the Boston Marathon bomber. She is considered by her peers as the best federal public defender in the United States.

This, to me, is the difference between a resume and a bio. It's the same person, but one just says what she's been doing since she got out of high school and the other is saying what is she famous for. So, when you think about how you describe yourself on your Web site, on LinkedIn, if somebody introduces you to speak, the stuff you put at the bottom of that special report you're going to write – all that stuff is bio kind of stuff.

It's not about resume. It's important to start distinguishing yourself in a particular way. This has to do with being expert in the way you appear. So, a resume or bio is pretty much can you account for your whereabouts since high school. It's also less about what your focus in particular is, let alone your passion.

It's more like what you were responsible for. If you go on LinkedIn and looked at bios of... or summaries of people with jobs, it's like we did this. We did that. We did the next thing. There's also this expectation of steady progress and no gaps. So, my friend, Betsy, is a recruiter. She said to me when she sees a resume the first thing she looks for is are there time gaps that are missing. When you look at a bio, it's not about that. It's instead highlights and accomplishments. It's more for like an obituary.

What were the best things you did in your life that are and this is a key thing relevant to the work you're doing now. The story meaning what do you claim to do now? So, maybe you've changed careers. There's somebody in one of my classes who is a financial planner and was a nurse. It doesn't relate, so when she writes her bio there's no mention of the fact that she was a nurse. It just becomes confusing.

I work with somebody else in one of my classes who is a professional face and body painter. She used to be a marketing executive for Merck Drug Company. Again, no connection – so you want to cherry pick the stuff about your life that adds up to what you're qualified to do what you're going to do. I'll give you an example in a minute. It's hard because if you've done something, if you've been a nurse for 10 years it's hard to just kind of leave that off, but remember your bio is a marketing document. You want me to read this and go wow she is really good.

You're never going to lie or exaggerate, but you are going to cherry pick so that when I read that I think wow, this is the best person on earth for this. This is the only document I think... I have to think more about this that I ever write in the third person, on my Web site or on that of other people that I work with. It sounds weird to write a bio in the first person.

I mean you could do it. I don't think it's hard and fast rule, but it tends to read better, I think, if it's like I get to your Web site, and there's the bio written about you even though you wrote it. Then the last thing is, which I think is really important, is this is not the place for modesty.

Again, we're never going to exaggerate here, but my rule of thumb is if you read your bio out loud and you don't feel a little bit uncomfortable, you're not doing it right because you know again like your obituary or like when you go to someone's funeral.

No one bad apparently ever dies because only nice people... they only talk about nice stuff at funerals. It's the same kind of thing. This should read like a great representation of who you are – a shiny polished wonderful representation of who you are. Again, you're expert enough, but you kind of have to be willing and say that... to say that stuff in your own bio.

Here's a woman named Belinda Wasser. Take a minute to read this... hit pause, all that and you can take a look at it. The thing I wanted to point out is that she only talks about the stuff that is relevant to the work she does so she's pulling stuff out now so that she is making the case for why as a business and work flow logistics expert she's the person you need to help you as your online business manager.

She's done a lot of other stuff, but she focuses in on stuff that's important and relevant so that when people read this they think wow, she's really good. Here's a few more examples so this is Belinda's if you want to check out this one. This is a woman named Kathy Rowe. Oh, I mentioned her earlier – the health care data chick – check hers out and then this is mine.

You're going to read these and think wow these people are amazing. Let me tell you, you are equally amazing. Not to say these aren't amazing people, but what we've done is created this highly polished wonderful version as opposed to everything you've ever done. Marketing document intended to show people that you are highly qualified.

Let's talk about testimonials. This is a key piece to having people see you as expert because it's very compelling to hear from other people who look like you that you may think about hiring somebody.

So when I go to a Web site like this one, I actually bought this book about 15 years ago to help write an eBook and it was actually very helpful. I think it's still up there, but you've probably seen this when you potentially buy a product online they often have these... I don't know why they're always in a yellow box. I'm sure they've tested that it works better and it's somebody saying glowing stuff about the person or the product.

It's a big part about getting people to buy something because when I read testimonial from someone who again reminds me of me it helps me imagine what it would be like to hire this person or buy the product or whatever. So, they're very important. They're very persuasive and they make a big difference in how people decide to hire you.

A few ideas related to using testimonials. So, this is a woman named Jen Carson, you can go to her Web site and check this out. What's here are right off her Web site, three recommendations that she's gotten from past clients or people who've worked with her and if you take the time to read them you'll see they're pretty compelling and they should be because she's terrific.

What I want you to think about though is the difference between this and this. So, notice what happens when I go from here just the words to here adding pictures of the people who said them. It suddenly makes the whole thing come alive.

By the way, these are not the actual people who said them. I just grabbed some photos, but the concept is you want these testimonials to sound as real and compelling as possible and when you see a photo of a person next to it, it just sort of jumps out at you. That's why often you'll actually see video testimonials as well. Those are even more compelling. You can get clients or others who've worked with you or have taken workshops you've done and put those on your Web site.

That goes a long way so in terms of getting testimonials, I mean Jen's got great testimonials here. Maybe you don't have it. So it does require again especially if you're starting out that you ask people for these. You want to get you know four or five anyway so you can put them up on your Web site and then as you get more, you can add to it.

Here's what I do. First up, if you publish something like a newsletter or somebody says hey it's been great working with you. Don't let those opportunities go by. Send them an e-mail back immediately and I love this phrase may I use your name and an excerpt of what you said in our marketing materials? The reason I say excerpt is because I don't want to necessarily use all of it. Now, I don't change it, but I may cut up pieces of it. I also want their permission.

Now, in 15 years of doing this with people giving me testimonials or whatever, I've never had a problem where somebody came back and said hey, I never gave you permission to use that, but I save these. I keep a copy now as I mention down here on my Web site because in case something ever sort of came back to bite me, it's worth keeping them.

The other idea is first of all I ask for them immediately. The second I get an e-mail like this and again a lot of it tends to be just somebody makes a comment. I go hey, can I use that. I'm not necessarily soliciting them, but I don't want to wait you know six months until I redo my Web site and then I can't find you, so I ask for it immediately.

Now, again, I may excerpt them, but I don't edit them. First of all, if you were going to, you'd need permission from that person, but the reason I don't is because the stuff sounds better juicier, more real when it's written by a real person. If you were to sort of smooth these over or sometimes a client will say ah, you go ahead and write it for me. They're just never as good. You want it to be in their language. It sounds better. Again, keep a copy.

Now, forum referrals – what I mean by that is it's good if you have say three people who are willing to talk to potential clients for you so I've got three people. It's like the same people I use over and over again. If I'm in a conversation with a potential client whether they ask for it or not I will usually say hey, you know what you know I can talk to you all day about how wonderful I am, but why don't you talk to some people I've worked with to get a first hand view of what it's like.

Those people, you know, I'll then call them and go hey, you may get a call from Joe Smith or whatever, but these are people who I know are happy with me and hereto they do a better job of making the case for me than really I can because it's a third party. Of course, they're people who are biased towards me, but it's very compelling so I have these people. They're ready to go. You've got the same thing. Have a bunch of referrals that on a moment's notice you can send other people to.

Then the last thing if the work you do is visual, maybe you do newsletters, maybe you do Web sites, and maybe you're a designer. If you have things where you show people samples on your Web site, it's a good idea to sort of mix the testimonials with the samples of the people you did the work for.

This way you can send people to your site and say hey here's a bunch of samples of work I've done and as they're looking at that they're seeing all these great testimonials. So, the bottom line is testimonials are very effective. You sometimes have to do a little work in the beginning to get people to do them for you.

You know even pestering a little bit, people, but it's just that your clients often are too busy or they don't think of it so you have to stay on them a little bit, but when you have someone who's particularly happy with what you've done, it's worth getting these because again they are very compelling to people.

A couple of more things – this sentence, which of course is made up is the way people often talk or write and as an expert I want you to check yourself and stop doing this kind of thing because the only real meat in here is this right here. It can cost as much as seven times to find new customer – all this other stuff up here this is all somebody qualifying everything.

Again, people are concerned that someone's going to disagree with them. We're going to be wrong and so until you get your feet under you as an expert, and it is a learned skill, there's a tendency to keep pulling back and hedging.

You need to learn to speak in a particular way so that you are more compelling. I mean even the way I'm like saying this to you now it's not because I was born this way. I've just gotten used to getting comments, advice, and opinion in a way that doesn't sound hesitant. So, pay attention to that. Look at the stuff you write – your Web site, your bio, your free give aways, as well as the things you say and see if you're kind of hedging that way. The more you can stop doing that the more compelling you'll be to other people.

Here's the advice. First, talk and write as if you've already arrived. Back to that story I told you about my son, Evan. If you're making money you are a professional. Second, don't expect somebody to ever come up to you and say you've arrived because the day will never come. You have to sort of pick that up for yourself. Third, remove these qualifying phrases as much as you can.

Then finally, this is really important. I don't like paying for a lot of stuff, but I'd pay for nice design because I find design on your Web site, the stuff you give away really matters. I personally don't have an ability to design anything and so the look of my site, the look of the stuff I give away to me it's important to have that. I've been to so many Web sites in particular of people who when I met them seemed sort of totally professional and all that, but I go to their site and it just looks homemade and not so good.

That will destroy my belief in you as an expert immediately. You have to step up a little bit to this, but it's really money very well spent. A few recommendations of books – the first *The Pumpkin Plan*, this is an I would say an oddly written book. I like this guy, Mike Michalowicz

He's kind of over caffeinated so he writes in a really like kind of hyper way, but his point with *The Pumpkin Plan* that's his metaphor for the idea that you need a niche and being narrow. If you've seen those big pumpkins that they have at the State Fairs, his idea is that the only way you can grow like a 2,000 lb. pumpkin is to kill everything else on the vine and you have to like sleep outside with your pumpkin and take good care of it.

To him that's your business. You have to focus and do nothing, but this particular thing so he talks all about having a niche, being narrow. It's a very accessible book with a lot of examples. You get fired up about the benefits of being narrow when you read this.

The second book, *Different* by Youngme Moon, I think she's a Harvard professor. Talks about why certain things, people, ideas stand out from as she puts it the competitive herd. It's not a business book *per se*, but the concepts of how we decide what's different and what's better and what isn't it's very, very subjective.

You want to understand this because being hired is very, very subjective. It's a great book – really interesting. And then *Selling the Invisible*, this book's got to be 20 years old, but Harry Beckwith talks about if you sell a professional service as opposed to a thing what kind of things should you be doing? How should you be talking about yourself? That kind of thing – how does that all work – all three great books.

Homework – you didn't know there'd be homework did you. In the next seven days write this paper I talked about earlier – why seven days, because if you don't do it then you're never going to do it. You need to be out there creating content.

This is a pretty easy one to do with this structure. It's really just an elaborate numbered list. Do it, send me a copy – I'd love to see it and get on your way to creating content. Remember be narrow, be visible, be expert. Here's how you get a hold of me. I'd love to hear from you. Thanks so much for listening. Go out and be a leading expert. See you next time.