

Welcome to Leader Circle and in this month's session, I want to talk to you about how to gain momentum with the online content that you produce. But let me start here. Do you still watch live TV? Probably for the super bowl you do. Maybe The Masters. Maybe the Oscars. Anyone watch the Oscars anymore? See, every once in a while you live to see the changing of an era. For example, our grandparents and great grandparents lived to see the farm become the factory, the horse and carriage become the car. And even the rise of jet travel. That's something my grandfather lived through. We missed those. I missed those. You missed those. But now we're in one of those moments and it's all about how content is used and consumed. And more importantly for us in this session, how it's created.

Now, if you produce content of any kind, if you write emails, if you produce videos, if you post a social, if you write lead magnets, if you develop web pages, if you have any kind of content that is customer-focused, client-focused, congregation focused, this is for you. If you're writing an email trying to persuade some volunteers to do something, this is for you. So let's start with consumption. Most of you aren't old enough to remember this, but there was a time when you had to tune in at a very specific time to watch your favorite show. For example, if you love Friends or Seinfeld, ER, or even in the early days of The Office, you had to be there Thursday night at 9:00 to watch it. And if you missed Thursday night at 9:00, you got stuck in traffic, you got home late, you missed it.

And maybe it would come up in the summer in reruns. But here's a surprising truth. In the age of Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime and Disney+, churches and a lot of organizations still behave like cable TV. We pretend that if you're going to host a live event or you're going to host a live moment online, it's like the 1980s. You either got to tune in live or you don't count. The culture operates like Netflix and YouTube, a lot of organizations still behave like cable TV back in the eighties and the nineties. Think about it.

For example, look at churches. We often say things and I'm a church leader by background, "Join us this weekend at 9, 10, 11, 12 for the live stream of our services", which is great, but it's not the future. Or if you write a blog or host a webinar, or you have your own YouTube channel or post to social regularly as part of what you do, you can be like, "Okay, I'm releasing this brand new video. I'm releasing this brand new content. I want everybody to like it". And in many ways, that's just what we've done. We've taken the old model of how we produce content with a live release idea. And we're saying, "That'll work on digital". Look, I love it when people tune in live too, but it's a very antiquated model.

Now switch categories for a moment. Because sometimes when you're in the water, you don't realize how hot or cold it's gotten until you get out. So switch categories and think about the music industry for a moment. Could you imagine Drake or Taylor Swift or Ariana Grande focusing exclusively on release day and telling their fans, "What do you mean you didn't listen in the first hour my song was released? You're dead to me. Okay. You can't get it on demand". Seriously, does anybody behave that way? Nobody does. You're listening to Taylor Swift from 10 years ago. You're listening to Drake from five years ago. Why? Because you love the song. And so here's the question. Does your organization still behave like cable TV in the age of Netflix, Disney+ and Hulu? Are people expected to be there at such and such a time to catch your big reveal or are you allowing them to listen on demand to watch on demand?

I've also been creating content since I was 16. I've been doing that for newspapers, TV, radio, church, podcast, blog conferences, and events. That's about four decades of content creation. And in this session, I want to talk to you about how our model needs to shift. So let's think about the old model to get started with. So if you look at the old model, there's step one, which is create the content. And normally the way that happens, it still happens that way to some extent for books, but for most of us if you're working on a weekend message. If you're working on a webpage, if you're working on a really big social post that you hope is going to gain a lot of traction, this is what you do. Step one is create. You go into the writer's den, a favorite spot or a studio, and then you write it or you film it. You create the content and a lot of time you do it alone.

Then about 20 years ago, I started to collaborate a little bit, maybe I should bounce this off a team. But step one is create, you create it. And then step two is reveal. That is the moment you publish, you deliver, you shoot, you launch, you broadcast, you release. It's out there. So you created the content, step one. Number two, you reveal it. What is step three? You abandon it. You never think of it again. You don't touch it again. You don't revisit again because now what are you? You're on to something new. And the joke for years has been, "Carey, what's your favorite book?" And the answer is, "My next one". Favorite series? The next one.

As my friend Rich Burch has said, "No one is better at the church than pouring hours into creating amazing content and never thinking about it again". And as go the church, so goes so many organizations. And maybe that worked in the nineties. Maybe that was the only way of doing content in the nineties. But as we've seen, somewhere along the way the internet came along and everything changed. So here's the bottom line. People actually prefer great content over new content. They really love your best stuff over your new stuff. The Office is still one of the top shows of the 2020s, but it went out of production back in 2013. Friends might never go out of business. Your grandchildren could be watching Friends at some point and Star Trek and Star Wars have become dynasties.

So spending some time optimizing your archive and helping people access some of your best content and engaging people who really do can help you expand your mission. You've got some great content that you did two years ago or five years ago. Maybe if you're a real estate agent, you did this post that went viral in your own world a few years ago on five tips on how to help up your curb appeal if you're selling your house. Or maybe you did something like easy keto recipes you can make at home or a series, perhaps your church did on parenting or a post you wrote about future growth trends. And when you look back at the stats, those are the things that always do well. And you know why they do well, content like that does well? Because people woke up today with the questions you have answered in the past. They're asking, "How do I up the curb appeal on my house? How do I lose 10 pounds in 30 days? How do I become a better parent, a better mom, a better dad?"

You see? And if you've got content like that in the past that the internet has told you really, really resonates. Just remember your best content isn't always your next content. Now that doesn't mean you shouldn't produce new content, but it means you shouldn't abandon your old one. A great example of that is Dave Ramsey, who has millions of followers, listeners, every single day. And what does he do? He tells you to cut up your credit card. He's been telling you that for 30 years, he tells you to get out of debt. He tells you to fund an emergency fund. He tells you to get into the debt snowball and start paying off. That's what he does. He says the same thing every day. Why? Because somebody today woke up broke. Somebody today woke up and said, "I can't handle this amount of debt anymore. I need to do something". They call Dave Ramsey and he is solving their problem.

So I want to show you the content creation model that I've embraced in the last few years that I would love for you to embrace that will help you get off the create, reveal, abandon model that kills so many churches and actually diminishes your effectiveness no matter what you do. So here's the new model. New model starts, it sounds like the same way create. But instead of creating the massive tone, your whole book in final form. Or the entire website ready to launch to the world. Or the YouTube video that you've spent hours editing. Here's a suggestion: start small. Just instead of creating the whole thing, finished polished draft, just actually do small bite size sentences, ideas, posts, a short Instagram video. Just pull out your phone and take a quick video and just send it out there. And then that leads to step two.

So you're just doing small bite size ideas. Single sentences, paragraphs, et cetera. Second step is this, test it. So you created it, now test it. Test it on social media. Put it on Instagram, do a short post. Do a 30 second, two minute video on YouTube, IGTV or whatever. Post it to Twitter, post it to Facebook and just

see what happens. And then so you've created it. You've tested it. The third step is to monitor. Because this is what the internet does that wasn't possible 15 years ago. The internet gives you real time feedback. It gives you likes, it gives you shares, it gives you comments. It gives you all kinds of feedback.

I am a terrible predictor to this day of what resonates and what doesn't. But we have the saying inside my company, "Guys, the internet doesn't lie". I worked on a post just this morning as I'm actually recording this video that I thought was amazing. And you know what happened? The internet yawned, went, "Oh, thanks for showing up". Last week I posted something that I didn't think was that great. I felt like I'd said it before. And it got read 50,000 times in the first six days. I don't know what that is. What that tells me is the internet said, "We resonate with this". So see, I've created, I've tested. Now I got some real time feedback. Now I can go back to step four. And so can you, which is revise.

And here's where you keep what resonated. And maybe you need to rework the stuff that didn't, maybe you got the angle wrong. Maybe try a few different words, try a different setting. So you take your best ideas, you polish them, you can bring them to your team and say, "Why did this one work? What am I not seeing? And why did this one flop?" And then you can test again. So now you've gone through multiple iterations of your content. You've gotten real time feedback. You've rehearsed it. And you have a much better idea of what is going to connect versus what doesn't. And that's when you can go to the next step, now that you've revised it and you've taken what the internet told you and you can release it.

So you got feedback and now you have a very good sense getting up here and recording or writing or releasing or launching what's tracking and what's not. You got a stronger message and now you can release it in its "final form". It's not quite the final form, because this is the internet and the 21st century. But this is where you release the book. This is where you release the sermon. This is where you launch the webpage. This is where you open up your YouTube channel, whatever it is and you give it the big push that always happens around release. And then you can move to the next part. Don't quit there. Don't abandon. There's no abandon in this funnel.

Then you can start to repurpose. You can see if it really connected, okay, we're going to take this five minute clip, we're going to share it on YouTube. We're going to take this 30 second clip, we're going to post it to Instagram or TikTok. Okay, we're going to take this and now turn that into an email sequence or we'll revise the website and we'll add this to it because that seemed to resonate so well. So you're now repurposing that content and relaunching it. And then finally you're going to amplify. The internet doesn't lie. It gives you real time feedback. So you can start to circulate your best.

What shocks me is posts on my website, careynieuwhof.com, that I wrote five years ago and really haven't touched sometimes get thousands of views a day. Why? Because there's this thing called Google and people search "How do you identify a toxic person?" Or "How do I know I'm burning out, what are the signs?" And that directs them to my site. And what you want to do is you want to keep amplifying it because that gives you an opportunity to connect with new people. That will give you a model now to share your ideas and your content in old forms and new forms. And the powerful thing is you can reach new people today on content you produced three years ago. Isn't that amazing? Because here's what's true. People prefer great content over new content.

So with that background in mind, follow the seven steps and now you can start producing great content that really resonates with people and you can keep iterating. I think that's the future potential ahead of us all. So there's a lot more in the team application guide. I'd encourage you and your team to turn there now.