

Lesson #21

# **Keeping Members Active Long-Term... It's All About Content!**

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## Introduction

There must be a reason why some content is very good and some content is very bad; why some information is so enthralling that you can't stop reading while other information is the cure for a sleepless night; why some words cause you to frantically take notes and some words cause you to take a break; why some lessons keep members subscribed to an FTM site and some lessons show members the exit door.

There must be a reason.

There is.

And that reason is this –

*"Quality" writers approach  
content creation as a craft.*

To be sure, some writers are just naturally gifted. They swing words like Tiger Woods swings a 5-iron. They can spot a good paragraph like Warren Buffet spots good investments. They write like Tom Hanks acts. Even though they practice their art form, it comes easy to them.

Then, there are those that swing words like Charles Barkley swings a 5-iron. Paragraphs are like Black Tuesday. Their writing is the equivalent of the acting in a kindergarten cantata ... and they aren't nearly as cute and lovable as those 5 year olds. Content creation is a struggle.

The good news is this: by focusing on two key components **all writers** can create the kind of content that generates interest and demand.

Whether you're writing ezine articles or paid products or anything in between, there are two components that you need to develop in writing your content. This especially applies to your FTM lessons.

Before I explain how to weave both of these components into your content, let me first explain the reality of why these components are necessary in the first place.

People read for two basic reasons -

- 1) They want to be ENTERTAINED. Many people read because they enjoy a good story. They settle into their favorite chair and John Grisham whisks them off to the courtroom for a legal adventure or Sue Grafton captivates their mind in a "whodunit" or Nicholas Sparks unlocks the emotions with a love story. Or, maybe they head to the bathroom with a copy of National Enquirer to read about a three-headed alien who's been dating Lindsay Lohan, whatever, they read to be entertained.
- 2) They want to be EDUCATED. There are other times when people read because they want to learn something. That drain beneath the kitchen sink is leaking again; a dormant website needs traffic; mom is coming to her house for Thanksgiving. Whether it's a do-it-yourselfer looking to improve his home or an internet marketing looking to drive visitors to her site or a young wife looking to impress her mom with a mouth-watering turkey, people read to be educated.

So, those are the two basic reasons why people read.

There will now be a test. Close your books. Put away your notes. No talking or looking at anyone else's paper.

What are the two reasons why people read? (No peeking!)

If you said "to be entertained" and "to be educated" then you get to continue. If you said anything else, it's time for an Xbox 360 break or a stiff cup of java or whatever it is you do to get your mind in gear. ☺

People read to be entertained and/or educated. And when it comes to the art of sharing information as a part of your business, including BOTH parts are important.

Listen to me carefully. This is the "ultimate" mastery of your craft -

***To teach readers something desirable to them in a way that they find enjoyable.***

That's the goal. Put a great big bull's eye right there. And fire away.

So, let's talk about some specific practices for each of these two components. How can you make your content entertaining? How can you make it educational?

**Content Component #1: Entertain.** There are many, many ways to make your writing a form of entertainment. Briefly, let me point you towards 6 methods of engaging your reader and making the consumption of your content an enjoyable experience for her...

- ➔ Analogies. A great way to keep your content flowing is to use a few analogies. That is, you compare one item to another item. Sure, I could have said earlier "writing is easier for some than others". But, with just a few extra words I instead said, "They swing words like Tiger Woods swings a 5-iron. They can spot a good paragraph like Warren Buffet spots good investments. They write like Tom Hanks acts. Even though they practice their art form, it comes easy to them." Honestly, which is a better read?
- ➔ Humor. A little chuckle goes a long way when it comes to the enjoyment factor of reading. Most everyone likes to laugh. (My apologies to those of you who don't enjoy laughing. You may skip this and go immediately to the section marked "Don't Have A Sense Of Humor"). Earlier, I built upon the analogy of Tiger Woods by comedically adding, "They swing words like Charles Barkley swings a 5-iron." By affording them the opportunity, you naturally make the reading experience more enjoyable. Does this mean you should make every attempt to be Jay Leno? Of course not. It just means when you have a chance to say something in a funny way do it. Don't use too much humor and stay away from offensive humor, but by all means insert light-hearted fun when applicable.
- ➔ Acronyms. Another idea is to organize your content by using an "acronym". I've used many in the past: "How To Keep Affiliates A.C.T.I.V.E. In Your Program", "How To S.E.T.U.P. A Web Site" and "How To I.M.P.R.O.V.E. Your Writing" are just a few. In these instances, the words "Active", "Setup" and "Improve" were used to reveal the various parts of the content. Not only do people love them (I've always gotten great feedback), but it also allows you to have something original that is uniquely yours.

- ➔ Storytelling. In a recent paid report I wrote, I opened with a story about me selling Grit newspaper back in the early 1980's and I tied it into the fact that this was an early form of the modern affiliate program model. A good story always engages the reader. Especially when it is relevant to the point being made. Keep them short (don't launch into the great American novel - this isn't Hemingway for crying out loud!) and lively and they'll only enhance your writing.
  
- ➔ Editorials. Opinions are like noses ... everyone has one. So, why not share yours? To be sure, you may want to steer clear of any controversies that might damage your reputation and business, but don't be afraid to get personal when you write. Many times I've mentioned my faith in Jesus Christ in my content. I've jumped up on my soapbox and preached about using integrity in your business dealings. I've gave my thoughts on a variety of issues that were relevant to what I was writing. And, you know what, it always gets the reader more involved in the process of consuming information. Either they agree or disagree (sometimes strongly) with what I'm saying, but they continue reading because editorials are interesting. Share your thoughts.
  
- ➔ Revelations. A simple way to get someone reading deeper into your content is to make a statement of something you'll be sharing later in the content. It's so easy to do. If you read back to something I wrote earlier in this article, you'd find this statement: "Before I explain how to weave both of these components into your content, let me first explain the reality of why these components are necessary in the first place." Do you see how that works? I set the table for what I'd be revealing shortly. I whet your appetite. Consciously or (more likely) subconsciously, you got the point that something desirable was coming later in the article. This isn't a new concept. Think about every newscast you've ever watched: "Coming up later in the hour, we'll show you how..." and "Up next we'll share..." Building interest breeds enjoyment -- especially when you deliver the goods later in the content.

So, those are just a few ways you can "entertain" your readers and make the consumption of your content an enjoyable experience.

But, what about the other component? How do you "educate" them? Let's take a look.

**Content Component #2: Educate**. Certainly writers of all shapes and sizes know that the essence of "educating" a reader is to explain the subject matter in a way that can be clearly understood. That's a given, right?

And certainly there are many ways to do this effectively. There isn't a standardized formula that all content must adhere to in order to get it right. However, I do believe that there are three basic parts that should be included in virtually every piece of content written as far as those involved in selling information.

- ➔ Action Steps. If someone is intent on learning a process, they want to know the necessary steps involved in completing it. For example: If I want to learn how to bake a cake, I don't want a list of ingredients with the instructions "Mix these together". I want a detailed, chronological list of what to do, step-by-step. Certainly, not all content is a "tutorial" (The very lesson you're reading isn't in step-by-step format) but, when applicable, always explain things in chronological, reasonable steps. Preferably, in 9 steps or less to avoid the appearance that the process is too difficult to be accomplished.
  
- ➔ Brainstorming. Two of your favorite words as a writer should be, "For example". The missing element of most information products and associated content that I've read is the use of "examples" and "ideas". Most people present some information and then leave it to the reader to figure out how to apply that information for their own use. That's usually not a good thing. Instead, it's important to provide as many different examples, case studies, ideas, etc. as possible to give the reader a good idea of how to accomplish what you're suggesting. For example (Hmmm, bet ya didn't see that coming, huh?): I could have simply said, "You need to entertain your readers" and "You need to educate your readers" and left it at that. Instead, I've been giving examples and ideas for doing each of these things. More than just information, readers crave application. They want to see the content in action; they want to see how they can use it themselves.

➔ Tips. Everything you write should have tips included. Everything. Tips come in many shapes and sizes: keys, tactics, techniques, ways, methods, options. As many of these as you can include in your writing, the better. All it takes is for one good idea that you've shared to satisfy the reader. If you share 10 ways to do XYZ and number 7 clicks with the reader, they'll love you. It doesn't matter what else you write in the content, they are happy because they learned something useful. Tips are the information publisher's best friend. A veteran might read your material and already know 99% of what you've written, but that one tip on page 47 just floored them and they are ecstatic. Share as many different tips as you can. Your readers will thank you later. Well, the grateful ones will.

So, there you have it, the two key components of your content. Don't forget the goal with these:

***To teach readers something desirable to them in a way that they find enjoyable.***

That's how you create your own original content that people can't get enough of. And that's how you keep your subscribers active long-term!

## **This Week's Assignment**

**1) Consider how you approach writing your lessons.** Make certain you "craft" out your content, using both entertainment and education in the information you share. Identify one or more of the ideas discussed in today's lesson to implement into HOW you write your next lesson.

That's a wrap for this time. See you sometime next week.