

# How 'zero value' content can help you grow your business

This article will either divide, or unite.

Hopefully, the latter.

How often have you been told to give more 'value' in your marketing as a coach or creative business owner?

More tips, more education?

That all you have to do is speak to the pain points, and offer a solution, and people will hurl credit cards, wads of cash and email addresses at you?

A lot of you I bet.

If you *don't* give enough value, people won't watch, right?

This is a super common idea marketers and business coaches will tell you.

*"If you just give more value, then people will buy eventually."*

*"Go deep on education, help people more."*

So you create another 'tips' video to help people learn.

But after doing this, you've probably seen three problems:

**1. We have well and truly passed *through* the Information Age.** I remember when I was growing up, the challenge was getting the info. The screeching dial-up internet was just coming in. The encyclopaedia Britannica was barely available on a CD. Information was king. But now, information is everywhere. We've moved beyond. In fact, the supreme guru himself Tony Robbins calls this now the "entertainment age".

**2. People who constantly suckle free information have a lot of free time,** and often, are demonstrating that they don't value paying for powerful work. I know this is contentious. People will be yelling that free information triggers "reciprocity." But in the land of TMI (too much information) that starts to lose it's impact... The irony that this is a free article is also not lost on yours truly.

**3. A lot of the educational content out there gets super boring.** When you start to notice this, you *really* notice it. It's like the matrix, and all of a sudden you can see boring content everywhere around you, belting you over the head with education and virtuosity.

The way the free 'value' content idea is supposed to work is you put out the free stuff, people comment how helpful it is, they give you this emoji 🙌, they save it. Then some time in the future they work with you.

But...

What really happens most of the time is they file it away as they make their way to the couch, where they sit down (and pay) to binge watching season after season of Ozarks.

Or scroll through videos of cars or random cats.

Which brings them zero 'value', whatsoever.

Now, I get it - "it's different for us", because we are coaches, or creatives, and we should be the one to elevate people's thinking, and bring them new tips, and ideas...

Where the Ozarks show is just a drug family making their way through life trying to survive the Mexican cartel.

Yes, and...

To educate or help people, first they have to be engaged.

Or - any content that we do, educational, or otherwise, can't be boring!

This means story, entertainment, or at a minimum, some personality. This is the stuff that makes Breaking Bad, Ozarks, and the Kardashians so engaging (and obscenely profitable).

It's also what makes a great coach or service provider.

Now I'm not saying 'don't deliver any value' or 'never teach' in your marketing. This article has loads of value in it. But, if we go back in time and realise that the *best* teachers, educators, and coaches from the beginning of time, have also been entertainers.

#### EXAMPLE:

A little while back I hired an online coach to write a strength training program. It cost a little more than \$1000 Australian, and went for twelve weeks.

Here's a summary of his marketing "strategy":

- He told the story of past training (semi-professional athlete in three sports) on podcasts

- Every second day or so he uploads a 60 second clip of his training to instagram

- He shares some opinion / attitude in his content about the fitness world

There are zero how-to tips.

Zero educational pieces of content.

Zero three step guides.

So why did it work??

Through demonstration, the guy helped me to create a vision of what the future could look like with his program. Turns out he's a similar age to me, and a similar height, so I could "see" myself starting to learn from him and putting it into practice.

Ultimately, when he opened up the offer, I emailed him right away and transferred the cash.

## **Educational still has it's place**

I've had a lot of different teachers in my life.

There are two that come to mind right now.

In uni, there was one guy who was this big lumbering American dude. Probably 6'5". He taught mechanics of solids, and he was very serious.

The other teacher was from high school. He was the art teacher, and he would tell stories, let us put on the music we wanted, and take us on field trips out to his studio.

Anyway, one day at uni, I was in the mechanics class in the front row.

I literally fell asleep.

I'm not sure why, but partly because this guy was like listening to a broken record. After a while he called my name out with a question in front of the whole class to try and teach me a lesson. But in hindsight, I think he needed the lesson.

Anyway, the point of all of this:

**Straight education isn't helpful.**

And in fact, a lot of times it sends us to sleep.

The art teacher on the other hand was super engaging, we learned a lot, and I remember him clearly.

The art teacher still educated us, even though he was entertaining.

And this is the goal.

Education is helpful will help position you as an authority. But giving away more free info or free downloads isn't going to necessarily get more peeps buying your stuff.

## Wrap any 'value' around your engaging world

Say you are a health coach. How could you bring in this “zero value” concept to create more engagement?

Well let's say you're talking about how important sleep is.

Sure, we don't get “enough” sleep.

We all know it's important...

But how could you jazz it up?

Well, you could tell us a story about a time when you didn't get any sleep for three days, and what happened when you went to work? Or you could interview someone you know who's an athlete, and listen to their story around sleep.

Both of these help you build your world.

They introduce story, or introduce us to your “allies” in your world, or other people you interact with.

So basically what we come to is this - *Any time we talk about something educational in our emails, delivery, or social media, we can ask “How can I make this engaging?”*

“How can I wrap my ‘world’ around this in a way that’s interesting?”

If *you* wouldn’t find it fun and engaging, the audience probably won’t either.

### **Remember the strength coach I told you about?**

You could argue there was some education in him demonstrating the movements. But it was wrapped in entertainment.

The captions are interesting. He’s wearing quirky clothes. The music is interesting. He’s filled the clip with his “world” so you go deeper with him, and get to know him more.

And you’ll have ways to do this as well.

Where you film your content  
How you speak and stories you tell  
How you dress and bring out your character

And more.



All of this stuff helps to build your world, and creates more engaging content that takes people deeper, without adding more education.

But it makes the education that you do bring more interesting.

*“Content, I am not interested in that at all. I don't give a damn what the film is about. I am more interested in **how to handle the material so as to create an emotion in the audience**. I find too many people are interested in the content. If you were painting a still life of some apples on a plate, it's like you'd be worrying whether the apples were sweet or sour. Who cares?” — Alfred Hitchcock*

In our world, content still matters (we aren't purely in film), but creating an emotion, or 'wrapping' the content in our world to help tell the story is critical.

## Creating “zero value” content

Sometimes an exercise I like to do with new business owners is have them create some zero value content.

It sounds crazy at first.

Literally an email, or social media post with no value in it.

Basically, this is an opinion, a story, or some vision that builds the world and character of the business, but without 'teaching' anything.

Pointless noise?

Well, if *all* you did was zero value content, then it might be. But zero value content does three things specifically:

**1. It helps us see we don't need to be virtuous all the time.** That content can 'stir' and cause emotion without having to position as the enlightened teacher. And, when we do that, we actually have more fun and build a better relationship.

**2. It teaches us how to build a relationship with our audience.** You might tell a joke. You might share a little story. You might talk about something that you learned - not to teach - but just to share. This builds resonance, or relationship.

**3. It helps you to not "care" as much.** Rather than needing to get perfect engagement or feedback from the market every time, zero value content helps you to loosen up and get more creative.

Now - this is a skill.

We've got to practice.

You can study film, TV, talk show radio - there are a ton of ways to learn how to improve on this. Personally, whenever I watch a movie that's engaging, or whenever I hear something that shocks people, or raises curiosity, I take note.

*How did that work?*

*Why did it catch people's attention?*

Usually it's not because of information or 'value', but because of story or the way it was said or phrased. That's all helpful for learning. Once you practice with some zero value posts for a while, you'll learn how to bring more entertainment into your stuff.

## **Conclusion - Have fun**

One time I watched a TED talk by a guy and he was speaking about how our brains kind of sync up when we tell a story.

His name is Uri Hassan, and the talk was called "Your brain on communication".

So if you stand up and tell a story, and I listen, the brain wave pattern from your brain, will literally sync in with my brain.

It's like you "give" me your vision from the story.

Whatever emotion the storyteller has, is the emotion that the listeners will get.

Anyway, since then, I thought about how people like to have fun in life. I mean emotionally, they like things that keep them on their seat.

**People like fun stories.**

I always thought that you want to have fun when you create content, or write things, because people can feel it.

People can feel whatever you are feeling.

That's why in a lot of the great movies, the actors "embody" the characters. For example, Denzel Washington in Training Day - he ad-libbed a lot of the dialogue. They got guys from gangs to come into the movie and play the role of extras, and Denzel would "feel" the emotions of being on the streets and in gangs. Then he spoke from that place.

So when you watch the movie it feels so heavy - he put himself in a heavy position, and *you're feeling what he felt*.

Heath Ledger the same in The Dark Knight. He studied the character from Clockwork Orange, and really embodied the "feeling" of the Joker. So that when he speaks, and cackles with that laugh, you feel it.

So if you aren't having fun when you write things, the reader isn't going to have fun either.

They're going to be bored out of their minds - that's what is happening with most of the content out there for coaches and creative business owners.

At the end of the day, if you have a little bit of fun, you're already way ahead. You'll have much more resonance with people, they'll get your personality, and will be able to dive deeper into your work.