



# Beyond the Book®



**Interview with  
Ann Handley & C.C. Chapman**

**Co-authors, "[Content Rules](#)"**

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KENNEALLY: When everything else fails, read the instructions, was the sage advice of the Sage of Concord, Henry David Thoreau. We've been reading the instructions for content creation and distribution in the digital age, as written by two pioneers in online communications. The book is called *Content Rules: How To Create Killer Blogs, Podcasts, Videos, Ebooks, Webinars, and More that Engage Customers and Ignite Your Business*. It's out November 30 from Wiley in the New Rules Social Media series. And joining us right now are the authors of *Content Rules*. I want to welcome first Ann Handley. Ann, how are you?

HANDLEY: Good, thanks. Thanks for having us, Chris.

KENNEALLY: It's good to have you on Beyond the Book, and joining her is her co-author, C.C. Chapman. C.C., welcome to the show.

CHAPMAN: Thank you for having us today.

KENNEALLY: Well, as I say, it's a pleasure to have you both. Let's tell people briefly about your backgrounds. Ann is the Chief Content Officer of the MarketingProfs, which helps businesses market their products and services. Ann was previously the co-founder of ClickZ, one of the first sources of interactive marketing news and commentary, and she blogs at Annarchy. That's Annarchy with two Ns.

C.C. Chapman is an entrepreneur who spent the last five years helping clients embrace and leverage social media and online marketing to its fullest. In 2007 he co-founded the agency the Advance Guard, which was acquired in 2009 by Campfire. His current and past clients include American Eagle Outfitters, Coca-Cola, HBO, Verizon, and Warner Brothers, among many others. He calls himself a modern-day renaissance man, and C.C. is a passionate content creator, photographer, and founder of Digital Dads, a site where a dad can be a guy.



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Well, the book is called *The Content Rules*, and I've been reading it here, and starting to learn some of the rules. Some of them I think I had learned by experience, some of them I've learned from reading your book. But let's get started by having you both try to make the case for content, as you start out in the book. Why is content now being rethought in the digital age? Ann?

HANDLEY: Yeah, right. So that's a great place to start, actually, and it happens it's also the place where we start the book. So the whole premise of the book is really that every company out there really has to be creating content these days. It's kind of a cornerstone of their marketing, for a couple of reasons. But primarily among them, the rules have changed. The whole notion of interacting your customers by direct mail, or by calling them up, or any of those traditional outbound ways of reaching your customers really don't cut it any more. And what's more, there's a real opportunity, I think for businesses to connect with customers in a really meaningful, human way.

KENNEALLY: C.C., how would you add to that? It's all about, as I think you put it, attracting customers, not chasing them. What does that really mean?

CHAPMAN: Yeah, exactly, because, let's face it, there is so much competition for every business today. I don't care what industry you're in, there is – you have more complication than ever, and trying to stand out, especially online, is harder than ever. And content is the way that you stand out. When you create a compelling piece of content that your customers or potential customers see, and they get excited about, and they share with others, that's how you're attracting them, rather than putting up billboards. And you go to Times Square in New York right now, you'll see all these massive billboards. It's hard to stand out there. I always use that as a perfect example, because everybody knows it. Same thing goes online. You create a video, or you write a newsletter, or you do a Webinar, there's just so much other content out there that to get yourself to stand out for the rest, you've got to create something that's really compelling, and that is going to attract customers to you.

KENNEALLY: Well, let me ask you, though, what we mean by content. It covers a multitude of sins, and in marketing-speak, it can be confusing. Just sort of zero in on what we mean, or at least in your case, with *Content Rules*, what we mean by content.

CHAPMAN: It's funny, because I've tried to come up with a – I mean, defining content is really, really difficult. The best way I've come up with it, personally, is I say content is anything your brand create and share that helps tell your story to the



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world. That's what – independent of medium, independent of platform, that's how I personally define content.

HANDLEY: Yeah, that's great. I was just going to say that. I think that, probably for your listeners, there is a distinction that we draw in the book between content – I mean, really, anything you're creating online is content, right? I mean, anything that's on your Website, any of the messages that you're putting out there. But, really, what we're talking about is creating content that drives an action, that will entice your audience to you. That's a great way of putting it, just what C.C. said, about anything that tells your story for you, that builds momentum, that has a purpose, it has an intent, to drive a certain action, or to further a connection with a customer.

KENNEALLY: Right. It's about relationships and connections, and I suppose we can get to the impact of social networking on all of this. But give us an example of some compelling content that achieves that goal of establishing a relationship. C.C.?

CHAPMAN: Oh, man, there's a million of them, really. I think about – just this morning, I watched a video that was actually for a video game. It was a video, it was a commercial that they're using for this game called Call of Duty: Black Ops. But what – it's a first-person shooter type of video game, so what was interesting about it was, they created this video that had all these everyday people in this video – they're not playing the video game, they're actually walking around shooting up buildings and planes and whatnot. And they slipped in a couple celebrities. Kobe Bryant's in there, Jimmy Kimmel's in it. And it was – out of all these videos I'm seeing online, all of a sudden I saw this video, and it made me stop dead in my tracks and watch it, because instead of showing more footage from a video game that everybody's done, they took a different slant on it, and had some fun with it, and playful nature with it. And then also, when you saw the celebrities, it made me go back and watch it a second time, because I was like, did I miss anybody? Because all of a sudden I saw Kobe Bryant. And I stopped – and to actually make me – especially me, where I'm online constantly – to make me stop and watch a whole video all over again – which was basically a glorified commercial for a video game – it evoked that emotion in me, where it got my attention. It broke through the clutter, and I actually – the fact that I watched it again made it really stand out for me, because – you know this – you can send a video, you can share a video. You watch it once, if you're lucky. But here was somebody they create – and it's been watched millions of times, and I guess – someone told me when I shared it out that they'd been running it on television. I hadn't seen it online. But they were smart in that they had a 30-second version for television. Here was like a minute



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and a half version online. And I sat through and watched it, and it just – it really grabbed me. It's a real recent example.

**KENNEALLY:** You know, Ann, in your work, you are advising all kinds of business clients about how to do this. Is there – and we're going to start talking about the rules specifically – but is there a way of getting people out of the old mindset and into the new one that you use?

**HANDLEY:** Yeah, I mean, absolutely. You made reference to the rules, and a whole chapter of the book that C.C. and I wrote is about just that, *The Content Rules*. And one of the key ways, I think, is to kind of shift your mindset. The inherent tension in marketing is that companies usually want to talk about themselves and what they're doing. But the reality is, your customer wants to hear about what your stuff can do for them. And so I think, just to make that shift, it's a subtle one, but it's really powerful. And the way we define it in the book as a content rule is, share or solve, don't shill. And what we mean by that is, any content you're creating, sort of put through that prism. Does this share a resource? Does this help my customers in any way? Does this help them solve a problem? Or, as we sort of talk about in the book, does this improve their lives, or make them smarter, or wittier, or better-looking, or taller, or whatever, as opposed to just shilling your stuff. Trying to sell them.

I think, if you start – think about things in that framework – how can I help you first, and then how can my – whatever I happen to sell, whatever products or services I have, how can those help you meet those objectives, whatever they are. So really think about, what does my customer need, and how can I help them?

**KENNEALLY:** Well, that idea of solving problems, I think, is a great approach to it. And our audience is primarily people in publishing and the media business at large. So I know you talk about everybody in the book from, I don't know, the pool business on up. Here we're talking to an audience that is trying to make this long walk through the valley from print to digital. It's still going on in the book business. And they then have all these tools, and probably are a bit confused as to which tools are the right ones to use at which moment. And there's content and there's content, as you say in the book. There's blogs, there's podcasts, there's videos, there's ebooks. How do you begin to make selections about which particular type of medium is the preferable one when you want to get a message out or start a story?

**CHAPMAN:** Well, I think a key of that is knowing – we talk about in the book that you've got to know who you are, and also who your proposed audience is. If your



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audience is not a highly online presence, so they're not on a social network, so they're not watching lots of video, then maybe the written word or photography might be a better platform you to go at. There's no silver bullet for anything in marketing, including content. What is crucial is that a book publisher, your audience, your focusing on your audience, is that they've got to know, what is their audience consuming? Where are they spending time online? And you've got to know that. And if you don't know that, you've got some issues that you've got to solve before you really dive into a detailed content strategy, because these are basic business things that every company of every size needs to know, is who they are, and who and where their audience is.

KENNEALLY: OK, C.C. So, Ann, there is no place to start, then, apart from that. It's not as if –

HANDLEY: Right, right.

KENNEALLY: – I have to do a blog first, and then I can do a podcast, then I can do a video. I could start with the video if I wanted to.

HANDLEY: Well, yeah, absolutely. I mean, it's kind of like C.C. said. You've got to know your audience. But, as he said initially too, you've got to know yourself. And I think that all of us have this inherently, we probably are capable of creating content. But what are you really passionate about? One of the things that we talk about in the book is that you don't have to do everything. You don't have to be all things to all people. But you've got to do one thing really well, I think, as an online business, doing business in today's world. So what do I love to do? What do I really want to do? What kind of passion will I have for creating content? And I think that's just as important as where your audience is. So if your audience is online, are you somebody that – are you a writer? For example, you and I, Chris, come out of that journalism world. My affiliation is always toward writing and text and blogging, where C.C. comes at it from a really different angle. He's more of an audio guy, long-time podcaster, is great with video. And so I think you've got to look to, who am I, and then who's our audience, and start to create your strategy from there.

KENNEALLY: Right, and you mentioned podcasting, Anne, and that's what we're doing right now, of course. It's a medium that I really enjoy, because we get – I like to talk, frankly. That's probably one of my sort of – I don't suppose it's a secret with my –

HANDLEY: I was going to say gift, but whatever. (laughter)



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KENNEALLY: (laughter) That's right. But in the book, you talk about podcasting, and you admit something that I guess I have to admit too, which is, a few years ago, podcasting was the hot thing, audio podcasting specifically. And then, with the proliferation of video online now, it's been a little overshadowed. But there is an argument to make for why a podcast is a great way to go to get a message out and a relationship going. And, C.C., since you practice the arts yourself, talk about that a little.

CHAPMAN: Well, I think audio podcasting never took off to the level that we all kind of hoped and dreamed that it would, but – and I know we make this point in the book, is the fact that there's still a lot of places where you can't watch video where audio podcasts shine through. Easy – the gym, in the car commuting, are two really – or at your desk even. You can listen to an audio podcast. I can't, personally, but I know a lot of people can sit at their desk and listen to a podcast while they're doing something else, as opposed to watching – even many video podcasts, I actually listen to them more often than I watch them, because it's usually the content that's in it that matters more to me than the visuals. Granted, it depends on the podcast, but when you think about it that way, that someone's on a plane, or they're sitting in their car driving to work, that's where audio shines. That's why the radio hasn't died yet. And the fact of the matter is, people are looking for new content instead of the radio, so audio podcasts are a great way to get into people's ears during those times when video just isn't appropriate.

KENNEALLY: Right, and if I can throw out a tip to the audience, one of the things that we do in Beyond the Book is we have the audio file, but we also accompany every episode with a print transcript.

CHAPMAN: Which is a great idea.

KENNEALLY: And that means you get to choose. Some people don't want to devote the 20 minutes to the show, but they want to kind of skim through the transcript to see if they missed anything, and I think it's terrific. It also helps with search. And in fact, that draws me to a question I wanted to address to Ann, and that is, the book talks about how people are going to search engines, and how they go to search engines for information. Talk about that some, and tell us about this rising threat to search by social networks.

HANDLEY: Yeah, can I actually just jump in with – and sort of going to pull a Sarah Palin on you answer the question I wanted to answer, rather than the question you just asked. (laughter) I'll just kidding –



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KENNEALLY: I'm cutting you off right now. (laughter) No, just joking.

HANDLEY: No, I just want to – just to build a bit on what you were talking about with podcasts. One of the stories that we tell in the book is about a guy named Bob Knorpp who has a podcast called BeanCast. And he's a friend of C.C.'s and a friend of mine, and what I think is really effective about the way that he use podcasts is that he's not just going out there to reach his client and signing) his central customers online, but at the same time, he's really selecting who he invites to be part of his show. So in a way, his podcast becomes almost a networking tool, where he can reach out to people and say, can I interview you on my show? That's a great way, I think, for a small business or independent consulting, in the case of Bob, to build his business. And since he launched his company, I think it was just a couple years ago, I want to say like 2007, something like that, he's done really well. It's been a really effective way for him to grow, versus just blogging or just sort of putting his (inaudible) out there, in other words, sort of inviting people as guests on his show to spread his message and connect with them (inaudible).

KENNEALLY: Yeah, but what about the question now? Sorry, I'm going to pull a Katie Couric on you, OK, and I'm going to (laughter) I'm going to make you answer the question anyhow, which is, search engines. People use them in different ways, and we've become more sophisticated with the way that we use search. But there is also this looming thread within the social networking sites, Facebook particularly, that is challenging search, and how is that going to change the way that publishers or pool companies are going to have to go about creating content?

HANDLEY: That's a great question, because the reality is that you can't just rely on search engines to spread your message for you, and increasingly, social networks like Facebook, like Twitter, like LinkedIn, are having your – in other words, your connections are sharing your message for you. So it's really important, I think, to bear that in mind. And we talk about that when we talk about sowing the seeds of your message, amplifying your message throughout the social networks, because, the reality is, you may come up first in Google, but if I'm somebody who's looking for, I don't know, say, a plumber to work in my kitchen, I'm probably not going to go to Google. I'm probably going to ask my friends. And one of the stories I tell in the book is about when I was looking for a digital camera to take on a trip with me. I didn't go first to Google. What I first did was went to Facebook and Twitter. And it was also going through Twitter that Jeffrey Hayzlett, who was the then-CMO of Kodak, reached out to me and suggested his own camera called the EasyShare – you know, hey, Ann, try this one. I mean, that's a radical shift, I think, in the way that companies are now reaching their customers.



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KENNEALLY: Really, you don't usually hear from a C-level executive to tell you which of the products to buy.

HANDLEY: No, right, exactly.

KENNEALLY: Well, we're chatting with C.C. Chapman and Ann Handley, co-authors of *Content Rules*, which is coming out November 30 from Wiley. And in the time we have left, I want to talk about your approach to the book as authors, because you people are very sophisticated about marketing, giving some real serious thought to the way you do this. Two points. You have been very strategic about the way you've made the book available up to now. C.C., I saw a video where you were talking about this, and you were not all about sharing the book, which is coming to be a kind of accepted way of building buzz, if you will, about a book. But you guys thought, no, we're going to hang onto it until it's ready. Talk about that strategy.

CHAPMAN: Yeah, so – well, it was kind of twofold. One, we wanted to make – let's face it, one of the biggest things about being an author is you want people to buy your book. So first off, we really wanted people to step up and pay for the book, and buy it, and read it. But, at the same time, we also wanted to prove our theories that we laid out in the book, by – because we didn't – while we weren't giving out review copies of the book, we were producing content on a very, very regular basis about the book, about content, about the philosophies, about the things we did in the book. And we set up a Website, and we both – we've had videos, we've had photos, we've had written posts, because we wanted to showcase the fact that, look, we're using what we talk about to market our own book, because – I hate the cliché of eating your own dog food, but that's exactly what we had to do. And I've been very – I mean, granted, ask me in six months if it worked or not, when the book – when we know if it sold or not, because we don't know yet. But I feel good about it where, we wanted to make sure that – we didn't want to just give out a million free copies to everybody and then hope people bought the book. We really wanted – like you said, strategic, like yourself, where we – people would approach us, we connected with them, we wanted their audience to know about the book. And I'm really proud of the way we did it. I know Ann and I talked a lot about it, and made a conscious decision of, this is the way we're going to do it.

KENNEALLY: Right, and indeed, you've made some real choices about how you go on a book tour, and I should say, it's a heck of a schedule that you've got coming up. You'll be doing everything from special events here in the Boston area, you'll be doing a Citrix Webinar, you'll be in Austin several times, part of a Regan Communications social media conference. But you've got some rules about where



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you go and how you get onto a book tour. Tell us about those rules, because I think they might make some sense for authors of all kinds.

CHAPMAN: I completely give credit to Scott Stratton, who wrote a great book called *UnMarketing*, for the inspiration for this. We basically said, for those people out there who don't know, we're not some bestseller yet, so our publisher isn't paying us to fly us around the world. And we told people, we said, listen, we'll come to any town in the world, as long as you preorder at least 100 copies of the book and cover travel expenses for one of us, both of us, because we understand adding two authors is kind of difficult. And people stepped up, and they've said, hey, come to Dallas, come to Chicago, come to San Francisco. And they preordered the book. And what's been fun about it is, different people are doing different things. Like you said, I know doing a social media breakfast in, say, Montreal, and then another company are bringing us out to do a private event for their clients. There's all these different ways – and we left it really wide open on purpose, because we wanted to have some fun with it. And the sponsors realized, some are selling tickets, some are giving them away for free. And the best part is, wherever we go, we're signing copies of the book, and we get to talk about the book to people, and it's just an exciting new way to do it. If you already have a platform, and you – Ann and I both already do a lot of speaking, and a lot of consulting, so it makes it – people want us to come and speak already, and now we can tie it in with the book.

HANDLEY: Right, right. And just to build on what C.C. was saying, and the other thing that we're doing which is a little bit different is that, on December 10, we're having a Boston launch party, which I know you're signed up for, Chris, at HubSpot, which is a good friend of theirs. We're actually going to be on HubSpot TV, which is their video podcast, that afternoon. And then immediately following the podcast, we have this launch party. So rather than having one company fund the whole thing, which could get into a lot of cash, we actually sold sponsorships to – I think we have like 15 companies now who are sponsoring it, \$250. It's a way for people who don't have a huge budget to fly us somewhere and buy 100 books. So \$250, they help launch us into – at our party, launch the book. Everybody that comes to the party gets a copy of the book. And it's just been a great – I don't know, I felt personally really warmed by the support that we've had in Boston.

KENNEALLY: Right, and I think, if those are two rules that everybody who's on this program listening right now can take away, they're really important ones. A, try to get some sponsors, and do as you do, plug, plug, plug, right? So we will make sure to put a link to that special Boston event coming up in December on our site, Beyond the Book.



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I want to thank Ann Handley, co-author of *The Content Rules*, for joining us today. Ann, it's great to talk to you.

HANDLEY: Thanks! Thanks so much for having me.

KENNEALLY: And C.C. Chapman, I want to thank you as well, co-author of *The Content Rules: How To Create Killer Blogs, Podcasts, Videos, Ebooks, Webinars, and More*. C.C., great to talk to you.

CHAPMAN: Thank you for having us today.

KENNEALLY: And for all of us at Copyright Clearance Center, this is Chris Kenneally from Beyond the Book. Have a great day.

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