

Four Steps to Choosing Your Perfect Content Platform

Welcome back to the tiny course empire podcast. I'm your host, Cindy Bidar. You'll find show notes and recommended resources for this episode at tinycourseempire.com/38.

If you're new here, welcome! I'm excited to have you join us. Be sure to hit the subscribe button so you don't miss any future episodes.

And speaking of future episodes, coming up next week, I'm going to take you behind the scenes of my content development system, and you're not going to want to miss that one.

This week though, is all about content creation and marketing. We're going to go over your options, what it takes to get started with each style of content, the pros and cons of each, and how to choose the right content marketing format for your business.

But first, why do you need content at all? What's the point?

Why do you need content?

Well, the short answer is because content is how your new subscribers—and future customers—will find you. If you think about it, I bet you can trace many of your online relationships back to a piece of content you either read, listened to, or watched.

I've often told people that I can trace every dollar I've ever made online back to my friend and mentor Kelly McCausey. She was the first person I met, in the literal, in-person sense, who had an online business, and I discovered her through the content she was creating.

This week I bought a course on starting a YouTube channel. The course creator's name is Matt D'Avella, and I'm on his mailing list because I found him on YouTube a couple of years ago—in other words, I found him through the content he produces.

Those are just two examples, but I have dozens more, and I bet you can think of plenty of examples in your own life. In fact, you might even be listening to this right now because you found me through a piece of content I published, or through an affiliate or JV partner who published a piece of content that led you to me.

Here's the biggest thing though. Creating and publishing content on a consistent basis will reduce or even eliminate your advertising costs. That course I bought about YouTube? When I logged into the forum, there were

Four Steps to Choosing Your Perfect Content Platform

almost 4,000 members. He doesn't have an affiliate program and I haven't seen a single Facebook ad. Those sales—from what I can see anyway—came only through his own content creation efforts.

Pat Flynn—who I first found through an interview he did with Nicole Dean (which is another form of content)—says it best. He says that the key to building an audience is to provide them with small, quick wins. That's at the heart of content marketing.

What's your content style?

Now you might be saying right now that you know all this. You already publish content online, and if so, that's perfect! Kudos to you!

But I gotta tell you, I polled my subscribers a few weeks back, and here's what they said about content strategy and the channels they publish on.

37% listed their primary content style as social media. My heart sank a little when I saw that, if I'm being honest.

Social media, to my mind, should not be your primary anything. Social media is a place to share the content you're creating elsewhere, but it should not be your main gig.

I've seen too many stories of companies who invested everything into their social content, only to lose their entire business to a single algorithm change.

Social media and the content you publish there is on rented land. It can be taken from you at any time, and I just don't want to see you put all your energy into Facebook or Instagram or TikTok, only to have your traffic destroyed by a policy change or worse, your account removed without notice.

Like I said, social media can be useful for distributing content you're creating elsewhere, so I won't throw it under the bus just yet. Just don't make it the only thing you do.

Alright, so if we're not talking about social media, what are we talking about?

When I talk content style, I'm referring to one of three formats: Written, audio, or video. There are others, of course. When I was researching this episode, I even found one article that listed 113 different styles of content. But at the end of the day, all of those 113 ideas fell into one of the big three categories: written, audio, or video, so that's what we're going to focus on today.

Let's start with some definitions just so we're all on the same page.

Four Steps to Choosing Your Perfect Content Platform

When I talk about written content, I'm referring to blog posts or articles. In my survey, I was really happy to see that 38% of you publish on your blog. If that's you, keep it up! That blog is a great tool for generating traffic.

Audio content is almost always a podcast, like this one.

And video content is most often published on YouTube, as that's where you're going to find the biggest audience.

Now within those three categories, you can publish a nearly endless variety of content, and that's where that article with the 113 types of content becomes more relevant.

You can publish case studies or recipes or interviews or how-to guides or product reviews or... well, you get the idea. There are lots and lots and lots of different things you can publish, and most of them will fit into all three content buckets. In other words, they can all be either written, audio, or video.

The question is, what's your content style? Which one will you commit to creating on a consistent basis?

Let's consider the options. Before we dive in though, I want to make it clear that in this episode, I'm talking about content in support of your business rather than content AS your business. In other words, we're not talking about the pros and cons of becoming a professional YouTuber and earning all of your income through ad placement and sponsored video.

What I am talking about is using content to grow your audience and to drive traffic to the things you do sell, whether that's courses or products, or to your coaching or service-based business.

Ok, now that we're clear on why you need content and how it can support your business, let's dive in.

Blogging

We'll start with written content. That's the one with the lowest barrier to entry. If you have a computer and keyboard, you can publish written content.

I want to make it clear though, that I'm recommending you publish content on your own site, so that does require a little bit more than just a computer and a keyboard. You also need a website on a domain you own.

Four Steps to Choosing Your Perfect Content Platform

But even that is super easy these days, and my guess is that you already have a website since you have or plan to start an online business. So written content in the form of a blog is an easy next step for you.

Of course, there are some downsides to blogging, too.

Probably the biggest is the competition. Top bloggers make good use of search engine optimization to attract visitors, and since there are only 10 spots on the first page of the Google results, the competition can be fierce.

It also takes time and effort to get a post or article to rank well. There's intention behind it, from choosing the right keywords to constructing your content in the right way to promoting it and building back links.

I'll share some resources in the show notes if you're interested in learning more about how SEO works and how you can use it to drive more traffic to your blog.

Podcasting

Next up is audio content, or podcasting.

My guess is, since you're listening to this, that podcasting is of interest to you. I admit, I'm a huge fan. Most of the content I consume is either audio or video. I love that I can listen while I'm doing something else, like walking the dog or folding the laundry.

Podcasting has a bit higher barrier to entry than blogging does. You'll need a microphone and a media host, for one thing, and technically it's a bit more difficult to set up than a blog, but it's not something you can't figure out.

Compared to blogging, podcasting is still relatively new, which means there is a lot less competition. Don't take that to mean there is no competition, though. One article I read claimed there are around two million podcasts, but take that with a grain of salt. Most of them are inactive—meaning they're not currently publishing new content.

Just like you might search Google for an answer to a question, podcast listeners will search their directory of choice for new shows to listen and subscribe to. Even if there are dozens or even hundreds in your niche, that's still a lot less than you'd find in a Google search, which can make it easier to be found.

Four Steps to Choosing Your Perfect Content Platform

Like blogging, one big downside to podcasting will be the time it takes to gain traction. It takes effort to build an audience and to begin seeing results, and most podcasters give up before they get there.

Video

Finally, we have video. This content style has the highest barrier to entry just because of the equipment required. At the very least, you'll need a webcam or a phone and the ability to use it. For a more professional look, you might also need lighting, a proper video camera, a tripod, a microphone, or other gear.

You'll probably want to edit your videos, too, so that's another piece of software to learn. While there are some very good, simple options available, if you want to do anything fancy with your videos like text overlays or scene transitions, you'll need a more full-featured video editor.

Video has a lot of upsides though, and very few downsides.

First, according to most accounts, video is a must have in today's content marketing toolbox. In a Hubspot survey, 53% of consumers wanted to see more video, and 62% of people pay close attention to the videos they do watch.

The big downside of creating video content is that you're going to be dependent on YouTube for your distribution and audience growth, because it's really the only game in town.

With a blog, you're publishing on your own site and putting the effort into ranking well on the search engines, but it's still your content on your site. With podcasting you have the podcast directories—and there are many of them—for distribution, but the episodes will still live on your site.

Video content is different. YouTube is it. They don't have any competition, and while you can also embed your videos on your own site, they're real home is on YouTube, which makes it feel a little bit like building your business on rented ground, doesn't it?

Listen, I'm not trying to say Google will treat you better than the podcast directories, or that YouTube—which is owned by Google, of course—will never change their algorithm in the same way we've seen it happen with Facebook and Instagram, I just want you to have all the information you need to make a good decision for you and your business.

Four Steps to Choosing Your Perfect Content Platform

So we've talked about the three types or categories of content, we've looked at the pros and cons of each, and we talked about how easy—or not—it is to create each type.

Now the question is, how do you choose the right one to support your business growth?

Consider your audience

The first thing you need to consider is your audience, and what they prefer. Are they video watchers or podcast listeners? Do they prefer to read or listen?

If you already have an audience, like an email list or a social following, then you can simply ask them to find out their preferences. A simple one-click survey in an email message, or a poll on Facebook are both easy ways to ask. You won't get everyone to click or answer, but hopefully you'll get enough to see if there's a trend.

If you don't already have an audience, then that might be even better news, because it means you get to decide what type of content you want to produce.

Consider the needs of your content

Something else to consider is whether or not your content will fit the size and shape of the bucket you've chosen. Here's what I mean by that.

I teach online marketing strategies. I can write about that topic in a blog post, talk about it here on the podcast, or I can make videos about it. All three of those formats will work for the message I'm sharing.

However, software and technology plays a big part in learning online marketing, and it's something people ask me about all the time.

If I want to tell you about setting up Google Analytics or creating a course mock-up in Canva, or how I use Trello to organize my course material, I can't really do that in a podcast. I could do it in a blog post with lots and lots of screenshots, but the best format for that kind of content is really video.

Now what about your topic? Most subjects will be perfectly clear if you write about them. You might have to include photos or other graphics, but you probably should be doing that anyway, so blogging will always work.

Four Steps to Choosing Your Perfect Content Platform

Video is a good fit for most everything as well. You can easily demonstrate a technique, or use images to make a point, or it can be just you on screen talking.

But what about podcasting? To me, this is the one that's not always going to work. I can't imagine choosing a podcast if I wanted to learn to paint, for example. That kind of technique-based content needs a visual to be successful.

With that being said, though, you could start a podcast that talks about art in a different way, by studying art history, or different styles of painting, or interviewing artists.

So here's what I'm saying—before you choose your content format, get clear on your content subject, and make sure that subject will be a good fit for your format.

Consider your comfort level

The next thing to think about is your own comfort level, because let's be real here: Publishing a blog post is a whole lot less intimidating than showing your smiling face on camera, right?

The truth is, it doesn't matter how many studies show that video is now the reigning king of content, if you hate being on video, you're never going to do it consistently. Sure you might force yourself to fire up the camera once or twice, but if there's one thing I know about content publishing, it's that once or twice isn't going to cut it. You are going to have to commit to showing up week after week, so make sure you're comfortable with the content style you choose.

You know yourself best, so ask yourself, what am I willing and able to do?

What's the potential return on investment?

Finally, consider the potential return on your investment.

Earlier I mentioned that starting a blog has a low barrier to entry. You probably already have everything you need to get started, which means there's no investment necessary aside from your time to write and publish the content.

Four Steps to Choosing Your Perfect Content Platform

In other words, your return on investment has the potential to be quite high, provided you're reaching the right audience.

At the other end of the spectrum is video. You might want to invest in a new camera and some lighting gear, and maybe you'll buy a video editing software and spend time learning to use it.

Those costs can add up quick, and you'll have to recoup them through audience growth and sales before you see a return on that investment.

I'll give you a real-life example to help illustrate this.

I've been publishing this podcast every week for eight months, and I'm beginning to see some sales coming in and we've certainly added new subscribers to the mailing list because of it, but it's definitely not paying for itself yet.

I'm 100% confident that it will be earning a profit at some point, but it's not yet, and that's ok.

So that profitability is something you need to consider when you're choosing your content style. Producing a podcast costs more than publishing a blog, and producing video is more expensive than a podcast.

Whichever content style you choose, just make sure you can afford to publish it consistently while you build up a body of work, because it will take some time for it to start generating a profit.

A quick note about consistency

I've mentioned a couple of times that consistency is the key to your success in any content channel. It doesn't matter if you're blogging or podcasting or publishing on YouTube, if you're not showing up on a frequent and predictable schedule, you're going to have trouble building your audience.

If you've followed me for a while, you've heard me talk about this before. Consistency is what makes the difference between a successful business and one that struggles.

It won't matter how brilliant your ideas are, or how professional your videos look, or how much money you spent on your website. If you don't show up to market your business consistently and over the long term, you're not going to find the success you deserve.

Four Steps to Choosing Your Perfect Content Platform

In episode 19 of this podcast, I gave you some tips for showing up consistently in general. I'll link to that in the show notes. And next week, I'll share how I find and organize content ideas so that I never run out of things to say.

If you're not subscribed, now would be a good time to click that button so you don't miss it.

But what does that have to do with choosing your content channel? Just this: Make sure that whichever format you choose, you're willing and able to publish to that channel at least weekly.

That might sound like a big commitment—and it is—but believe me when I say it matters. Putting your content out there on a weekly basis is the best thing you can do to grow your business in a sustainable way.

Now I know some of you are thinking, "Weekly publishing? That's a lot!" And you're wondering if you're up to the task.

Here's what I want you to know. This will feel hard at first. It will take up way more time than you think it's worth. But it will get easier.

The first few weeks of recording this podcast, it took me days to get it done. But the more I did it, the better my system became, and the smoother it went.

The same will happen for you, too. You just have to give it a little time. You'll get there.

Ok, so for you podcast skimmers and multitaskers out there, let's do a quick recap.

There are three main types of content you can use to promote your business: written, audio, and video.

To choose your content style, you're going to want to consider 4 things:

Your audience preference—in other words, what will they most enjoy and engage with. If you don't know, you can ask them with an email survey or a social media poll.

Next, consider your content topic, and whether or not it will fit neatly within the format you chose.

Then think about your comfort level with the format. Are you happy to fire up your camera or would you rather stay behind the scenes? Or maybe the happy medium of podcasting suits your style.

Four Steps to Choosing Your Perfect Content Platform

Finally, what's the potential return on investment? Obviously, the more you have to invest, the longer it will take to pay off for you.

Here's what to do next.

Head on over to tinycourseempire.com/38 to find the show notes, all the resources we mentioned, and while you're there, be sure to leave me a comment. I'd love to know what content format and style you're going to commit to. And if you already have a channel you publish on consistently, drop me a link so I can check it out. Extra bonus points and virtual high-fives if it's a podcast because I am always on the lookout for new shows I can binge.

Finally, if you're enjoying THIS show, would you do me a favor and leave a rating and review over at apple podcasts? That helps others find us. And of course, if you have a friend or colleague who would love to hear this episode, go ahead and send them the link. [Tinycourseempire.com/38](https://tinycourseempire.com/38).

And that's it from me. Have a terrific day, and I'll talk to you again next week!