



# RAY EDWARDS

LIVE WITH JOY. LEAD WITH PASSION. PROSPER WITH PURPOSE.

## Conversation with Mike Stelzner of Social Media Examiner

This is Mike Stelzner from Social Media Examiner and you're listening to the Ray Edwards Show.

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Welcome to episode 149 of the Ray Edwards Show. This is a fun episode.

Here's a hypothetical question for you. How do you start a company with just an idea, a simple idea, a few volunteers, no budget and in less than five years have a web media property with 13 million readers! That's exactly what Michael Stelzner did with Social Media Examiner and in today's episode I'll share a conversation I had with Michael about exactly how he did it and how he thinks you could do it too.

This is definitely a conversation worth listening to. We'll get into and discover why the smartest promotional strategy might be not promoting at all -- the best way to differentiate yourself from your competitors. Michael's method for launching new projects and products that is totally different than any product launch strategy you've probably heard anywhere else and Michael Stelzner's personal social media marketing recipe.

What does he do every day when it comes to social media marketing?

I got him to give up his personal recipe and you'll get to share in that on today's episode.

### **Announcements**

- On Friday, we're going to release the first in a series of three video trainings on how to sell more of whatever you sell without being salesy, without being a salesperson.

Most people would say they're not the hugest fans in the world of selling, but they would like to sell more of their products and services and make more money. Well, I've got some powerful frameworks to share with you this week that will let you sell more of your products and services, get your emails opened, get more of your content read and shared, all without you feeling salesy or pushy at all.

- Plus, one other little bit of news to share with you. We're moving the podcast publication day to Tuesdays. So my ambition from now on is to publish every Tuesday morning of the week and then have at least one blog article, one blog post on Fridays.

We'll see how that schedule goes and how you feel about it. So give me some feedback and let me know how it feels this week.

- Finally, I'm still looking to share your success stories and good news with everybody else so we can encourage people.

So if you've got a business triumph, a spiritual victory or a story of God's miraculous intervention in your life or in your business, I want to hear about it. There's a link in the show notes at

[RayEdwards.com/149](http://RayEdwards.com/149). Scroll down, you'll see a button that says 'Send a Voicemail to Ray'. Leave your story of victory, of triumph, of miraculous intervention in your life or health or the life or health of somebody you know. Leave that for us so we can share it with our community, it will be encouragement to other people. Let me go ahead and thank you in advance for doing just that.

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## **Spiritual Foundations**

This week's spiritual foundation is made up of a lesson that I learned from my wife about joy. Now, it's an interesting story in itself because my wife's name is Lynn and, if you do a little digging on her name, one of the meanings of her name is actually joy. She was giving a little talk at our church over the last few days and she was talking about how to find your joy when you feel you've lost the joy in your life.

I don't know if you've ever been in that place where maybe circumstances have prevailed, maybe you're not feeling well or maybe some things have come your way that have not been totally ideal and you feel like you've kind of lost your job. One day you wake up and realize, I don't seem to be really happy like I used to be.

Well, Lynn shared a couple of insights that I found really powerful and helpful and I believe you will find them powerful and helpful, as well. They're really centered around two simple Scriptures and an easy way to retrace your steps and find your joy because it didn't just disappear, you left it along the path somewhere. This is what Lynn advised us to do.

She advised us to take a look at Matthew 6:33 where Jesus is talking and He says "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you." When he says 'all these things', He had just been talking to the crowd that He was addressing about not being worried about what they're going to eat or what they're going to wear. Basically, where their living is going to come from that God will take care of them. He says God, your Father, knows you need all these things, everybody needs them. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.

What Lynn shared was an insight that kind of blew me away because I realized I had done the same thing. I had edited that verse in my head the way she described that she had. She had for a long time, she said, been remembering that verse as seek first the Kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you and leaving out the part about His righteousness. Then, for me, not only had I done that, but when I did recognize oh, His righteousness is part of that verse, I also found myself thinking well that means that I have to be righteous, just as righteous as God is on my own.

I don't know about you, but for me whenever I consider being as righteous as God is and doing it on my own strength, I get kind of discouraged because I feel like I can't do that and, of course, we can't. That's why Jesus had to come and do what He did on the cross so that we could be righteous, that we could have His righteousness given to us as a gift. That's the magic, if you will, of this verse. It's not really magic, but it seems magical. That we seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and we get His righteousness as a gift from Jesus and all these other things, in other words, the things we get anxious about and worry about, will be added to you.

So the question comes up, as Lynn pointed out, if you think about this long enough you'll begin to think well, okay, but it says seek the Kingdom of God, what is that? She pointed out that whenever Jesus went anywhere and spoke to anyone, He would say the Kingdom of God has come near you. Seems like it was where He was and, of course, now we know that He lives

within us, inside of us. We've invited Him to be a part of our lives and we've given ourselves to Him, so He lives within us.

She also shared a second Scripture, which was Romans 14:17 which says, "The Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Of course, Paul had been writing here about how there were disputes in the church about what things were okay to eat, what things were okay to drink, what festivals should be celebrated and what dates on the calendar should be celebrated. Paul was saying no, no, no, that's not it. That's not the Kingdom of God. It's not about all those rules. The Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but the Kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

So Lynn pointed out that we could just retrace our steps. If we don't have joy that means we've lost our peace and if we've lost our peace it's because we lost sight of our righteousness and our righteousness is in Christ. So the way this works for me is to give you a practical example of how this might play out in your life.

If I find that I've lost my joy, if I'm depressed, irritable or angry, then if I sort of retrace my steps I can usually trace it back to someplace either that day, the previous day or the previous evening where I've lapsed into some self-condemnation or some self-righteousness where I feel like oh, I blew it. I was impatient with that person or I said the wrong thing or I had terrible thoughts about that situation or about that other individual, whatever, but I just find something to condemn myself for. I eat an entire pie when I've been eating so well and sticking to my eating plan so succinctly and powerfully and demonstrating my great self-discipline and then I eat pie so I start condemning myself.

For you it may be something different. Maybe it's not eating pie or maybe it's not being angry, I don't know what it is, but usually there's something where I have discovered that I've been condemning myself. Why am I condemning myself? Because I think my righteousness is up to me and if I do what my wife recommends, if I just trace my steps back and realize where did I pick up that self-righteousness, that self-condemnation and realize I need to set that down and accept the righteousness that Jesus gives to me as a gift. When I see that in its fullness I experience peace and that leads me to a place of joy.

So if you ever wonder if you're living in the Kingdom, if you're living a Kingdom life, here's the way you tell. If you're living a Kingdom life, the signs to look for are peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For that powerful spiritual insight you can thank my lovely and beautiful wife, Lynn Edwards.

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## **Feature Presentation**

All right, let's get down to it. This is our conversation with Mike Stelzner, Founder of Social Media Examiner and the big conference called Social Media Marketing World where I'll be appearing live in the month of March. Looking forward to that, seeing you there and getting together with you there. More details about that coming up in just a few moments.

In this conversation, we're going to discover together as we talk with Mike Stelzner why the smartest promotional strategy might be not promoting at all, the best way to differentiate yourself from your competitors, Michael's method for launching new products and projects and his personal social media marketing strategy. That's all in this conversation with the world famous Mike Stelzner.

**Ray:** Welcome to the show Michael Stelzner.

**Mike:** Thank you so much, Ray.

**Ray:** You started this thing from scratch, I mean just an idea and I just wondered. Did you have an idea of how big it was going to get? I mean you've got how many million readers now?

**Mike:** Last year we had 15 million people read Social Media Examiner.

**Ray:** Wow! Did you know?

**Mike:** I had no idea. When we started it was a big experiment, Ray, but I saw some signs that led me to believe before I started Social Media Examiner that it had the potential to be really big. For example, one of the things I noticed back in 2008 and I started Social Media Examiner in the fall of '09, was that whenever anybody would write an article about Twitter or Facebook that it would go crazy on the social networks. So the first cue was ha, marketers seem to really want to know what the heck is going on with social. The second cue was the economy was really bad back then. Do you remember that?

**Ray:** Oh yeah.

**Mike:** It was horrible and a lot of marketers were like okay, somehow there's got to be some alternative that doesn't cost as much money as print, television, radio and even the Internet in the way we used to think of it back then, which was Google Pay-Per-Click, and social media was kind of answering the call. It was like the Holy Grail back then because everybody kind of saw it as this free way to collect together people and mobilize them to do amazing things. So those were some of the early cues.

The other thing I noticed, Ray, was that there was not a lot of people that were writing long-form copy back then and my background is I'm a long-form copy guy. I used to be known for whitepapers, which you know are persuasive documents that are designed to inform and also persuade and, typically, 10 pages. So I thought to myself hum and I analyzed the space and saw that everyone was writing opinion pieces that were critically analyzing every move Facebook ever made.

Of course people still do that to this day, but what nobody was writing about was the how-to stuff. So I thought to myself, maybe I can take all my experience in the how-to world and empower marketers around the world to figure out how to use this social stuff, yet I knew literally nothing about social media, Ray, when I started Social Media Examiner.

**Ray:** That's just amazing to me. What amazes me even more is I remember around that time when the economy just had imploded and many people I knew were saying there's no room on the Internet for big players. Google has already moved into their space, there just was no room and you came in out of nowhere, seemingly, and made this big splash with Social Media Examiner and now you've got 15 million readers. I bet right now there are people who think well, there's no room on the Internet now. It's too late.

**Mike:** I've got an answer to that.

**Ray:** Okay, let's hear it.

**Mike:** When I came in to the space in October 2009, there was literally thousands of bloggers writing about social media, thousands. I had a choice to make at that juncture. I could say there's no room for another blog on social media, as a matter of fact, some of my friends said that to me, or I could look at it with a different frame of reference. There's a lot of room for people to write about social media because there's literally thousands writing about it. So I looked at it as marketplace justification instead of fear and I said to myself what I've got that none of them have is the ability to create content that is super long and super rich.

I had already done it, by the way, Ray. I had written for Copyblogger, Brian Clark's blog, and for MarketingProfs. I had written a couple articles about social media marketing that I essentially sourced from many different individuals in a journalistic fashion and they were the most popular articles of all time that were published on those particular publications. MarketingProfs said it was the most popular article they'd ever published and with Copyblogger we were up there for a couple of years as one of the top most popular articles on the site.

So I kind of already knew hum, this works. What if I did more of this? What if I took this network of writers that I had been training for years on how to write whitepapers and what if I brought some of them to the table and we kind of collaborated to create a movement. Nothing necessarily for sale, just really inquisitive people that want to teach and want to reveal their knowledge to the world and that formula worked like gangbusters. In the first 90 days, I think we had 10,000 people on our email subscription list.

**Ray:** Boom! Just like that. Okay, let's slow down for a minute and let's go micro. How did you start, was it just you in a back bedroom? How did this whole thing get off the ground?

**Mike:** Well, at that time, I had a very successful writing business and I had people lining up to want to work with me.

**Ray:** So you were freelance.

**Mike:** Freelance writer, yeah. I had written a book and I was speaking and traveling around the country, so this was a side project, this was kind of a secondary bed. I had no need to start this, people called me the "King of Whitepapers". I could have gone on writing whitepapers for the rest of my life, made a lot of money and been very happy.

**Ray:** I just have this picture of you, like a website with a caricature and you with a scepter and a crown, the King of Whitepapers.

**Mike:** I've never called myself that, but people would call me that.

**Ray:** I'm so glad it didn't turn out that way. That would have been a horrible way for it to go.

**Mike:** But it worked for a lot of years.

**Ray:** Oh yeah, whitepapers are great. I just thought the King of Whitepapers thing was just so vivid.

**Mike:** So it was really just me, a volunteer named Cindy King, who's now my Director of Editorial, and a bunch of my friends who agreed to write one article a month until they

were bored. Some of those friends I had built relationships with for at least a year prior to starting Social Media Examiner, one of them is Mari Smith, who you may know.

**Ray:** Yeah.

**Mike:** I call her the Queen of Facebook. Another one was Chris Garrett who co-authored the book *ProBlogger* with Darren Rowse.

**Ray:** Yeah.

**Mike:** Another one was Denise Wakeman, who was part of this thing called The Blog Squad. She was the one person that I knew was really out there doing things on the cutting edge and she's the one that introduced me to Mari. The last person was Jason Falls from Social Media Explorer, who used to be a fan of me in the whitepaper days when he worked for an agency.

So I kind of leveraged my network and each of them wrote a handful of articles. Very quickly they saw how big this thing was and they stepped aside, but I knew that if they could bring their knowledge to the table and I could get some of my friends who are writers like Casey Hibbard who wrote the book on case studies. Surprisingly, her first name is Casey.

I encouraged her to write the book on case studies because I was helping her to become kind of like me in the case study world. She wrote case studies for us for free for a couple years and I just recruited people out of my network and then, before you know it, everybody else wanted to be part of it.

I set a very high editorial standard because I'd already kind of established all that through my teachings and courses and stuff on writing for whitepapers. I just set the bar really high and people met the bar. It cost money, don't get me wrong. Even though I had a lot of volunteers, I paid editors to edit our content and I put a lot of time into it, but the thing exploded and today we email 330,000 people every single day.

**Ray:** Wow! At some point, you had to have the 'Jaws' moment where you realized we need a bigger boat.

**Mike:** Absolutely.

**Ray:** We've got to get offices. When did you realize that?

**Mike:** Well actually, we've always been kind of a virtual company.

**Ray:** Oh really.

**Mike:** Yes, there are only three people here in the headquarters. Everyone else is distributed all over the country and, frankly, all over the world. I've been an entrepreneur since the mid 1990's, since 1996, so coming up on 18 years, if I'm doing my math right. Back in the early days, I owned a creative services agency and if you've ever run an agency you know it's like running a construction company. You're the general contractor and you bring in subs. You bring in writers, you bring in editors, you bring in illustrators, you bring in animators and you bring in voice talent.

I had a lot of experience working with contractors and knowing how to pay them well and how to encourage them, so in the beginning it was just bringing in a lot of those very same contractors that I had been working with for a long time. So my whitepaper business, frankly, just funded everything and most of these contractors have been working with me for a very, very long time. It was always kind of just duct tape, spit and shoestrings and it all worked.

**Ray:** It worked in a big way and it's still working. What fascinates me is the kind of slow way you took of building this thing. What had to drive some people crazy from the outside was looking and thinking how is he going to make money with this thing and then you wrote this book that I think tells the story. You wrote a book called *Launch* and there are other books with similar titles, but your approach to this whole concept of launching something is so different that I wonder if you'd spend a minute or two and just talk about that.

**Mike:** Absolutely. It's very simple. It's a simple formula, great content plus other people minus marketing messages equals growth. Everybody knows great content when they see it, the part that people may not understand is the 'other people component'. The other people component means really researching and studying the audience and understanding intimately what their needs are and giving them exactly what they want for free.

Another component of other people means to work with people that already have your audience in mind. I call them Fire Starters, their recommendation is kind of like dropping a match into kerosene and it can explode. So that's where strategic partnerships with some of the people I mentioned earlier were really key to growing Social Media Examiner knowing, for example, that Mari Smith, Jason Falls and all these other folks would basically share out content to their network.

Everyone in the beginning agreed to share everyone else's articles, so there was that kind of cumulative affect going on in the early days. That's something most people don't get, which is you can't do it all on your own. We had a massive volunteer team of writers and nobody was paid, so that's the other people component. That also involved intimately understanding what they need and their needs are. Writers want something. They want a platform, they want exposure and so what I did was I made sure that I was like the 'Wizard of Oz' behind the curtain shining the light on everyone but me. That's exactly what I did in the early days.

The part that everyone gets wrong, Ray, is the minus marketing messages. I use the metaphor of an airplane. You know when you're coming in for a landing on an airplane you're going from 400 miles an hour probably down to 90 miles an hour because those flaps are coming up on the airplane?

**Ray:** Aha.

**Mike:** Well, every time you choose to market or promote with your content that's like putting the flaps up on the airplane, it slows down your growth. So in the early days, there was zero advertising, zero marketing of anything of any type. People came to the site, they saw content and there was nothing more, there were no strings attached. There was no call to action. The only call to action is do you want to get more of this and that was it.

So that's the secret sauce, my formula for growth and we're exactly the same today. We're fundamentally no different today than we were back then, except we just do a lot more stuff today than we ever did in the beginning.

**Ray:** So to people who are listening to this and thinking well, okay, that sounds great for you, Michael, because you had this whitepaper business funding everything, but what about the guy or the lady who's got a business and they have to do some marketing because have to make some money, they've got to pay the bills. What do you say to those folks?

**Mike:** I say that you don't need to spend anything. There was no cost really in the beginning other than graphics design, an editor and my time. There was no cost because of the people component, the other people component. I had spent time to develop relationships with people that ultimately was like a small, little army and they were out there evangelizing the content because they believed in it.

You don't need a lot of money to run this kind of a business it's a very profitable business. To this day, I'm not spending money to promote anything on Social Media Examiner as far as content. So what I say is it's highly repeatable all you need to have is time. You need to have time to develop the relationships before you need them, you need to have time to produce great content and if you can afford an editor then go for it. If you can't, then don't. I don't want to freak anybody out, but we spend \$1,000 in development costs on every article that we produce.

**Ray:** Holy cow!

**Mike:** Yeah, we have like six editors on every article.

**Ray:** That's why I'm always afraid that you'll actually read my blog some day because I just outsource my editing. People write to me and say hey, you made a stupid mistake here in paragraph two and then I fix it.

**Mike:** Well, it's kind of like this. In the beginning, you realize what you're doing is working and then you ask yourself is there something I can do to improve it. In our case, in the beginning it was more of it, which meant we had to have more people behind the scenes entering things into WordPress. Eventually, it's graphics you add to it to insure that it's seen on Pinterest or Facebook. Then it's SEO people to make sure it's optimized for search. These are things you kind of grow into. You don't just start with any of types of things. Then, eventually, it's translating that content into different mediums.

So it's just more and more of it, but today I call us a media company and our product is our events. We make the vast majority of our revenue through our online and physical conference. We own the audience, so to speak, so that we don't have to pay anyone else to get in front of that audience.

Yes, we do pay to promote our products, but we don't have to. The vast majority of our revenue comes from the nonpaid stuff. It just comes from the daily email blast because we can promote our product in there. It comes from dedicated email blasts for our products. So it doesn't cost a fortune, but it does cost time and that's something not everyone has. Let's be honest, success takes work and work takes time; thus, there are sacrifices.

**Ray:** Mike that is not a popular message. Work and time, come on.

**Mike:** It's not popular, but it's what every successful person does.



**Ray:** Exactly. There's a picture on the Fizzle site, I don't know if you're familiar with the Fizzle guys.

**Mike:** Oh yeah.

**Ray:** So they've got this picture of this guy with this huge barbell. He's doing a dead lift and it says something like, everybody wants to have muscles, but nobody wants to lift this big weight.

**Mike:** Exactly.

**Ray:** Actually, it's a little more colorful language than that. Let's talk about the event for a minute. One of the first impressions I have of you, I think I mentioned this to you earlier, is seeing you in the middle of like 3,000 people who all wanted your attention. That was pretty impressive. So just like with Social Media Examiner, you put together this real world event Social Media Marketing World. To my way of seeing it, you just blew everybody's grid on what an event in this space could look like. You didn't have hundreds of people at your first event, you had thousands. How did you do that?

**Mike:** I had been going to a lot of conferences for a long time, Ray, and I became friends with a lot of the conference people and I kept telling them, you know what? Nobody cares about going to a bar and having music blast and having to lean over and yell in somebody's ear. You know what people want? They want a network, especially social media people, and nobody listened to me. Instead what they would say is well, Miller is sponsoring this, therefore, we have to do it in a bar. I'm like okay, all right, whatever.

If anybody who is listening has ever experienced anything that Social Media Examiner does, we really try to do everything with excellence. We're not one of the minimal viable product guys, if we can't do it well we're not going to do it at all. I had been studying for a long time what I thought was really great about conferences and what I would like a conference to be like if I was running the conference. Nobody was doing that, so I finally decided I was going to do it on my own.

I knew I had a big audience that I could pull it off, but I wasn't expecting as many people to come as came. In our first year, I think we had about 1,300 people, I think we had 1,700 in our second year and we'll have 2,500 in this year. It's hard to get people from around the world, 40 countries to come to San Diego and come to a conference, but I wanted to create an experience that was so incredible that even if someone wasn't coming back they would say best conference ever.

I worked really hard to study every kind of user experience than you could ever imagine. I wanted to create a Disney-like experience from literally not just the first moment someone came, but even before they came. So I employed a lot of social psychology to encourage people to begin connecting way before the conference.

If you go to our sales page, which I'm sure you'll provide a link to later, Ray, you will see there's a Twitter bar on the sidebar and people are constantly tweeting about this event. They're doing it months out from the event and they've been doing it for six months, so the amount of buzz and the excitement level that people have is crazy and I just create lots of little things to encourage all that.

When we're finally about 45 days out, we open up a private LinkedIn group and we encourage everybody to start connecting before they ever come to the conference. All of a

sudden what you have is people saying, I'm coming from Lithuania, I'm coming from Australia or I'm in the healthcare industry. All these people start interacting and connecting with each other and they've already started connections so that by the time they come they are ecstatic. This is the kind of stuff you don't see at other conferences.

**Ray:** No.

**Mike:** We preload everything so that by the time they come they've never been more excited.

**Ray:** Yeah, I went through this exact same thing myself. Last year was the first year that I went and you ruined other conferences for me, really, because nobody does these kinds of things. It pays off because I would listen to conversations that people were having and be involved in conversations with other people attending the conference last year and they were just blown away by the quality of the speakers, the materials, the presentations, the side events and the networking thing you had on the deck of the USS Midway.

**Mike:** Yeah, an aircraft carrier.

**Ray:** And you're doing that again this year.

**Mike:** Yup. You know, another thing that I didn't like about other conferences is I hated the fact that there wasn't a good vetting process on the speakers.

**Ray:** Yeah.

**Mike:** Just like we vet like crazy for writers at Social Media Examiner, I knew we had kind of a high standard to meet because people that read our blog were expecting things to be excellent. There's nothing worse than going to a conference, walking into a session and saying to yourself, these people on the stage don't know what they're talking about.

So, literally, at Social Media Examiner we have 12 simultaneous sessions going on and more than 100 sessions total and every speaker is hand-recruited, every speaker. They go through a very sophisticated vetting process and most of them have excellent communication skills, which is our first requirement. Most of them have written a book, which means they've organized their knowledge. Many of them have extremely deep domain knowledge.

All three of those criteria matter to us more than whether they're famous or not. If they're well known to our audience that's like the bottom of the list, instead what we care about is the quality. We know from our surveys the reason people don't come back is because of the content, so we want someone to walk into literally any room and experience exceptional content because we know that that will increase the chances that they will come back.

**Ray:** And you do a great job of that. I couldn't go to everything because, like you said, there's a dozen things going on at once, but I didn't hear a single speaker that didn't have fascinating, useful, helpful, insightful material to share. I think it's okay for me to say this, you're not getting pitched all the time, which you are at other events.

**Mike:** Oh yeah. We have a no-pitch policy, pure education and what's really cool is people bring their A game. When you set a standard so high, I've seen presenters literally say I'm completely revamping my presentation for tomorrow because I just saw this or I just saw that.

**Ray:** Yeah.

**Mike:** Once people begin to see how important this is for the presenters, the water raises all the boats. I don't know how else to say it. People rise to the occasion, I guess, is the best way to say it and it's a win for everyone.

**Ray:** So you've got a new thing that you just launched a couple of days ago, you want to talk about that a little bit.

**Mike:** Are you talking about the Social Media Examiner show?

**Ray:** Yeah.

**Mike:** So we have two podcast now, my weekly show is called the Social Media Marketing Podcast where I interview experts and go deep.

**Ray:** Which is awesome!

**Mike:** Thank you. We call it our Meal, our Audio Meal, and our snack is the Social Media Examiner Show, which is a daily 10-minute show where we basically go into tactics all about social media. It just launched, literally, a few days before this recording and we're really excited about it. It's just another way for us to get in front of, potentially, a new audience that doesn't have a lot of time to read, but wants rich, valuable content to be fed to them in a little, tiny 10-minute snack every day.

**Ray:** What I love about it is, until now, I would tell people who wanted to know about social media, they would ask me about it, my readers or people that I encountered when I was speaking at other conferences, and I would say well, go to Social Media Examiner, which I was happy to do, but I also knew there was kind of a fire hose effect going on there.

**Mike:** Oh yeah, we're publishing eight to 10 times a week now.

**Ray:** Yeah, which I just crazy awesome, but now I'm really excited about this show because it's five minutes a day, I can recommend it to anybody. Even people who don't know anything about social media, I can say well, just listen to the show for five minutes a day and in a couple, three weeks, you're going to feel like you know a ton about social media and I know that's going to lead to all the other resources. You have so many resources on your site, the reports, the articles you publish and your big podcast. It's just a cornucopia of content.

**Mike:** Thank you. We also have a link to a networking group with like 30 or 40,000 people that are interacting with each other.

**Ray:** Yeah, that might come in handy.

**Mike:** We've got all these little communities that we've built and it's great because in the end we're just trying to serve. We're just trying to help people. It's just so rewarding when we hear people say, I got that promotion or I got the job that I always wanted and I learned everything from you. So it's really, really rewarding.

In the grand scheme of things, we only need mere thousands of customers a year to be very successful from the many, many millions that we serve. So it's just really great to be able to offer such a variety of free resources to the world, if you will.

**Ray:** On your main podcast, I heard you interview Guy Kawasaki recently and he was describing his mind-blowing social media routine that he does every day, which just fried my circuits. What is your social media routine? How do you normally interact in the world of social media?

**Mike:** Well, the good news is I've got a whole team and there are seven people on the team.

**Ray:** That helps.

**Mike:** Personally, the first thing I do is check Facebook. I use Facebook mostly to just kind of keep up to date on what's going on in the world. I don't actually read the newspaper or even read online news anymore, I just kind of check out my friends on Facebook. Occasionally, I will post up something on Facebook that is personal, like me or my kids doing things. Occasionally, I will post up my podcast. Hey, I just interviewed Guy Kawasaki. For the most part, I use Facebook like a consumer would use Facebook, I don't use it so much as a promotional vehicle. Our company has 330,000 fans and we have a much more sophisticated strategy on our wall.

On Twitter I have a team that posts our content into my personal Twitter feed and post some evergreen content into there and then what I do is I interact with people on Twitter. I mostly am interacting with people that are asking me questions on Twitter every day and I use a little app called Tweetbot on my iPhone as the primary way to do it.

**Ray:** Love Tweetbot!

**Mike:** It's pretty cool, ha?

**Ray:** Yeah.

**Mike:** I track the hashtag for our events and occasionally will reply to people. Then I'll go on LinkedIn every now and again and check to see if anybody has sent me any personal messages, but that is the main thing I do. The other thing I do is I'm a rabid consumer of podcasts. I listen to podcasts when I'm shaving in the morning. I have a waterproof speaker and listen to it when I'm showering. I listen to it when I'm driving to work and when I'm driving home. I listen to it when I go on walks on the weekend. I am probably consuming 10 to 15 hours of podcasts every week and that is the main way I learn all the new ideas. I don't have a lot of time to read, but I do have all these idol moments where I'm commuting where I can listen to content.

**Ray:** Yeah, I love doing that, too. Now, do you listen at higher speeds?

**Mike:** No.

**Ray:** No?

**Mike:** I don't.

**Ray:** Dude!

**Mike:** I probably could, but I don't know if I want to rush it. I really enjoy it. There are a lot of shows that I love and I just want to go ahead and let them come into my brain at the speed at which they were recorded.

**Ray:** Oh okay, so just think about this. There's an app called Overcast.

**Mike:** Yeah, I have that, but I don't use it very often.

**Ray:** Okay, so here's what's cool about it. They have a thing called Smart Speed that doesn't speed up the talking, but it takes out all the spaces in between words and pauses.

**Mike:** What does that take a couple minutes off of a show?

**Ray:** Yeah. It puts it at like 1.25 speed. In some cases, maybe even 1.5 speed, but you don't hear it really.

**Mike:** Very intriguing.

**Ray:** Yeah. What I do is speed it up to 1.5 and then I use the Smart Speed on top of that. Sometimes if people talk really slow I do 2X, but that's just me. Now I want to speed people up in real life. I'm like can't you talk twice as fast? It doesn't work so well.

**Mike:** That's too funny.

**Ray:** Okay, Social Media Marketing World. I'm going to now tell people, listen to me people. You must come to Social Media Marketing World. I'm so excited to be coming and my son is coming with me again this year. There's the whole thing on the deck of the USS Midway and you have the networking party and the flight simulators where you get in there and you're spinning around 360 degrees. I mean it's the coolest networking party you will ever go to anywhere, as far as I know.

**Mike:** You should mention that you're a track leader, also, which means you will be in a room and you will be introducing speakers and facilitating the flow. So someone can get a chance to kind of sit in your presence for quite some time if they came.

**Ray:** Well, and I love to meet folks. By the way, if you go to [RayEdwards.com/149](http://RayEdwards.com/149) I've got a link. If you look on the right-hand side of the page, there's a link to Social Media Marketing World that says 'See Ray Live!' If you click on that and you happen to purchase your ticket through that link, then I'm going to arrange a dinner of some kind where we all get together. Probably something simple where we'll all get together and sit around a table, put our feet under the same table and visit people who come kind of as my group so we can hang out and spend some quality time together. So I'm looking forward to that. I don't know what's going to happen if I have like 100 people.

**Mike:** That's a huge value. If I wasn't putting on the conference, I would buy a ticket.

**Ray:** Well, that's cool. That's awesome that you would say that. So who is it for? I mean, really, if somebody is listening and they've never thought about coming to this event, who is this right for?

**Mike:** There are a couple different crowds it's for. We have seven different tracks upon which these 12 simultaneous sessions are going. We've got the small biz track and that whole

track is perfect for the small business owner who wants to figure out how to take his or her business to the next level with social and all the other related topics that small businesses care about. We've got a lot of incredible thought leaders that are teaching in that track.

We've got tons of sessions on every social thing you can imagine. We've got a content track which has something for podcasters. You could literally come and just attend all the podcasting stuff if you want to learn to be a podcaster. We've got another one on blogging, another one of video marketing and then we have one on every single social network that is significant: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest or Instagram.

You can pick any of those kinds of things, so I would say it's for anyone who cares about taking their business and improving their traffic to their website or increasing the exposure they have in their world, increasing in their sales. Any of that kind of stuff using any kind of social, new media or content creation strategies and, for what it's worth, we are also including recordings of every single session for everyone who buys a ticket.

**Ray:** What!

**Mike:** Yeah. You know how you can't get into a room? Well, don't worry about it. Everyone is going to get every single session recording with the ticket price.

**Ray:** Now, wait a minute. That's included with the ticket price.

**Mike:** Correct.

**Ray:** Because other conferences, you know what they do.

**Mike:** They charge a heck of a lot of money for that.

**Ray:** Yeah, they do. They charge as much as your ticket was after you get there.

**Mike:** Basically, it's at least \$300 to \$500 more than that.

**Ray:** That's incredibly generous that you're doing that. That relieves all the stress because then you don't feel like I'm missing something and I'm not happy about it. Now you get everything recorded. That's beautiful.

**Mike:** Absolutely.

**Ray:** That's cool.

**Mike:** By the way, the networking side of it I think is worth the price of admission for a lot of people. If I can just dwell on this for two seconds...

**Ray:** Yes, please.

**Mike:** We give people little stickers they can put on their badges. Do you remember that last year?

**Ray:** Oh yes. This is awesome! You have to describe this. This is cool.

**Mike:** So you get all these stickers to choose from that you can put on your name badge which indicates what your interests are: podcasting, blogging, educational, regulated industry, corporate, small biz. These badges hang around your neck and whenever you meet people at all these organized networking events you can look at someone's badge and immediately say oh, they're interested in podcasting. I'm interested in podcasting. It breaks the ice and allows an immediate conversation to happen. In addition, we have dedicated networking. Not just on the aircraft carrier the night before the event, but after every major keynote we set aside an hour. We have this huge space called the Networking Plaza and you can just go in there and network. At lunch we put little things on tables that say blogging or podcasting and you can go sit at a table that has a topic you're interested in, metrics, analytics. You're going to be surrounded by people that are interested in that topic and you can just dialogue with people.

This is just a sampling of the things we do. We go crazy overboard to make it effortless for you to connect with people.

**Ray:** Yeah, like nobody else I've ever seen, like no other conference I've ever seen. Everybody is so accessible, it's not one of these deals where you feel like people are superstars and you can't talk to them. Everybody is there to connect, I mean it's social.

**Mike:** Oh, yeah. We don't have a speakers' room, we purposely force the speakers to stay out in public.

**Ray:** I love that. What I would advise you to do if you're going to come to the thing, just plan to dig in and take advantage. I am. I'm looking so forward to meeting everybody I can possibly have a conversation with. One tip I'll give you is grab a copy of Keith Ferrazzi's book *Never Eat Alone*. Read that before you show up for the event because there are some great ideas in there about how to have conversations with people.

If you could only say here are two things I would do to get the absolute most out of being at Social Media Marketing World, what would those two things be?

**Mike:** Here's what I would do. About 60 to 75% of the people join the LinkedIn group, so you can actually go into the LinkedIn group and literally look for people and search for people that have in their LinkedIn profile things that you're interested in. For example, let's just say you're a mommy blogger and you're looking for people that are into kids' activities or you're in the pet space or the financial services space, you can actually start connecting with these people in the LinkedIn group before you come. You can just say hey, how about we meet up for lunch?

Something as simple as that because most of these people are coming on their own and if they already feel like they know somebody, oh, my gosh, that's a huge, huge barrier to kind of getting started with things. In addition, the app we have is called Bizzabo and a lot of people end up using the mobile app. It connects to their LinkedIn profile and it allows you to send private messages to people before the conference, at or during the conference.

**Ray:** Yes.

**Mike:** It's just another cool way. So I think a little bit of legwork and maybe even engaging with people on Twitter because we actually put together some Twitter lists and stuff like that. We use everything you can imagine and I think just a little work ahead of time can make

your experience that much better because Ray, I started Social Media Examiner at a conference. I didn't mention that, but I went to a conference and I had a hit list of people that I wanted to interview. I had a video crew with me and people I wanted to meet and you know what? Those face-to-face connections never are forgotten. If you're very strategic about this, you can accomplish a huge amount in a couple of days. That's my piece of advice.

**Ray:** So now everybody is going to show up with video crew. We're all going to have our personal video entourage following us around.

**Mike:** Well, there are a lot of people that bring these little portable podcast things with them, like a little recorder.

**Ray:** Yes.

**Mike:** They just kind of grab people, go to a table and hit record.

**Ray:** Yeah. In general, most people love to do that. I just think it's so wonderful, all the things you do to help people connect and those connections are one of the important things you'll take away from the conference and the other important thing is the content is topnotch. You said something earlier that I really think sums the whole thing up, you talked about having a Disney experience. Anybody who's been to a Disney park knows that that means. It's like you walk into a magical world that's totally different than the world you occupy every day from day to day and I think you really succeed with that at this conference.

**Mike:** Well, that you. Again, it's just one of those things that you have to experience. It's expensive, it's an investment, but the way I look at it is I made an investment in going to a trade show when I started Social Media Examiner and those relationships I build there still last to this day. You know what, without out those relationships I would not be where I am right now. Sometimes you have to just leap forward in faith and just say okay, I don't know who I'm going to meet, but I know I'm going to come out of this with a massive return on my investment. I'm just going to bite the bullet and I'm going to go for it.

**Ray:** I think that's well said. That's probably a good place for us to wrap up. Michael, thank you so much for taking the time to sit down and have this conversation and I'm excited about seeing you there.

**Mike:** Oh, Ray, thank you so much for having me on your show. I look forward to shaking your hand in person very soon.

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I thank you so much. I look forward to seeing you at Social Media Marketing World.



Until we meet again my friends, next Tuesday is the next episode of the podcast, may God continue to bless you and may He keep on doing more for you than you ask or even possibly imagine.

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