



The logo features the name 'Ray' in a large, black, cursive script font. Below it, the name 'EDWARDS' is written in a bold, black, sans-serif, all-caps font, with each letter spaced out.

EDWARDS

Ray Edwards Show, Episode 484

Eric Upton's Amazing Rise as A Top Copywriter

Automated Speaker (00:00):

Ray Edward show episode 484, Eric Upton's amazing rise as a top copywriter. The Ray Edwards Show This is the podcast for prosperity with purpose.

Ray Edwards (00:18):

Welcome, my friends, to another edition of the Ray Edwards Show. We've got some uplifting conversation to share with you today. As I have a chat with Eric Upton. Eric is a student of ours, and we crossed paths in a kind of serendipitous way, but it happens that way more often than not these days, serendipitous coincidental. If you believe in coincidences, which I don't, I think life happens for us, not to us. And this story is a great example of that happening. And Eric and I get into how we crossed paths about where his career has gone since that time and what he feels is in store for his future. And he gives a great example, I think, of following the spiritual guidance inside yourself, to a place where you're uncertain about where it's going, but you know, it's going somewhere. If you have that feeling, and you're wondering, "What should I do?" Maybe this conversation was timed exactly for you, where you are right now. I invite you to listen to our chat. That's coming up.

Automated Speaker (01:18):

Does anyone want to live a life that has long prosperous? Spiritual foundations.

Ray Edwards (01:25):

Spiritual foundations. This one comes from Jeremiah 29, 11 through 13. Many of us know this well, but I think today's chat with Eric really exemplifies this. The scripture says, "For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord plans to prosper you and not to harm you plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me. And I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Automated Speaker (01:56):

Now simple hacks that make life cheaper, easier, and faster Ray's tip of the week.

Ray Edwards (02:02):

My tip of the week this week is kind of related to what I was talking about last week with social media. And I just will say this, be intentional with social media. I'm not suggesting you just quit social media altogether. That's not my position. What I am saying is to be intentional. And I talked with you about taking social media apps off your phone when possible. So you're not doing an infinite scroll thing. If you can't do that, or you don't want to do that, maybe put them in a folder on your phone in a sub-screen, not your home screen, but two street screens back. That's a possible way too, so you have to go through some effort to get to that app. Instagram is something that it's easier in many ways to post to Instagram from your phone. Some solutions to that are you could use your phone's camera app to shoot your Instagram stories and then upload them later. Or if you want to be more advanced to do some editing and some music, you'd use an app called spark camera. I love this app. I use it not as often as I'd like, but pretty often. And I always get comments when I do use spark camera to make an Instagram story, check it out, spark camera and use social intentionally and separately. Here's the key thing, separate creation from consumption. If you use social media to intentionally market your business or your ideas, that's great, but I encourage you to just do this experiment set a separate time each day to consume social media and a separate time for contributing or creating on social media and see if that changes your social media experience. I predict that it will. All right, let's get right into the conversation I had with Eric.

Automated Speaker (03:36):

And now our feature presentation.

Ray Edwards (03:39):

I'm super excited today to talk to you about another success story of somebody who got into this weird, wacky, crazy business of copywriting, which is something most of us copywriters know, we have to explain to people what that is. Cause I think we put the little C inside a circle at the bottom of the page. It says copyright 1972 by Ray Edwards. But no, that's not what we're talking about. We're not talking about protecting your intellectual property rights. We're talking about selling your products, your services, your ideas. Eric Upton, welcome to the show.

Eric Upton (04:10):

I am so excited to be here, Ray. Thank you for having me. I appreciate it.

Ray Edwards (04:15):

I'm thrilled to have you on. We had a conversation a few days ago, and it was so much fun to talk to you. Let's just start with, get into the wacky world of copywriting. I should stop calling it that it's not really wacky. If people know copywriters, wacky is probably the last word they'd use to describe most of us, but how'd you get into this strange business, to begin with.

Eric Upton (04:32):

It's a long and crazy story, and you know, meeting more and more copywriters who have similar journeys, not in the exact steps, but just in that it's a crazy journey. So, wacky in how we got here for sure. I mean, my son he's five years old, and he still tells people that I'm a coffee writer. And so I don't even know if my kids fully understand what it is that I do yet, but little by little, I'm trying to help them understand it. So yeah, my journey started not too long ago. But I grew up in church, and for 14 years after growing up in church, I became a pastor, and I started in youth ministry and fell in love with working with students and working in the church world and investing myself in students and families. And so I did that for gosh, about 14 years and loved every second of it, and swore up and down, anytime new volunteers came in, or new parents or families came in, I told them, I said, "I never plan on leaving this. I love what I do. And I always plan to do it." And then God, in his twisted sense of humor, said, "Well, watch what I can do." And you know, one day we got a call out of the blue from a church in Phoenix, Arizona that we'd never heard of before. They said, "Hey, we heard about you. And we would like you to come on staff with us and begin writing the curriculum and the content for our small groups for adults." And at first, it was going to be a very simple, "Well, thank you, but no thank you." Because it wasn't in our plan, Phoenix, not a place that we'd ever thought about going to or moving to or living at, but the more we prayed about it and looked into it, the more clear it became to us, that is actually where God was leading us to go and what he wanted us to do.

Eric Upton (06:09):

So we decided to pack up all of our stuff, collect our kids. We had three at the time, and we left all of our friends and our family and everything that we had ever known in the place that we grew up in. And we went out to Phoenix, Arizona, where we knew no one and had no connections and nothing going on other than the belief that that's where God wanted us to be. So I started working for this church. And at the time when I accepted the job, I didn't know this, but it was the second-largest church in the USA that I had taken a job at. And it was just insane to go from where we were to where we now are. And about six months into that role, my supervisor came into my office and said, "Hey, we're going to start something new. And we don't know if it's going to work, but we were thinking, you might be the perfect person to help us start it. We've never had live streaming services before. We've never had an online church presence before, but we think it's time that we do that. And we'd like you to be the one who kind of starts this up, would you be interested?" And at first, I was like, Oh my gosh, this is an incredible opportunity. Yes, absolutely. So I jumped at the opportunity, and then they hit me with the kicker, and the kicker was this. "We want to know if it works, but we're not going to really give you a ton of money. We're not going to promote this from the stage. We're not going to announce it or have any marketing budget for it, but we need you to find volunteers for this ministry. And we need you to figure out a way to promote this ministry to people inside and outside of the church without us ever telling anyone about it. So good luck with that."

Ray Edwards (07:38):

Wow.

Eric Upton (07:38):

I lived in Phoenix for six months. I didn't know anyone. I didn't have any deep relationships or connections or relational capital. And so I was kind of scratching my head wondering like, how am I going to do this? How am I going to tell the people about this thing that doesn't even exist yet and convince them to not only serve but also watch? And that kind of led me down the rabbit hole of how do you promote stuff? How do you get people involved in stuff? And over the course of, kind of, doing some research, they fell across this company called Story Brand and this gentleman named Donald Miller. And I started looking into his online course, and as part of that online course, he said, "Not only are we going to teach you how to clarify your messaging, but we're also going to give you this whole bonus course on copywriting. How to write emails that convince people to be a part of things or to sell things or whatever it is." I started looking at this, and I'm like, that's what I need. I need to figure out how to write words that convince people to be a part of something that they've never heard of before. And as it turns out, the person who is leading that bonus course was you. And so that's how I came to the knowledge that there was a Ray Edwards, that there was a thing called copywriting. And that the words that you use and the messaging that you use is really, really important when you're trying to get people on side or to journey with you to wherever it is that you're going or buy your products and services or whatever it may be.

Eric Upton (09:02):

So in about two days, I burned through all of the material, and I spent a lot of that time kind of going through the course that you taught, which was walking people through the PASTOR framework. And I got to the end of the course, and I thought, well, I've really got nothing to lose. I might as well just see if this actually works. So I got to work, and I crafted an email series using the pastor framework, telling people that were a part of the email list that I got from our data team. I think the list was like 300 people total that fit the criteria of whom I was looking for. And so I wrote out like a five email, long sequence, and I sent it out completely cold to these 300 people. And ultimately, the email sequence led people to sign up for an introductory dinner where I would give them tacos in exchange for listening to my pitch, to be a part of this ministry. And out of those 300 emails that went out, 30 people ended up showing up for taco night. Now, I don't know if they were there just for the tacos and were willing to put up with my spiel or if they actually cared about the ministry, but 30 people showed up, and they listened to the spiel. And at the end of the night, 15 of those people raised their hands and said, "Yeah, I want to be a part of this ministry." That again didn't even exist. Like I had no clue what we were going to do or what it was going to look like. And those 15 people ended up dedicating the next year and a half of their lives to helping build this online live streaming ministry. And one of the coolest parts about that is being six months new into a church and into a place where we knew nobody, a lot of those people became really close friends. I'm currently sitting on the deck of a house that sits on an island in the middle of Wisconsin. And two of those volunteers that showed up that night for tacos, it's their family that owns this house. And we're on vacation with them right now because of the relationship that was started because of the emails that were sent out. I followed up with people, and I asked him like, "What made you come that night? Like, was it honestly the tacos?" And I remember talking to Danny he's the husband of the wife that owns this house, and he said, "You know, I got that email. And I was sitting on the couch with my wife, and we're reading through it. We were like, we've never seen an email like this come from a church before, and I don't know

what this is about, but I think we should go and find out what it is." And that that created this ministry. And I figured if I could get 15 volunteers to be a part of a ministry that didn't exist, I wonder what I could do to get people to watch. And so over the next year and a half, we created an email series and email sequences and language for this ministry. And as we built it, we went from zero viewers to over 3000 viewers in under a year of building this ministry. And that's without any marketing budget or, you know, announcements from the stage or anything like that.

Ray Edwards (11:51):

Wow. You know, and one of the things that's super amazing about that is most people, I don't know if you know this, maybe you have a more accurate number, but the information I read recently said that the average church in America has a membership of 200 people or less. So For you to go from zero to 3000 viewers is kind of remarkable. Amazing.

Eric Upton (12:14):

Yeah. I mean, you don't think about it at the time because I think you're, I don't know. You set such lofty goals. There are a lot of us that set such ginormous goals. And a lot of that comes from comparison. I think like we look at the success stories that everyone kind of touts or talks about. And we think that if we don't reach those massive numbers overnight, then there's something wrong with us or we're not doing it. Right. But the reality is when you realize that every single person that you're reaching every single one of those 3000 people is an individual life. That's a family that's a husband, a father, a mother, a sister, a brother, a son, a daughter like that is someone who is hearing a message that is drastically transforming their life. That's a big deal. And that's not just church stuff either. Like, yeah, I genuinely believe that coming from a ministry background, but I know that a lot of your listeners they're copywriters, they're people in the business world, in the business space, you have to understand like your products, your services, what it is that you're doing is drastically changing people's lives. I mean, that's probably why you got into business in the first place, and whether you're reaching the numbers of the success stories that you often hear people talk about or not, you're reaching someone, and that's a big deal. That it's too important to not consider, I guess.

Ray Edwards (13:25):

Yeah. Absolutely, for sure. And it's important to remember something you said about those are individual lives, and you're having an impact on them. And I think it was Michael Hyatt. I heard once he was giving a talk in front of an audience, and there were some questions to being asked, and somebody said something like, "Well, I've only got like 500 listeners to my podcast." And Michael said, "Well, think about that for a minute. What if you had 500 people that showed up outside your front door once a week to hear what you had to say, what would that feel like?"

Eric Upton (13:57):

Incredible, right?

Ray Edwards (13:58):

That was a total reframe. It's like, "Oh, I never thought of that." So I think getting into the whole comparison thing, especially online, when, so often we hear things like this author wrote a book, the first book, he went from zero to a million readers, New York Times bestseller. Those are great stories, but it's usually not the way it happens. And there's a book that one of the lines, the book I remember, said, "Do not despise the day of small beginnings."

Eric Upton (14:25):

It's a very important book if I remember correctly.

Ray Edwards (14:27):

Yes. And a very important piece of advice. So what happened from there? Where did, where did you go from? Well, wait a minute. When you built this online church, this was before COVID, I'm sure.

Eric Upton (14:40):

Yeah. So this was I got hired by this church in 2017. And so we're kind of, we're wrapping up 2017 into 2018 when all of the this is kind of going on. And then in November of 2018, everything kind of changed. We started hearing a new message from the Lord. And I know that sounds weird, and not a lot of people talk like that, but like we're really big into prayer in our family. And we, we really try to not just make it a one-way conversation. Like we, we really honestly want to hear what the Lord has to say to us. And we started just feeling in our heart like, "Hey, I want to transition you away from this." And that was really scary for us at the time. And we had a lot of questions we're trying to figure out what's going on. And in the midst of our own personal turmoil, the church leadership started asking some really big questions, and I never wanted to be dishonest or not forthcoming with them. And I kind of made an arrangement with the Lord, which if anyone has ever done that before, you know, that generally never works out in the way that you think it should. When you try and make arrangements with the Lord and, but you know, I'm, it takes me a while. I'm dense. So I made an arrangement with the Lord. I said, "All right, Lord, if people ask the right questions, I'll give the right answers. I'll always be honest, but they have to ask the right questions. I'm not just going to like come out and say, you know, that I'm struggling here." And what ended up happening is they started asking all the right questions.

Eric Upton (16:11):

We ended up going on a tour of churches in the Southwest. We toured some of the big ones like elevation and North point and church of the Highlands and some of the bigger name churches. And it was a common thing. And we're just, you know, talking shop and sharing tips and tricks and what everyone's doing. And on that trip, I found out that there was a very different perspective than I had about church than a lot of my coworkers. And I created some dissonance between me and them and what was going on. And simultaneously, while we were all on this trip, everything that could go wrong with the live stream while we were away did go wrong. Like the whole thing just crashed, and anyone who could do anything about it was on that trip. And when we came back, we had this big meeting with the executive pastor, and he sat down, he

said, "You know. We need three things in order for this to run successfully." And they listed out what those three things were. And I say, "Listen, I realized that I wasn't one of those three things." And so literally five minutes after that meeting ended, I called him and my supervisor in the room. And I sat down. I said, "Listen, you just said the three things that you need in order to accomplish what it is that you want to accomplish. And I'm not one of them. And I never want to be the person that causes more friction as opposed to less friction in an organization. What do you think we should do?" And they kind of looked at me bright-eyed because they'd never had anyone come to them before. I don't think and say, "Hey, I don't know if you actually need me to be here to accomplish what it is that you want to accomplish." I was essentially committing work suicide at the time right there. And I couldn't believe the words that were coming out of my mouth as they were coming out my mouth. And what ended up transpiring over the next few weeks with a number of really big conversations about whether or not I should be in the organization anymore, and the good news, it was all positive. It was all friendly. It was all healthy conversation and dialogue. But two weeks before Christmas, they came back to me, and they said, "Hey, Eric, we're going to go ahead and let you go. And we're going to wish you the best. And, you know, we're going to give you a little bit of a ramp-up period so that you can maybe land another job." But two weeks before Christmas, they let us go with kind of enough of a ramp-up period to get through the middle of January.

Eric Upton (18:14):

And that was it. And having worked in ministry, we didn't have savings being in a new place. We didn't have family or friends to like rely on. I didn't have any additional contacts of jobs or other churches to work for. And so the middle of January, we were just kind of stuck. We were looking at each other, my wife and I were wondering what we're going to do. And like Carrie Underwood said, "We were living off faith in gasoline" at the time. And I kind of looked around, and I said, "Well, I know this story brand stuff. And I've met a few Story Brand guides along the way. I wonder if they just need help with extra work that they can't handle." So I started reaching out to a few friends and got some freelancing jobs and just started trying to make ends meet when 2019 turned over.

Eric Upton (18:58):

And I did that for about six months until my wife in her wisdom, said, "Hey, you've been doing this work for other people, and they're getting all the credit. Why don't you just become a Story Brand certified guide yourself and do it for you?" And so in July of 2019, I got certified as a Story Brand guide and started trying to build my own company and do marketing for other people, clarifying their message. I'd always kind of leaned into the copywriting side because of my experience at the church that I worked for and starting that ministry. And a lot of the freelance work ended up being copywriting needs that I helped people out with. And then that continued on through the end of 2019, just kind of like piecing income together. And then, as we all know, now 2020 hit like a bat out of hell with a complete vengeance. And man, it's been crazy. And in March of this year, man, everything just kind of flipped upside down for a lot of people. But at the end of March, the beginning of April some, some really cool opportunities opened up for me through another Story Brand guide. I got connected to people like Dean Graziosi and Tony Robbins company mastermind.com and did some copywriting for some of their workshops. And that led me to be introduced to a gentleman named Pete

Vargas of advance your reach. Who's looking for a senior copywriter at the time. And so in April, he actually hired me to be his senior copywriter. And that's what I've been doing ever since.

Ray Edwards (20:32):

So what lessons do you feel like you've learned through the COVID crisis? I mean, there you were looking for opportunities and building a business during what is arguably the worst economic environment of your life so far.

Eric Upton (20:48):

Yep. Yep.

Ray Edwards (20:49):

You are thriving, not just surviving, but thriving. Yeah. What are some keys do you think that led you to this place?

Eric Upton (20:57):

You know, I'm really excited to do more intentionally reflecting on that question. Because I think it's a really important question, but if I was to do that right now, I know that in our space, like so many people are talking about this concept of pivoting and the importance of pivoting. And I know you had to pivot in, in your own business. And when we were talking last, just going from, you know, a calendar booked with speaking opportunities to not having those anymore because of COVID like that's an overnight shift and an overnight change. And I think reflecting back on some of the lessons that I've learned, one of the biggest ones that I'm continuing to challenge myself on is to operate in spite of fear to move towards boldness, even with the fear that's attached to it.

Eric Upton (21:49):

I really like to mitigate risks. I like to be very confident or have this strange sense of confidence before taking action on certain things. And the more confidence that I feel, the more willing I am to take risks. Well, when COVID hit, like all confidence went out the window, I think for a lot of us. And what I'm realizing now is it's those who are moving forward in spite of the fear that is able to make the most progress and experience the greatest sense of success or greatest forms of success, even in the midst of all of this. I'm seeing a couple of different types of people, and, and business leaders, you know, there's the business leaders that are looking to preserve and protect to kind of mitigate losses in a lot of ways. There are ones that are completely shifting because they have to, you know, they were in an industry in a job that job had to let them go. And now they're having to kind of reinvent, to recreate. And then there are those that are kind of looking at their gifts and their skills and how they're wired. And they're realizing that it's really scary to move forward on those things, but they're doing it anyway. And I think now more than ever; the world is looking towards leaders who are willing to stand up and say, "I'm really scared. I'm really freaked out. I'm really unsure if this is going to work out, but this is the direction that I'm going, and I'm moving forward in it." That's been a big one for me. I think another one is just valuing

relationships. I think we've talked about it for years. A lot of people have talked about it for years. Like it's more about who, you know, than what you know. There's a lot of people right now who have a lot of knowledge about a lot of things that are still jobless right now or really struggling.

Eric Upton (23:42):

So clearly it's not just a matter of what you know, but who, you know. The people that I've met, the circles that I'm in now is a direct result of the relationships that I've kept. And so for me during COVID right now, relationships have become probably the most important investment that I can make. I really want to invest in other people; I want to invest in relationships because when this all changes again, and I don't know what the world's going to look like in, you know, three months, six months, or whatever. I don't know how much of the way things used to be will ever come back. But what I do know is the investment that I pour into other people right now will yield great results in the next three to six months. And I don't know what those will be, but I know they'll be important, and that's what I care about.

Ray Edwards (24:34):

Yes. I love that. That's what a great answer, and you know what? I'm just reflecting on the stories I've heard from people I know. Pete Vargas and I are good friends, and he's told this story publicly, so I'm sure it's okay for me to share a little bit of what he's said to many thousands of people all over the world is that when this all struck his business virtually disappeared overnight, and it was a lot of money, like to the tune of millions of dollars. And what struck me was the immediacy with which Pete, by his own story, reached out to people like Michael Hyatt, like Tony Robbins, like Dean, and said, "I'm not sure what to do," and made those connections and got feedback. And not only did Pete managed to not go under, his business is now thriving. He did things that are remarkable that were done for the first time in the industry and turned what could have been the end of the business into the beginning of something even bigger and more impactful.

Ray Edwards (25:35):

And I've heard Tony tell the same kind of story because he has all these live events that he makes his impact on the world through. And he had to cancel all of them, which was very frustrating to a man who is 40 years of being in business had never canceled a single event. Pretty shocking, even when he was dealing with mercury poisoning, and I heard him tell this story where he had been throwing up backstage and when it's time to him for him to go on, he went through that curtain that led him onto the stage and just came out, being his explosive, powerful, amazing self, and began serving the people in that audience. And nobody knew that he was so direly ill. So just hearing individuals at that level of the game saying, I had a moment where I was like, I don't know what to do. And then reaching out, connecting with them through those relationships and being willing to make the pivot, even though it was different from what you'd been doing for 10, 20, 30, 40 years, that really is the key and relationships. If being willing to pivot as the key relationships with the foundation, the strength that will hold you up during the process.

Eric Upton (26:37):

A hundred percent, because I think when you're at your most fearful, if you can look to your left and your right and you see people that are looking back at you and, and just with their, with their eyes, with their presence, with their encouragement, they're essentially saying, I believe in whatever you have in you to move forward, to take that next step. Sometimes that's all the confidence that you need to take that next step. And so having those relationships where you can look on your, your right and your left and see people who are next to you, who believe in you, who support you, that helps you get past a lot of the fear sometimes, you know, and one of the biggest temptations when things are not going well, when a mistake is made is to essentially turtle up, you know, to hide, to be alone. I mean in the church world and in the Christian world and in the Christian walk, like it's one of the things that I talked to students about for years is, "You're going to make mistakes. You're going to do something that you should not have done. And, and the greatest trick of the enemy is number one, to convince you to do the thing that you know, you shouldn't do. And his second greatest trick is to convince you after you've done it, that you should be alone and deserve to be punished in isolation for having done it." And, and for him to hit you with a double whammy like that. And this translates to business in that as business leaders, as copywriters are whatever it is that you're doing. When you get hurt by the economy, a strong pivot, a virus that no one saw coming, and you feel like you have nothing. The greatest hurt that we can incur upon ourselves is to believe that warrants us to be in isolation, that we should shrivel away, that we should be by ourselves like that. That is the double whammy that we can't afford to have happen. Powerful.

Ray Edwards (28:20):

If folks want to connect with you and keep up with what you're doing, where's the best place for them to do that.

Eric Upton (28:26):

There's a couple of places. My website is pretty simple; it's EricSUpton.com. And that's probably one of the easier ways to get ahold of me. I am on social media, but I'm pretty sparse on social media. So you can follow me on Instagram. That's probably the place that I'm at most often, and that's @TheEricUpton on Instagram. And I do. If you leave a comment or shoot me a DM, I answer all of those real fasts. And personally, my posting is a little bit sparse, but yeah, those are probably the best ways to do it.

Ray Edwards (29:02):

That's awesome. We will link up to those contact points in the show notes for this episode. Eric, Thanks for taking the time out of your vacation to share with us. I appreciate it.

Eric Upton (29:14):

It was a pleasure. Thanks for having me.

Ray Edwards (29:16):

Well, it's your turn to join the conversation. Let me hear your feedback on today's episode at RayEdwards.com/484, and finally subscribe to the podcast, please. You

won't miss an episode. You can't beat the price. It's totally free. We've got easy, one-click subscription links at RayEdwards.com/484. And I would love to hear from you. And if you're so inclined and you want to write us a review, maybe give us a star rating. I'd love that too. Be sure to put your name in your review. If you do that so I can mention you on the podcast, we'll do a looking at our reviews episode pretty soon. Until next time, may you enjoy long life, good health, and great prosperity. Peace to you and peace to your house.

Automated Speaker 2 (30:00):

Thank you for listening to the Ray Edwards Show.

Automated Speaker (30:02):

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Automated Speaker 2 (30:12):

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Automated Speaker (30:17):

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