Easy Book Content:
Module 4: Writing YOUR Content

Tony Laidig

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Introduction

Welcome to the fourth lesson of Easy Book Content! So far we have looked at using public domain content and using other people's content. This lesson is about writing your own content. Actually, in this lesson you are going to learn some of the easy approaches to writing your own content.

There are a lot of different ways to go about writing, and some methods take longer than others. I have shared some of my own ideas and insights before. This is the first time I've ever really dug into them. I am also going to share some new methods with you. So, by the end of this lesson you will have some fresh ideas about how to go about writing your book. In this lesson following topics will be covered:

- New Personal Writing Models for Content

- Capitalizing on Blogging and Social Media for Content

- Being Interviewed for Content

- Chronicling Your Life (Journaling)

- And Much More!

Preparing to Write YOUR Content

GETTING STARTED…

Preparing to Write YOUR Content:
- WHY do you want to tell your story / write your book?
- WHO is your audience?
- WHAT do you want the reader to walk away with?
- Start with a synopsis and outline.
  - Chapter Titles and Subheads
- Write daily without editing!

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Before you begin writing, think long and hard about why it is that you want to write your book. You should also think about whom your audience is and what you want your readers to walk away with. These are considerations that you want to make no matter what type of product you are creating, and you should really have these things pretty well-defined in your mind as you go about the process of generating your content.

You'll want to start with a synopsis and outline. This really applies more to writing nonfiction books, but it can apply to writing novels as well. If it is a nonfiction book that you are writing, then you will want to break up your outline by first listing your chapter titles. Most people included about 8-12 chapters. Then you may want to list 4-6 subtopics under each chapter titles. When you do this, it makes it really easy to write your book because you are able to do so a small section at a time.

I recommend that you write at least a little each and every day, and it is best to do so without editing. Practice makes perfect; it doesn't matter whether you are writing, painting, taking photographs or anything else. So, writing everyday is going to help to improve your skill. It is also going to help you to accomplish your goals. It's really amazing how much you can accomplish in a short period of time if you stay after it. The reason why you don't want to edit anything at this point is because you don't want to interrupt the flow of information as it comes out of you.

I have found that there are basically four different writing styles, and whether a book is fiction or nonfiction, it will fit loosely within one of the following writing styles:

Expository: Your typical how-to book would fall into this category. An expository work is one in which you explains a process of some sort.

Descriptive: Some books describe things in a very detailed manner and the writing is sometimes very poetic.

Persuasive: Present reasons and arguments to justify your point of view on a topic.

Narrative: Telling a story from your point of view as the character.

Let's say that you were using the descriptive style for writing and part of your story was about a horse running through a field; instead of writing "The horse was running through a field just now." You would write something like "A gorgeous black stallion was running through the field at full trot. His mane was flowing in the wind as the steam from his nostrils burst forth…" The whole purpose of it is to really envelop your reader into your story or topic.

Sales copy and marketing books can often be thought of as persuasive. If I were to write a book about building a list using Facebook, then I would essentially be trying to persuade your readers that Facebook is the best tool to use to drive traffic, or build your list, and so on. In other words, you are writing to convince people of one thing or another.

I believe that when it comes to doing anything that's creative, it's important to have a dedicated place to work. You want to have something that gives you a dedicated flow. Chunking is a method that I use where you set aside a certain time and place to do your writing every day. I use my office to do a lot of things, but I never do any of the writing that I do in my office. I always go somewhere else. The reason why I do this is because the shift in environment helps me to focus.

If you remember, when you do your outline you are going to list a number of subsections under each chapter. I recommend that you write out a new subsection every day. If you write just 500 words a day for 90 days, that comes out to be 45,000 words. That's the typical word count for an average book. You should be able to crank out 500 words in about a half an hour.

When you break the process down into chunks, you don't have to stress out about the process of writing an entire book. All you have to worry about is writing 500 words on one particular subcategory. By chunking, you won't be cranking out a book every other day, but you will be making headway each day.

Being Interviewed

I found the transcript from an interview that Mike and I did together. I actually went through this process twice. The first time was with Mike, but the second time I pulled in questions from my subscribers. I used those questions to teach a four-part webinar series. When searching through my files, I came across this content and I had completely forgotten that I had done it.

Before putting like this together, you want to determine the key points that you want to make in your book. This will help you to formulate your questions. You'll want to use these questions to cover each key point. You can have your primary questions make up the chapter titles and the follow-up questions that are related to the primary questions can make up your subheads.

I remember walking a couple of my friends through this process a few years ago. They were writing a health-related book. We got together to talk about the vision for this book, and we began by formulating an outline of the different things that we wanted to communicate. We provided questions that would draw out the answers that they wanted communicated.

After these interviews were conducted a couple of times I was able to go through these questions and answers and put together all of the basic content for the book. All that we had left to do after that was edit it down and add a few key insights. Most of it was an easy process because of how we handled the prep work.

You can also use the questions that you ask to follow a writing formula. There are a lot of different writing formulas out there, and if you want to learn more about them, you can Google it. A simple formula that I use is to make a point (what), back up that point (why), and apply it (how). I recommend that you use this formula when you are trying to come up with questions because it helps you to focus on what you are trying to get across.

Your book's content can come from multiple interviews. You don't have to hold one marathon session and get it all kicked out over the course of one day. As a matter of fact, it may make more sense to do it over multiple interviews. One of the reasons why I love this approach is because it makes it really easy to tap into a flow. You may have predetermined one of the questions, but what I have found is that the interviewer will often think of things during the course of the interview that you may not have thought of before. This often makes the interview more dynamic.

Blogging & Social Media
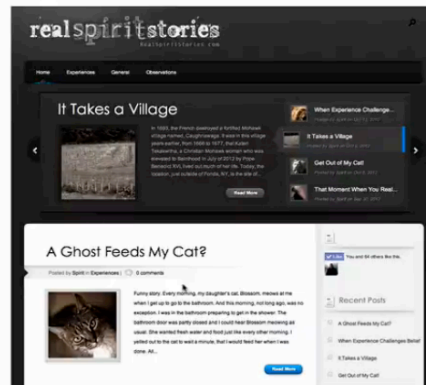
A screenshot of one of my blogs is shown above. Normally a blog will be about a specific topic. In this particular case, I am writing about the supernatural events that happened to me and my family. Eventually I will use this content to put together a book. When I do, the posts will become the subheads to my chapters. All of these subheads will come together to form chapters.

You can deliberately plan your posts or you can just go with the flow and organize everything after the fact. That's actually what I am doing in this particular case. I really haven't added any content to the blog above for about a year because I got distracted and moved on to work on other things, but I definitely plan on finishing it. Right now I am writing posts as I get inspired to do so. I have a basic idea of what stories I want to share in my blog, but they're definitely not in any given order. So, the way that I'm going about this is a bit random.

One thing that you can do in order to generate more content is allow people to comment on your posts. User interaction is also a great way to add to the power of your story. It can make sense to engage your audience and allow them to contribute. You will need to screen them if you do so, by the way. A big advantage in doing this is that it gives you the opportunity to build relationships with future customers of yours. In a way you are kind of pre-selling your book.

Facebook can be utilized in a similar fashion. Specifically, you'll want to use Facebook fan pages if you are going to use this method to write. When you do it this way, you give your readers

even more opportunities to interact. Facebook is designed to encourage feedback and collaboration. Plus, it's a much larger platform. If I had decided to do Real Spirit Stories purely as a Facebook fan page, as opposed to a blog, my page would surely get a lot more visitors. So, Facebook gives you the ability to share your work with a much larger audience.

Again, creating a blog or Facebook fan page on your books topic can not only help you to generate content, it can help you to pre-sell your book. Now, you don't have to tell your readers to go out and buy your book; they will because it's just a natural part of the process. The visitors to your page will feel like they have contributed, that they belong, and that they had some say-so in the book's creation. They were engaged in the process of creating the book, so they are going to want to purchase the book upon its release. Therefore, these are the first people that you are going to let know about the book.

You can essentially do the same thing with Twitter, except your limited in the number of characters that you use. Personally, I couldn't imagine writing an entire book 120 characters at a time, but there are people who have done it. They probably did it more for publicity than anything else though.

Google+ is very much like Facebook. You can't really have a fan page, but you're not limited in characters, and it is very easy to engage your audience on that site. One advantage that you have is that you can even limit your work to certain circles on Google+.

There's a lot of different ways you can utilize this method, and there are a lot of blogging websites as well. You could use Blogger, or you could use WordPress.com. You could also use some of the document-based sites like HubPages. No matter what you do the method is the same. It really all just comes down to this chunking model. You're putting out small posts or fan page posts that are around 300-500 words long, and you have people following along.

Teaching/Speaking

PERSONAL WRITING MODELS...

Creating Your Own Content – Teaching / Speaking:

- Speak or teach thematically over the course of a few days.
- Give the SAME speech or talk over and over to perfect it.
- Talk your book into an audio recorder.
- Teleseminars, Podcasts, Blog Talk Radio Shows, Webinars, etc. work the same way.
- Videotape and record audio.
- Transcribe or Dragon Naturally Speaking.

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This is something else that we have touched upon before, but there are a lot of different ways to go about this. One thing that you can do is speak or teach thematically over the course of a few days. This can be delivered in a lot of different ways. You've already learned that you can do this through webinars just like I do, but you don't have to do webinars.

Another thing that you can do is give the same speech or talk over and over again in order to perfect it. When you do this you are able to make your explanations very clear, which makes it easy to turn your recorded content into a book. One thing that people often do is talk their book into an audio recorder. For some it's easier to 'talk it out' than 'type it out'.

There are great many different platforms that you can teach or speak through. Many people like to hold telesiminars as opposed to webinars. You could also host your own podcast or blog talk radio show. This is probably the method that I have used more than anything for producing books. I would say that over half of my books have been talked-out in one way or another.

Some people can type as fast as they can talk. I can't. Also, there's a different dynamic that occurs when I'm talking as opposed to typing. There's a natural flow that comes along with speaking that makes things a lot easier for me to get in the zone and express my thoughts. There's a natural flow you get into when writing too, but it's not quite the same.

All of my *Expert Media Show* episodes are an hour to an hour and a half long. Think about that for a second. That means that at a minimum there is 81 hours of content that I can take and convert into books. That's not even counting all of my courses, which I could convert into book form as well.

In a sense you could say that this method is like chunking because I'm teaching my courses in sections. If I have a course with just six lessons and each is two hours long, that means that I have 12 hours of audio I can have transcribed. That would probably make a decently sized book. This is an extremely powerful method and an extremely fast way to create a book. Plus, this method requires very little writing.

You can video tape, screen capture, or just make an audio recording of your presentation. You can also use transcription programs like Dragon Naturally Speaking. I have used Dragon while I talked live, and it came out okay in the end. Once you train the program to pick up your style of speech, it works pretty well. It will also convert MP3s. So, you can load an MP3 into it and convert it into text. I really recommend not doing that though because when you do it just runs all of the text together and it's really a mess to clean up. It took way more work for me to go in and add punctuation a paragraph breaks than if I had sat down and typed it out by hand.

You don't have to speak or teach on a subject live. You can just do it on your computer. I prefer to teach live. I feel like it really challenges me to be spot-on because there's more pressure to deliver well. If you've not done a lot of speaking or teaching, it does take a little time to get comfortable in your own skin, and rely on your own knowledge, and so forth. It really makes it a lot easier when you create PowerPoint presentation that you can spin off of while you are talking.

There is a level of comfort that you have to have to use this method. Not everyone is cut out for speaking about a given topic, but just about anyone can do this. Always remember that practice makes better. I have found that speech classes can really help out a lot. Not only does this help you to get over any shyness, it also helps you to think and assemble your thoughts so that you can communicate to your audience naturally.

Of course, it also helps to be able to talk a lot. I've done over 700 webinars, so I have had plenty of practice talking. Before I got into webinars I used to pasture a church. I was also a youth pastor at one time. So, I was teaching every Sunday, and in some cases I was teaching twice a week. I would have to prepare messages and lessons, and then I would have to deliver them for an hour or hour and a half.

Lifelogging

Lifelogging may be a word that's new to you, but you will find that this is really nothing new. It's seen as a new trend, but it really isn't. The way it is unfolding is new and different because of technology, but the concept is as old as the hills. Lifelogging simply means recording various aspects of your life whether through words, pictures, or data, and you are doing so on a regular basis.

I find the process of lifelogging extremely fascinating. Pictured above is a little camera that I have which is only about 1 ½ inches square. It shoots 720p hi-def video. This camera is small enough to clip on your shirt or pretty much anywhere you need it to be. So, you can set it up to record anything that's going on and it will stream into your phone or record to a micro SD card.

This camera gives me the ability to capture ongoing information. So, this is the kind of thing that we have available to us nowadays. In the past, people used diaries, letters, and journals to make records of their life, and before that you had oral traditions. This lifelogging process has really been around as long as humans have been around and communicated.

Think about the Lakota Indians and some of the traditions that they had, for example. They would take buffalo hides and mark off time as it passed on them, basically using them as calendars. Another example is the letters that came from the Civil War. A lot of what we know

about that time period we learned from letters from people who were entrenched in the war. Many of these letters, or stories from these letters, were turned into books and movies.

When you record details about your life, you are essentially doing the same thing. Some of us are more disciplined about writing on a regular basis than others. Sometimes I have a tendency to think "Who really cares what I'm doing on a daily basis?" You shouldn't think about it this way, however, because there are ways to use this concept that do make sense from a book-production perspective.

The popularity of social media and reality TV really emphasizes how powerful this can be. I don't know if you realize this or not, but reality TV came about at a time when the writers of Hollywood were on strike. At that time, the networks needed someone to fill in the blanks. So, reality TV was the product of all of this, and now it's a mainstay. For some reason we are fascinated when it comes to watching someone else's life unfold before us.

I realized that I have been on Facebook since 2008. That means that a large chunk of my life is recorded right there on Facebook. The last six years, in fact. So, you could really call this lifelogging as well. There are also apps and cameras which will automatically capture information for you. Now take a moment and think about some different ways that we can use that.

About two weeks ago I took a trip, and on the way back home I had to travel through the little town that I grew up in. That's where my dad is buried, and so I stopped by his gravesite and visited with him a little bit. My dad was like 67 whenever he passed away. We have some photographs and video of him. We also have our memories. However, if I could compile all of these memories, photographs, and so on, how do you think that compares to him living moment by moment, day by day for 67 years? It would be small in comparison to what life really was for him.

I recently turned 52, which hurts me to admit. I'm very intimate with my personal experiences and what I have gone through. Quite frankly, I don't remember much of my own life much less anyone else's. That's one of the reasons why I love the sky series that I am doing. This is a lifelogging kind of experience. What's amazing is that I remember more about 2012 than any other year just because I took a picture each day.

These pictures take me back to that whole year; so at least one whole year is captured, at least in some form. You want to know that your life matters and you have something to show for the number of years you've been on this Earth. That's where I see this having a lot of value.

There are a couple of different ways that you can use lifelogging to write books. How-to book creation is sort of a lifelogging process because you are taking a period of your life and you're

recording a process and describing what you're doing. You can either do it through taking photographs and writing it out or just videotaping the whole thing and describing what you are doing as you do so. You are logging a portion of your life, and then you can take that information and turn it into a book.

The photograph series that I was referring to above is what I refer to as a '365 project'. This is just something that you do every day for a year, just like I took these pictures every day for a year. Again, you're logging your life in some form or another. In my case, I was making a record of the sky every day for a year.

Lifelogging also works extremely well for recording different kinds of journeys, like spiritual journeys for example. You could also use it to write travel books and things like that. You can also utilize personal experiences, especially if you log them on a regular basis. There's a lot of ways that you can go about using the information that you log, and the best part is that you don't have to bang out a lot of words all at once. You do this over time, so it's kind of like chunking.

One of the coolest things about lifelogging is that, as you do it over time it shows repetitive patterns. Some people believe that by observing yourself throughout long periods of times you can identify some of these patterns and improve your own life. There are apps out there that will automatically track how far you've walked, how long you have worked, and things like that. This can help you to learn about yourself personally. I'm not as interested in this as I am capturing information that could potentially work for a book or something.
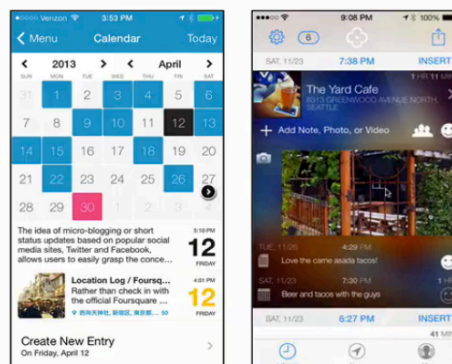
Day One is an app that I just started using. It is the one shown on the left above. This app allows you to quickly enter in journal entries. It also gives you the ability to capture photos, and you can sync it with other apps so that it can track where you are. So, it captures both the data that you enter and some automatic data as well.

Rove and Lifelapse are two other apps that you may want to try out. Rove has more to do with tracking your movements, and Lifelapse is more of a photo based application; it takes photos on a consistent basis. There's also an app called 1 Second Everyday. The name of this app pretty much describes what it does. It uses your phone to capture a second of video every day. So, this kind of allows you to run an automatic 365 project. Then, it compiles all the captures into a movie over time.

The 1 Second Everyday app seems pretty interesting. I'm not sure how you would use it for a book. I guess could use it to track the progression of a process, like how your house comes along as you build it.

Narrato is an app that is very similar to Day One, and so is an app called Saga. Saga is the app to the right in the picture above. I haven't really used this one very much because I kind of like Day One better, but Saga gives you the ability to add notes, video, and things like that. It will also tie into the GPS information in your phone so that it keeps an accurate log of everything.

Questions & Answers

What do you think of Scrivener?

Quite a few of you have commented on how much you like Scrivener. I'm still trying to get used to it. I haven't used it a lot yet but I have had friends that have switched over to it and were just singing its praises. That's what made me curious enough to get it. By the same token, I was and Evernote holdout for years as well. Finally, I bit the bullet and started using it. Now I use it all the time. It has become a bit of a journaling app for me. I use it for book ideas and things like that too. Scrivener really seems to be a great program for helping you organize your book. It helps you to focus as well.

It's true that more people hang out on Facebook, but it's their sandbox not yours. Would you advise that we start out on social media and then invite them to your website?

That's what I did with Real Spirit Stories, and I'm going to use that same method again when I take it up again. Also, whenever I updated the blog, I would either share that blog post on Facebook so that people could comment on it there. However, the comments would automatically update on the blog as well. You can do the same thing with Twitter and Google+.

Can you use feedback from Facebook comments as part of your story?

I would recommend that you ask permission, but you could probably handle that pretty easily by putting a disclaimer on your site as well. You can just say something like "Any comments made on this page may be included in my book." There are a number of different ways to handle that, but if you get some really great comments that you think will add value to your book, just let the people that left the comments know. A lot of times, people will think that it's cool that their comments are being included in a book.

Do you know the names of any speaking clubs that will help me learn?

Toastmasters is one club that you might try. They are very reasonably priced and they are located everywhere.

How difficult is Scrivener to get used to?

I don't think that it is that hard, and it is not super-expensive. There is a lot of free training on their website and elsewhere that can really help you to get into the flow.

Do you only use the slides in your presentation to prompt your thoughts or do you have written script as well?

I only use the slides. What you see on the screen in my webinars is what I have to go by. Every once and a while I will have notes if I there is something that I want to share but it didn't make sense to put in as a bullet point. That's a really rare occurrence though. Usually it's just me on the fly, working off of my bullet points.

When you're recording you have to be mindful of other people's privacy, right?

It's smart to a certain extent, but if you're in public then it's not as big of an issue because of the way the laws are written about being in public. That's why the paparazzi and newspaper reporters can do what they do. Those laws are different in each country, but here in the US you can film and take photographs in public. People can, of course, request to not have their image or likeness used, but most of the time as long as you're not using it in a harassing and demeaning way, you usually can. I was mostly suggesting that you log your own life or some kind of project that you are doing.

Where are you posting your sky pictures?

Primarily just on Facebook right now.

How do you feel about lifelogging your children?

There are a couple of different scenarios where I think that would be cool. For example, I think it would be cool to visually photograph your kid everyday as they grow. That would be just you and your kid. I have a big issue with people photographing other children. I won't do it personally without the parent's permission whether I'm in public or not. I also make sure that the parent is present if I ever do, and I would provide them with my contact information as well

as send them copies of the picture. I just feel like photographing kids is completely different because they need to be protected.

What is the generic name for the little camera you showed earlier?

Looxcie.

Are the apps that you shared available on Android?

They were all iPhone apps, but most of them were available on the Android too.

How is this Easy Book Content course different than the Easily Create Bestselling Book Content webinar I was offered?

Easily Create Bestselling Book Content was the title of the sales webinar that I used to sell this course. So, that's just an introduction for this much more comprehensive training.

I have about 10 years of letters of correspondence between my mom and her mother. These were written in the late 50's and 60's. They wrote to each other every single day and I have not unpacked them all yet, but I would like to hear your thoughts on how to best develop these.

In some way you're going to have to read through those, and as you do so, I would look for things that stand out, things that are thematic or unique. It can be kind of fun, especially if the writing really documents the era. It really showcases the contrast between how things were then versus how they are now. So, you might want to take that kind of approach. You could also use this material to demonstrate parent/child interaction.

The way you use this material really depends on what's in the letters. I think there are probably some gold in there that you can mine out. For example, maybe you can pull out portions where your mom was receiving advice from her mother. So, it can be a book that centers on lessons about life or something like that. There a lot of different angles you can use, and again, in mainly depend on what these letters contain.

How do you keep all of your projects organized?

I am probably not as organized as you may think. I have a lot of paper journals that I keep and they go all the way back into the mid-90s. I still do paper journals because I just like that process, and by journal I mean legal pads. Most of my webinars are developed that way. So, the basic outline that I use is actually written out by hand with a pen and a piece of paper. I brainstorm a lot this way as well. Afterwards, I move everything over to Evernote.

I'm very inspiration-driven. When I am inspired, I capture it as quickly as I can, especially if it's for a course or a product or something. I will take as much focused action as I can at that moment to capture as much data as I can while I am inspired. Then, when my inspiration retrieves for the moment, I stop and move on to the next thing.

Whether you're talking about writing a book, shooting a video, or even developing products, ultimately you have to take action and get it done. If you don't, your ideas aren't going to make you money, or reach your audience, or change people's lives. Hopefully, that gives you some insight into how I work.

What program do you use to record the program to the computer?

Right now I use Screenflow. It's a Mac-only program. Camtasia works just as well though. Screenflow just gives you more control over the audio and video after you're done.

How many more lessons are there, and what will the topics be?

There are going to be six in all, and next week we will be talking about images. The last lesson will be on publishing your content.

Should I include names with my Facebook comments?

In most cases though, I would use their names because it give them a special acknowledgement. Either way, you want to get a person's permission before using a comment or their name. In the very last lesson of this training we will discuss audience engagement and social media further.