



A Million Books in Print: DM Scott

Guest was David Meerman Scott

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Transcription of Interview

Joe Dager: *Welcome everyone. This is Joe Dager, the host of the Business901 Podcast. With me today is David Meerman Scott. He is an internationally acclaimed strategist whose books and blog are must-reads for professionals seeking to generate attention in ways that grow their business. He has a list of clients from the early start of HubSpot through a list of other recognizable names and sits on the board of advisors with several other companies. He is also the author of The New Rules of Marketing and PR, one of the first books on what I might say was the new age of marketing. David, your original book, the New Rules of Marketing and PR, as I just mentioned, really seemed to, is it fair to say launched your career? How much credit do you give that book?*

David Meerman Scott: That book was really important to me. I was a corporate guy for about 15 years and in 2002, I got fired from Thomson Reuters. I had to reinvent myself because that was right after 9/11 and it was very tough to find a job, actually couldn't find one. I went out on my own, started doing some consulting which is hard work. But then, New Rules of Marketing and PR originally, the first edition, came out in 2007. About 5 years after I started my business and, yeah, it was a bit of a rocket ship for what I do.

Since that's come out, most of my time is spent doing speeches. I've spoken in 42 different

countries around the world. I do about 40 a year. And then, as you said in the introduction, I sit on a number of advisory boards of early stage, SAS-based companies, typically in the sales and marketing area, among them, HubSpot and ExpertFile and a bunch of other ones.

That book really was the catalyst because I was fortunate enough to draw on my experience working in real time news business and I was able to understand earlier than almost anybody else that marketing and public relations now is really about content. And, guess what, I had tons of experience with content because of what I was doing about prior to starting my own business.

Joe: *Were you blogging back then?*

David: I started blogging in 2004 on my blog, but I was actually creating content way, way, way back into the early '80s because I worked for companies that created content on the Reuters' screens, the Dow Jones screens. So, you know, and this was for Wall Street bond traders. And so, I was aware of and understood the concepts we now call blogging way back in the early 1980s, and that was my first job. And so, yeah, I was very much someone who understood the concept of electronic information and what it could do. But, I think I was probably the first person who put together the idea of electronic content in that way being an amazing for of Marketing and Public Relations.

Joe: *Well, in 2004 it was just probably Brogan, Jantsch and Scott out there blogging. Do you read each other's blogs?*

David: Yeah, and Seth Godin was actually one of the early ones too but yeah, there weren't that many at that point. That's for sure.

Joe: *Well, you have re-written or updated the original book and, I guess, I want to ask you, why just not a new one? I mean you've written 4 or 5 others since that time but why an update?*

David: Yes. Well, first of all, The New Rules of Marketing and PR has really carved out a niche as a book that continues to sell really well. In fact, I've written 10 books, The New Rules of Marketing and PR outsells all the other 9 books I've written. It's also used as a text in hundreds and hundreds of universities and colleges around the world. Many companies require that their Marketing and PR employees when they join read the book. It's essentially got a brand name as a book, and therefore, I need to keep updating it because while the strategies haven't changed, I mean the idea that Marketing and Public Relations now is about creating amazing content on the web, that strategy hasn't really changed. Some of the tactics have changed, and the tools are constantly changing. When I did the first edition, I was actually writing it starting 10 years ago. I started writing the first edition at the end of 2005 and ended 2006, and it released in early 2007. At that time, the most popular social network in the world was MySpace. Facebook was only for students. Twitter didn't exist. YouTube was just getting started, other tools like Instagram and what not did not even exist. So, every couple of years I update the book to make sure, and I'm now up to the 5th edition, to make sure that I'm current with the new tools that are available, and I also update the examples because it's a very, very case study example-driven book. I'm constantly updating the examples in it.

Joe: *I'm an avid blogger. Is blogging still worthwhile?*

David: I think it's really important, and I'll tell you why. I think it's important because it's your own real estate. And, what I mean by that is, you know, the social network, sure

they're important. I'm on Twitter. I'm on Facebook. I'm on LinkedIn. I'm on Instagram, a couple of other ones I dabble in. But, ultimately, those are somebody else's real estate. Twitter, even though you have a Twitter feed, it's Twitter's real estate. I think it's really important to have your own home base on the web and for many people, sure, you can have a website. But, a website tends to be kind of product driven for most, in most organizations. I think you need to have your intellectual home base on the web. I think people need that, and I think companies need that. And, to me, the best form of doing that is a blog because you can have your own URL. You can drive people to that URL. You can have total control over the branding and the design and the elements of it. You can embed other social networks into it. You can embed a YouTube feed. You can embed a Twitter feed into it which is kind of cool. But, ultimately, I do think it's valuable to have a blog because I think it's the best form of original content where you can own the real estate.

Joe: *So, is there a difference in blogging let's say, 10 years ago to a decade back? Is there, should we be updating it and including all those things you just mentioned, you know, embedding a YouTube video once in a while or...?*

David: I think that it's evolved in a way that it's both more exciting but also more of a challenge. I think it's more exciting because it used to be just kind of straight text. I mean, you know, we all started our blogs with kind of just cranking out the writing. But then, we could add, start to add images. We could start to add things like audio. I mean here we are recording a podcast, right? You could embed that into your blog. Video and other sorts of things can be embedded into it. So, that's changed. But, the other thing that's changed is that while a good blog continues to have great audiences, I think it's harder to attract audiences to new ones. Now, I have a strategy where I don't, I try to avoid the word blog, and I recommend that people who are starting a content site don't use that word blog. So, for example, if you were to create some original content that you were writing and

embedding other stuff into, I would not call it a blog. I would not say, "Hey, this is David's blog." I would not have a link on your website that says View Our Blog. I would avoid that word, and the reason I would avoid that word is because I think there is some negative connotation around it. People think "Oh, a blog. That's frivolous. You know, what are you wasting your time doing that for? Isn't that what people in their pajamas do at night?" If you just avoid that word, and I also believe the same thing's true of the phrase social media, by the way. I like the term real-time media as opposed to social media, and I think you could call your information site or something like that instead of the term blog because kind of the nature of your question, Joe, "Is blog still valuable?" I mean I think there's always value around great information that will continue to be the case, and I think it's essential to have that original information be on your own real estate. But, semantics involved would suggest in my mind, that you don't necessarily use the word blog.

Joe: *Okay. Well, in the book, you take some updated thinking maybe concepts of marketing and PR, and you discuss it in a sales and service concept now, are the same rules applying? Is this kind of all meshing together?*

David: I think that there is some convergence between what traditionally we would call marketing and public relations and what we would traditionally call sales and service. I wrote a book called *The New Rules of Sales and Service* as well. There's a chapter in the new edition, the 5th edition of *The New Rules of Marketing and PR* about how that convergence is happening and how sales is now much more aligned with marketing than it used to be. I mean it used to be, for example, back in the day, I used to be a bag carrying sales person at several different technology companies, and it used to be that marketing was about generating leads and then sales people were about closing leads at B2B companies.

I don't think that's the case anymore because I think marketing can create content that will drive people into an organization. But, that content that marketing creates can serve as a tool to help the sales people do their job going forward. I think the real difference between marketing and sales today is that marketing is about reaching many people at once, whereas, sales is about reaching one person at a time. Yet, both of those endeavors on the web use great content and use the tools of electronic communications, and so many of us now are doing our buying products and services on the web.

Maybe at some point, you meet with a human being but a lot of that process, a lot more of that process happens online than it ever did. I think that conversions become you've got one set of people or one set of tools that are reaching many people at once, and then another set of people are or and another set of tools that are reaching people one at a time, yet both of them are still content driven, both of them are still web-driven, both of them are still about how you can relate to your buyers.

Joe: Well, someone told me the other day that you take marketing, sales, and service, and it really can be lumped under 2 words, customer experience. Is there any truth to that?

David: Oh sure, I think you could say that why not, I mean I think there are a lot of different ways to look at the same thing and what I'm talking about here is there's a customer experience that happens online. When I talk to audiences, sometimes I open with a series of questions. I ask people. I ask a series of 5 questions. I say, "In the last couple of months, either privately or professionally, have you ever, have you purchased a product or service as the result of receiving a direct mail advertisement?" Now, almost nobody raises their hands, about 2% on average. I say, "Have you bought a product or service based on receiving a cold call from a sales person?" And, it's usually 1% of the room. And, I say, "Have you bought a product or service as a result of seeing an advertisement in a

magazine, radio or television, newspaper direct mail or, sorry, or a billboard or some other form of advertising?" Usually about 10%. "Have you bought a product or service as a result of a Google search you did?" And, it's 100% always every room. And, the final question, "Have you bought a product or service as a result of advice from a friend and that advice came, you know, maybe perhaps you asked them through a social network or a LinkedIn or whatever it might be?" And, that's 90%, consistently over audiences. It doesn't matter where it is in the world. So, what that says to me is that people are buying products and services online. I mean clearly and we all know that because we all do it. If, you know, I need a new set of golf clubs, the first thing I do is go online. And, I may ultimately make the purchase in a store, but I've done all the research online. So yeah, absolutely, the customer experience can drive that. Ultimately, I think that it's about sales and marketing converging in such a way that the best content wins and the people who are the most engaged win. And, the people who are, their organizations that are most in tune with what buyers need are the ones that are most successful.

Joe: *We sit there, and we think about today and how much blogging, how much things are on the web anymore. It's really difficult to create that differentiation, isn't it?*

David: I don't think it's as difficult as people think. The problem is if you're just creating content about your own products and services, yeah, it's tough to differentiate because that's what most people do. Most people create content about their products and services.

I think where you can differentiate though is around the concept that I call buyer persona. This is actually a chapter in the book. And, the buyer persona's concept is that the more that more that you understand about the group of people you're trying to reach, your potential customers, I call them buyer personas. The more you understand about them, the more you know because you've literally met with representatives of that buyer

persona. You've interviewed them. You learn what their problems are. You learn what words and phrases they use to describe their problems. You understand deeply about their lifestyle. You understand in great detail about how they go about their life as it relates to the sort of things that your business might be able to help them with. The more you understand about that, the more that you can create the kind of content that can attract them, and that educate them, and that can inform them.

I think there's a really big difference between those companies that kind of don't really know much about the people they're trying to reach and sort of create content about their products and services, which is by far the vast majority of organizations out there creating content and blogging and doing these things versus those ones that truly understanding what people are trying to do and then what their problems are and how they describe those problems, what language they use and are creating the sort of content that will drive them in. I mean, for example, you're doing the podcast. There's thousands and thousands and thousands of business podcasts out there, but you know your specific audience probably better than any other podcaster. So, you can ask questions. You can bring people in, in ways that others can't.

There's always room I believe for a podcast that reaches a niche audience, for a blog that reaches a niche audience but less so on the kind of general sort of "Oh, I'm just going to toss something out there and see how it works."

Joe: *The analogy that you don't find water by digging sideways has some merit, right?*

David: Oh sure. I mean, you know, I look at another metaphor. I mean, right, we use to have just a handful of broadcaster television stations in the US and now we've morphed into what thousands of cable television stations and if you include online it's tens of

thousands or hundreds of thousands of stations and the ones that are successful are the ones that are best able to reach a particular niche market and you can have a successful cable television station with a million viewers but simply because you're reaching a particular niche that people want to reach.

Joe: *I go back to gaming in that area is that just with Twitch, the amount of people they reach with that platform, and it's foreign to maybe 90% of the rest of the world, okay.*

David: Right, that's no interest whatsoever to me, but if you're interested in that market, it's really a great stuff, and I think that that's the model for the future. That's the model of what your marketing can be, and if you do understand your audience really well and create information for your niche audience, I think you can, you can definitely carve out a room in this what many perceive to be a crowded marketplace.

Joe: *Well, this applies great to SAS companies and, you know, online companies. But, what about the most traditional companies like a Caterpillar or someone like that?*

David: Oh, I think absolutely it can. Absolutely it can. I think it can relate to most any company because imagine, I may not know much about Caterpillar. I know enough to be a little bit dangerous but whom are they trying to reach. They're reaching small business people who need to purchase sort of one every couple of years.

They're reaching large business people who need to purchase a fleet. They need to; they're reaching people who rent the things, I mean when you think of the those are 3 different buyer personas right there, right? If I can create content for those people who have a fleet of Caterpillar equipment because they rent it. That's going to be a different audience than people who are going to buy just one to use for their small construction firm. Both of them

are still going to do research in a similar way. They're going to go online and check out what people are saying and figure out what the new models are, and the more content they create, the better for Caterpillar and if they're creating content that's different for those 2 different personas, then they're going to be more successful than if it's one size fits all.

Joe: *I have to ask you kind of a side question here. Of all the traveling you'd done and things, has your music taste gotten any better or are you still?*

David: I love going to shows. I love going to rock concerts. It's one of my things. Saturday, I went to a band called the Anderson Ponty Band. There's Jean-Luc Ponty, who's an awesome violin player. Played with Frank Zappa and a bunch of other bands and John Anderson, who was lead singer from, yes, they put a band together, and I had a great time. The band before that was earlier last week. I saw the Remnants of the Grateful Dead. It's called Dead and Company with John Meyer playing the Jerry Garcia role. So, I am a big music fan. And, you know, music taste is you love it, or you hate it. I'm a big fan of lots of different bands.

Joe: *The book has sold so well. How many copies have The New Rules of Marketing and PR sold?*

David: More than 350,000 copies in English and it's in 27 other languages. So, I don't know if we're over a million, but we're certainly getting close.

Joe: *That's pretty impressive.*

David: It's a lot of books, and it's hard to sell even 10,000 business books because there's

so many that are coming out these days. I'm fortunate that I was able to pick up on something, and I've been updating it every couple of years since then.

Joe: *Where can someone find out more about the book and David Meerman Scott?*

David: So, the Google machine, my full name is David Meerman Scott, so you'll find me that way, New Rules of Marketing and PR, all the online book sellers have good content about it. I would start with those 2 places. If you're a Twitter person, my Twitter ID is dmScott.

Joe: *I can remember you talking 10 years ago. You've made the comment about using your middle name there.*

David: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Joe: *Just a lesson in differentiation, right?*

David: Well, yeah, and I'll tell you. I mean it is one of the most important business decisions I ever made and, basically, when I was, began writing my first book in 1998. I did it, and Google didn't exist so it probably was Yahoo. I did some sort of search for my name, David Scott, and up pops David Scott who walked on the moon as the commander of Apollo 15. Up pops a US Congress person from Georgia. Up pops an ironman triathlon champion. I'm like "Holy cow! How am I going to compete with all these other David Scotts out there?" I just came up with what in hindsight is the most important, one of the most important business decisions I ever made. I just started at that time, 1998, using my middle name for my professional endeavors. I didn't use my middle name at that time I was working for companies. I didn't use it at the company I was working for. But, I did

when I started my first, I had put up my first back around 1998, 1999 and then my first book was published in 2000. And then, ever since I've focused on using that middle name and it's been great because it definitely is me and me alone. There's no other David Meerman Scott in the world. It means that if someone searches my name, they're only finding me. They're not finding random people who walked on the moon.

Joe: *Been branded very well because I don't even, would even attempt with David Scott. I mean I don't even think of you that way.*

David: Right, right, right. It worked out great, and I feel there's a bit of a lesson there. I mean not just your personal name but every time I've written a new book I've been very careful to make sure that the title of the book is something that I can own. So, The New Rules of Marketing and PR, if you type that in, up comes me. The New Rules of Sales and Service, you type that in, up comes me. My book Marketing the Moon, it's mine. My book, Marketing Lessons from the Grateful Dead, that's mine. My book Real-Time Marketing and PR, that's me as well.

I think a lot of people make mistakes when they name a product or a service or a company that they use a sort of generic kind of name that if it were entered into the search engine, that it wouldn't be even popped up. I'm a big believer in understanding how you can create a brand, even if it's a product brand. In my case, the titles of books, that if somebody were to enter it into a search engine, that it would pop up. I think that's an important part of branding and marketing that a lot of people overlook. And, when you're creating a new company or a new product or a new service, that's the time that you can take advantage of figuring out how I can create a name for it that I can own.

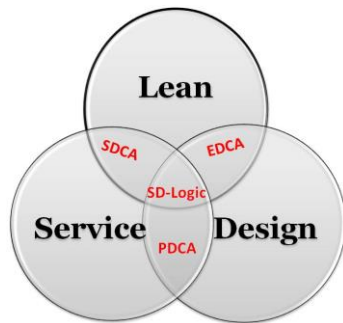
Joe: *I think you're so right. I remember that lesson from the previous time I listened to*

you in a webinar years ago is that it's important to own your space on the web.

David: Absolutely it is, no question.

Joe: Yeah. So, no, I appreciate your time very much.

David: Thank you, Joe. I appreciate it.



Joseph T. Dager

Business901

Phone: 260-918-0438

Skype: Biz901

Fax: 260-818-2022

Email: jtdager@business901.com

Website: <http://www.business901.com>

Twitter: [@business901](https://twitter.com/business901)

Joe Dager is President of Business901, a firm specializing in bringing the continuous improvement process to the sales and marketing arena. He takes his process thinking of over thirty years in marketing within a wide variety of industries and applies it through Lean Marketing and Lean Service Design.

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