

# CONSCIOUS

BRANDING

## Magical Content That Attracts Customers

January 12, 2021

Panelists:

Alan Wallner — President and Visionary, Conscious Branding

Wendy Jacobson — Copywriter, Incredible Content

Susan Rose — Copywriter, Rosebud Communications

Rosemary Wallner — Editor, Conscious Branding

### Alan Wallner (00:14):

Hello everyone. I am Alan Wallner, president and visionary of Conscious Branding. I wanted to start today by wishing everyone a Happy New Year and a year full of abundance, love and personal growth. Welcome to Thrive!cast. With Thrive!cast, our intention is to focus on you, your business and your success. With each episode, we discuss at a high level topics that spark new thoughts. This is a new world, a new way of doing business. And so we need to start thinking about things differently and we want to generate ideas and push the boundaries of what we know is familiar. And hopefully we may even frame up a new mindset, to ignite your business forward and inspire action. As we focus in on our topic for today, copy seems to be this mystical barrier to successful communications with our prospects, clients, employees, and community, even more so today.

(01:14): We're going to be exploring the world of words, language, and communication, and the magical content that attracts customers. We're going to look at what copy does and what it can do for your business and how you can master it, or at least make it something that isn't so crazy for you. We'll take a little bit of time to even tap into strategy, content versus copy, and even what equates a good copy and content and how to sustain it over time, because that's the secret. But before we get started, I'd like to welcome our panelists, introduce you to them. I have Wendy Jacobson; she's a copywriter for Incredible Content. Wendy works with clients to create content that builds and maintains their credibility and acquires more clients and generates more revenue. Wendy produces content for businesses consistently when they don't have the time, resources or interest to create it themselves. That's a good resource to have on hand. So welcome and good to have you here, Wendy. Next we have Susan Rose. She is a copywriter for Rosebud Communications and works with empath entrepreneurs to increase their impact and income. And she works with her clients to increase engagement and loyalty with the content that creates visibility and recognition as an expert and strategically positions them as a leader. It's great to have you here today.

(02:50): Thirdly, we have Rosemary Wallner, she's the editor and proofreader for Conscious Branding. Rosie works along with me and she has a diverse background in a variety of industries from financial to medical and from retail to motor sports. Her focus is making our clients' marketing and business communications impactful, professional and error-free, and we rely on her to do that for us as well. So thanks, Rosie, for taking the time out to be here today with us.

MIND. HEART. BRAND.

# CONSCIOUS

BRANDING

## When Did You First Realize that Copy Was Your Calling?

### Alan Wallner (03:22):

I'm excited to hear what our panelists have to say today, because this is a real volatile business climate. And we can all use whatever help we can get these days in terms of communicating with our clients and attracting the right ones to us in the right way so that they want to work with us. I'm going to start out with our first question. And I would like to ask our panelists to share when you first realized that copy was your thing. Was it something you did when you were younger or did it just come out of the woodwork as you began your career? Share your story here.

### Wendy Jacobson (04:05):

I have always loved to write. When I was a kid, I loved to write with two of my friends in the neighborhood and I put together a neighborhood journal that we gave out free called Paperclip. We went to the drug store and photocopied the pages, and we thought this was going to be a great thing. But after one issue, we realized it was a lot of work and we weren't getting paid for it. So we tabled it and I never actually thought that I would pursue writing as a career. My father always encouraged me to do so, but I thought I was going to go to law school. Junior year in college I realized I did not want to go to law school. So after I graduated, I just fell into a marketing position and worked in marketing and sales for Fortune 100 as well as startup companies.

(04:54): What I really wanted to do was own my own business. Both of my parents were business owners and I wanted to follow in their footsteps. I left the corporate world and got into residential real estate because that was a path of least resistance. The barrier to entry was very low and I loved real estate. But what I found out that I enjoyed the most was building my brand and communicating with my clients through words. I mean, obviously the service that I provided was important. It's really competitive. So I wanted my brand to stand out and I had a lot of fun doing that. But after the birth of my second child, almost 14 years ago, I realized that real estate and being a parent for me do not go hand in hand. So after she was born, I took about a year off and then literally fell into a role helping a local entrepreneur, a food startup company, build his brand. And from there I built my business. He eventually sold his business to Schwan's. I stayed on with the Schwan company, doing some writing for them and built my business through there.

(05:58): And I got the best of both worlds because I was building my own business, doing something that I love, writing. And over the past 13 years, I've worked for a variety of different businesses in a variety of different industries, doing a variety of different writing. And it's been a blast. I really enjoy it. And just a final note, every so often when I talk to my dad, he asks me what I'm writing. So it's nice that he's getting joy out of finally seeing me having pursued a job in writing.

MIND. HEART. BRAND.

# CONSCIOUS

BRANDING

**Alan Wallner (06:36):**

It's good when your parents are interested in what you're doing. So when you were working for a larger corporation, Schwan's, did you find that it put your understanding and learning of branding and content and copy on steroids, really got you moving fast with understanding how that all works?

**Wendy Jacobson (06:58):**

Well, it did because they're a big company and other big companies that I've worked for too. They work in silos. So that you have to be pretty specific on what you're doing and who you're doing it for, who you're writing to. And also staying true to their style guide and brand guidelines. I brought a whole new world of copy and content into my life which has stayed with me. And I've spring-boarded since that time. So it was a good experience for sure.

**Susan Rose (07:34):**

Parts of my story echos Wendy's and I'm beginning to wonder if that's just how it is with all writers that from birth, our families are encouraging us to go down this road, but I come from a family of people who just love words. So language was always very important. Communicating, writing was always very important, but I think when I go back to, when did I really feel the call to go into this general profession? And I'm going to date myself here and tell you that it was during the Watergate hearings. I thought Woodward and Bernstein were heroes. I thought they were the coolest people on earth. I was completely mesmerized with what they had been able to do through journalism. So from that point on, I decided I was going to be a journalist. So I went to college and majored in journalism.

(08:28): It turns out, though, that being a newspaper reporter is not actually really my bag. I'm I think too nice. I didn't have what it took to do it on the level that I dreamed of doing it. So I went into magazine article writing, magazine editing, and that's really where I started my career. I am at heart and we're going to talk about content versus copy a little bit later, but I started the content world in magazines and writing articles and in-depth pieces like that. I just always have loved it. And like many people, my career went around. I ended up being a management consultant for a while, leading community development projects, which was all the communication around that.

(09:21): And then about 20 years ago, my sister said, Hey, you want to quit your really cushy job and start a branding agency with me? And since I was single and had a mortgage, I said, sure, let's do it. So that's when I shifted, made the shift more into copywriting, when we started our branding agency and did that for about 10 years. I'm working with all sorts of different kinds of companies, small micro businesses, solopreneurs, large, huge, Microsoft was one of our clients. So we really ran the gamut, which I always thought was great because you see how different people do it. You see how different industries communicate, you see how people with different budgets and different levels of what they're doing, what they can do. And we can all do it. We just need to know how to do it. So after our agency dissolved, I went out on my own to do freelance writing. And here I am today.

MIND. HEART. BRAND.

# CONSCIOUS

BRANDING

**Alan Wallner (10:21):**

It sounds like you really followed your passion and over time while doing that, did you discover a greater purpose around your copy to really set you in a guided direction for how you wanted to take your copy?

**Susan Rose (10:38):**

I've always believed in the power of words to tell a story and to persuade, at the end of the day, I love persuasive copy, whether it's overt sales or whether it's I think that we all have a story to tell and being able to articulate that is powerful. So every project I work on, ideally I'm working with people who I think are trying to bring some amazing change into the world at large or into their community or whatever, and I can help them. So that has never changed. I think that was the piece of the whole Watergate thing that struck my heart when I was young. And I've always carried that idealistic philosophy with me.

**Alan Wallner (11:29):**

Thanks. It's good to have all that insight. Rosie, I want to check in and hear your story. I know it, but others here don't.

**Rosemary Wallner (11:39):**

I went to college as a computer science major. But by my sophomore year, I realized that was just not my thing. So I started to take more English and journalism classes and I was just hooked on words. As I started my career as a writer, I wrote newspaper articles. I wrote several school and library, nonfiction books, biographies, but I also discovered my love for shaping other people's words through proofreading and through editing copy. As an author, as a writer, you take your research, you have ideas, you create your copy. I find that very difficult. But what I found is that I can help to improve or work with words that have already been written, by knowing a writer's audience or their purpose, I can ensure that their content had some impact.

(12:47): And I got into more nitty gritty, real detailed editing, correcting grammar, mistakes and typos, but also making sure there was consistency in tone and style. I went on my own, I became a contractor and then started working with Conscious Branding. And I kept adding to my services. Not just the detailed work, but more helping them with the content. What I love about my career today is how diverse it is. I have many different clients, I edit advertising copy up to emails and catalogs. So every day is a little bit different.

**Alan Wallner (13:38):**

I know you've had a wide variety of things happening and originally you worked for a lot of large, big book publishers, and then you got down into the nitty-gritty of marketing and all kinds of different target audience groups and helping writers keep consistent with their messaging for each of them.

MIND. HEART. BRAND.

# CONSCIOUS

BRANDING

**Rosemary Wallner (14:00):**

And really taking what someone else has written and not taking it over, but working with them to make it the best it can be.

**The Difference Between Content and Copy**

**Alan Wallner (14:15):**

Thanks for sharing all of that. So today you hear the terms “content” and “copy” a lot and almost used interchangeably. So how would you define copy versus content and how does that impact how you work with copy?

**Susan Rose (14:35):**

This is such a good question because there’s a lot of confusion around it and they are technically very different things. Copy is about the sell. You are persuading people, you are presenting your offer. You are encouraging people to take action and buy something from you. Content is more about the relationship building. It’s about establishing your expertise and laying down the groundwork, sharing this information. This webinar has content basically. And so they both have very valuable places within the whole marketing strategy. But if you just think about copy is to sell content is to build relationships, in my opinion.

**Alan Wallner (15:22):**

When you start differentiating between the two, as you’re mapping out your planning for say a website, sometimes there’s content and copy on a website. Do you break a page up and define various roles on the page or sections of the website?

**Susan Rose (15:46):**

There are definitely sections and it really depends on the website you have. Having a purely sales-focused website is not appropriate for all businesses. It just starts first with who are you, what is the website doing for you? And then I would say within there will be areas that are going to have more of the copy sales, like booking a call or getting the free whatever; I would consider that copy, not content. And then maybe the sections, the blog, any process types of things you do or more in-depth pages you have are really going to be content focused typically.

**Alan Wallner (16:32):**

Rosie, I’d like to hear your perspective from the editing side, because you often get involved with content as well as the copy.

**Rosemary Wallner (16:41):**

With editing, there are basically three types of editing and each one makes a distinction between content and copy. So for example, substantive editing, this is paying attention to

MIND. HEART. BRAND.

# CONSCIOUS

## BRANDING

the content and it's a first read. And with that, you're really looking at what the copy is saying. You're reading to suggest changes in the structure, adding or deleting copy, inserting heads and subheads to help a reader in longer copy. And then there's the copyediting stage, which is once the content is set, once you have what you want to say, then it's more technical: correcting the grammar, spelling, and providing maybe some style even tightening up your message. And then the third type of editing is proofreading and that's the final check. So by that point, all your content should be in. And again, it's just a last check. You check the copy on the website to make sure there's no line breaks and things like that. So when I work with clients one of my first questions to them is, what stage are you at? Am I editing for content? Or is that clear? Am I just proofing for a final, final read-through?

### **Alan Wallner (18:17):**

What you're doing a lot of is looking at everything as a big hole, how are all the different pieces working together? Are they working together? Is there continuity and consistency across all the different channels of content and copy? So it really gets down to looking at the big picture and the details

### **Rosemary Wallner (18:37):**

It does. And also even at the very final stage making sure that once everything's correctly written, no typos and things, but I usually do one more read, putting myself in the place of the reader, just to double check.

### **Alan Wallner (18:58):**

That's so important. Just making sure that you understand the target audience and that this content and copy resonates with them. Wendy, I'd like to hear how you look at content and copy together.

### **Wendy Jacobson (19:15):**

I echo what Susan said. I think there is a lot of confusion (and I apologize for any drilling noises in my background). I think a lot of my clients use "content" and "copy" interchangeably. They would introduce me to a team player as their copywriter, but I'm writing content for them. Or they're asking me for some content, but it's actually copy that I'm writing. How I approach the two different disciplines is what Susan said, "copy" sells and "content" tells. Their places are at different points of the sales funnel. Content is really, in my opinion, meant to create awareness and engagement and inform your target audience as to who you are because they might not know who the heck you are. And you keep feeding that funnel with compelling information that speaks to them about their issues.

(20:16): And then when they're ready, when they get to the point, the bottom of the funnel, I don't want to say grease the wheels, but you've built a relationship with them. Then some copy can come into place. That's not to say, copy can't exist with the content. I'm working right now with a client, a retailer, and all I do is write copy for them. It's descriptions on their website, their email series, but they also have content that goes along with that: blogs on

MIND. HEART. BRAND.

# CONSCIOUS

BRANDING

certain areas of what they do. So they work hand in hand. I think a lot of businesses interchange the word, “copy” and “content” and think it’s the same. But they truly are two different things.

**Alan Wallner (21:02):**

I liked how all of you brought in the integration of it, but yet the uniqueness of each, and I think the underlying segments, all this is branding; is very important when it comes to all of this, because you need to have the cheat sheet of what is the brand’s styles, in terms of what’s the core message, what’s the feeling, what’s the emotion, what are all the different aspects of the brand that the content and copy needs to convey? Especially today in this distance business climate, your words and your content are even more important. And how are they energetically connecting to the target audience who’s supposed to be reading this? Is it copy and content that makes them feel like, Oh, you understand me? Or is it selling to me? I like Wendy, how you said that the content is used to create awareness and engagement with them, with the copy.

## Basic Rules to Help Businesses Communicate Effectively

**Alan Wallner (21:58):**

The copy is finessing that relationship a little bit more to engage and call them to action. It was really nice how it all works together. All right. With, with that I’m going to go on to our next question: Copy’s become this mystical barrier to success. Just successful communications for business and some seem to have it figured out and others do not, and that can leave a lot of business owners scratching your head, trying to figure out what this is. Can you share what you do and something a company can do to make this less of a guessing game and more of a here’s a methodology to follow, or here’s some basic concepts to apply, some good rules of thumb to help people communicate with their target audience effectively.

**Rosemary Wallner (23:04):**

When someone asks me to edit their copy, there are a few things that I need to know before I get started. And these are also coincidentally things that writers should be keeping in mind as they write. I asked my client three questions and one is who is the copy written for? We’ve started to talk about that a little bit, who is the audience? And the more specific, the better. Not just men, but people who own a garage. My second question that I ask is what will the copy be used for? We talked about content versus copy, is it an email versus a blog, which might be you can go a little more in-depth and if an email, you keep a little shorter; is it website copy versus a formal presentation? The third thing I ask is why was this copy written; is it to sell something like we talked about to inform them to teach the audience? Once I have this information and once a writer has that information as well, then the whole process of writing and editing, rewriting if necessary, and then final proofreading goes much more smoothly.

MIND. HEART. BRAND.

# CONSCIOUS

BRANDING

**Alan Wallner (24:33):**

I like how you started bringing up understanding the customer. I know that in the projects we've worked on together we go quite deep. We build an avatar around that target audience group that is actually that specific segment of the target audience group. What's their name, what are their challenges in relation to how we can help them? And what are their stress points? Their disposition? It's more than just demographics, 30 to 50, and they have a garage; it's what are the psychographics as well. So you can really learn to connect with them. And I know we always pass them along to you. So while you're proofreading, you make sure that the copy and the content is addressing that individual.

**Rosemary Wallner (25:21):**

Right. And even though sometimes you think of editing or proofreading as something at the end, and a lot of times it's rushed. It is helpful for me at least to be a part of the whole process rather than just be brought in at the end. And I asked my clients to do that too.

**Wendy Jacobson (25:46):**

I could talk about this for hours, but don't worry, I won't. I will say that I am not a fan of writing content or copy for content or copy's sake. So to echo what Rosie said, it's important to understand not only who you're writing for, but why and what you want it to do. And before you even jump in and decide I'm going to start writing copy or content or whatever, have a plan, and content, depending on your business and the size of the business and what you want it to accomplish for you, it can be really overwhelming. You can have the best intentions, but then when it comes down to putting the pedal to the metal, getting it all out can be difficult.

(26:38): Because work and life and whatever, it gets in the way. So plan out what you are going to write or what you're going to produce; who it's for, when you're going to produce it, and where it's going to go, where is it going to live? Is it going to be on your website? Are you going to tweet it out, you're going to link it to LinkedIn? And don't just do that once. Don't produce a piece of content or copy once, share it with the world and then put it in a drawer forever. You can reshare your content over and over and over again, just get every last drop of juice out of your content that you can and it all comes down to planning. You don't have to plan a year out; plan, maybe a quarter out; don't bite off more than you can chew, but commit to what you plan and commit to being consistent with that plan.

**Alan Wallner (27:31):**

I liked that the plan is so important. I think the other component to that plan you'd talked about, mapping out for a year. Maybe it's having some of that content roughed in, but then being able to modify it as needed as the business climate shifts and changes, but even making that copy fit more along the vein of what can your brand do for me rather than about the brand, really understanding the target audience and planning out that messaging. So it works with that funnel, brings them along the journey and, having that content about them along that way. So you're aligning their mindset with your copy and really building a relationship. And you can plot that all out on that calendar.

MIND. HEART. BRAND.



# CONSCIOUS

BRANDING

**Wendy Jacobson (28:23):**

And it's okay to pivot. I remember when COVID hit, I'm on a mailing list for a travel agency and at the end of March, they sent a message to their mailing list saying cruise sale, buy your cruise package by April 1 and save \$500. And I'm like, you guys are so tone deaf as to the climate right now. I mean, the world is shutting down. There are cruise ships that are out at sea because no one will take them. And you're asking me to book a cruise and say \$500. Whenever I see one of their messages, I just delete it because they obviously weren't aware of the climate or they didn't care about the climate. They just cared about that message. And your message really, really matters.

**Alan Wallner (29:09):**

It's so important to have that message be organic with what's going on in the business climate.

**Susan Rose (29:18):**

I wish I can say I have really radically different things to say than these two, but I'm pretty much a hundred percent aligned with them. I want to reiterate what Wendy said, creating content or copy just for the sake of doing it because you've got your calendar and you're supposed to be doing it isn't going to serve you and it's not ultimately going to build your authority and make more sales for you.

(29:42): My first question is always, what is the purpose? Why are we coming here today to talk about this thing I'm going to produce for you? And by purpose, I mean, ultimately, what do you want the reader to know or do because they have consumed this? And it is shocking how often people cannot answer that question. And I've worked with people, I'm talking about people who've spent a lot of money on market research and stuff, and they still can't answer that question. And if you don't sit down and take the time to think about my audience, who I've now very carefully defined, and I love them. And I'm writing this for them. If you don't know what you want them to do, then the piece is going to be garbled.

(30:30): Your call to action might not connect with whatever the story is that you're telling. So it's a really important thing to know what the end game is. And that ties into your strategic marketing objectives. I come in as the writer for the project and I ask to know what the marketing plan is and people will be like, why do you need to know that? Because content is an integral part of your marketing plan. So keep that in mind. And then with the audience, any piece of content you write should be written for one singular person, there is no such thing as good copy that talks to this person. Oh, and let's throw in this audience, Oh, and this audience over here, because I don't want to have to do three different pieces of content. I only want to do one again; you end up with something really watered down. The most successful pieces I've ever worked on with people, whether it was thought leadership or an ad or whatever, we had one audience in mind and one singular purpose, and then we can build whatever we were doing around that.

MIND. HEART. BRAND.

# CONSCIOUS

BRANDING

**Alan Wallner (31:35):**

It's really having a clear image of who you're writing for in your mind so that if they're reading it, they feel as though you are talking directly to them, not a crowd of people, that's how you really make that connection with them. And that's how you draw them in.

**Susan Rose (31:55):**

I just want to say, there've been studies that have showed this, that the age we're living in right now is people feel disconnected. I think we all know that. So when they're reading your copy, whether it's a social media post, an email or an article, they want to feel like you see them and the way you do that is by, I'm writing to Alan or I'm writing to Wendy. And it doesn't matter if John over there isn't Wendy, because I'm writing to one person, other people are going to feel that humanity of it and feel like they're engaged in personal conversation. And that is really what people want and what they expect. So you do that by being very specific about who you're to.

## What Should Businesses Set in Place to Ensure Their Content's Consistency and Quality?

**Alan Wallner (32:40):**

All right, you don't want to be that one hit wonder with your copy. So consistency is key to building the right reputation and credibility through content. So what are two things you would advise a company to set in place to ensure consistency and quality of content?

**Wendy Jacobson (33:05):**

Well, I think the first thing is, have a commitment to it. If you want content to work for you, you've got to work for your content. And so be committed to putting some content plan into place. If that's one blog post a month, it's one blog post a month. If it's a case study a quarter, that's fine too, but just commit to doing something and then make sure that you have the resources to follow up on that commitment. So you have the person or people or whomever who's going to produce that content. And the process laid out as to who's going to produce it, where's it going to live, and how are you going to distribute it? I think distribution could be a topic for another Thrive!cast. But you don't want to just write content, like I said, and stick it in a drawer and post it once and be done. You worked hard for that content. So that content should work hard for you.

**Alan Wallner (34:08):**

And a content strategy is key. Otherwise, content always becomes that last-minute thing, and you don't want that to happen because that's the foundation that drives everything.

MIND. HEART. BRAND.

# CONSCIOUS

BRANDING

## Wendy Jacobson (34:26):

I'm guilty of it. I mean, last year I was going to write a blog post a week, guess what? I didn't write a blog post a week. So it's easy to fall off that wagon, but if you set realistic expectations that you or your company can achieve, then that's good. A blog post a week for me was just way too much. But I had big big plans.

## Susan Rose (34:57):

Well, not a surprise at this point, I agree with Wendy on the planning piece of it. If you don't have a plan, then nothing's going to happen. That needs to be scheduled. I would take that a step further and say one way to help keep it from becoming overwhelming is to, when you get your plan, set aside what we call batch days, which is a chunk of time where you knock out a lot of it. So rather than, Oh my God, this Tuesday morning, I need to write my Tuesday blog. And you're not always in this feeling of, I need to catch up. So writing it ahead of time, going back to things that you have from years ago and repurposing that can really help to get that message out, update things and make it less of a burden.

(35:38): The one caveat on that is that of being tone deaf, like Wendy said; my guess is that travel agent had scheduled out their emails months ahead of time and forgot. Because when COVID came out, a lot of people forgot that they had a social media post or whatever on auto schedule. And they're putting out all sorts of tone deaf messages at the time. So, just keeping that in mind, but you can create things ahead of time so that it's not a huge burden. My second point we've already talked about this, that I really am hoping you all walk away knowing that the audience is important and what your audience needs is important, because that's going to determine what you're producing and where you're distributed.

(36:28): Like Wendy said, that's a topic in and of itself. I have a friend who works with tradesmen, a lot of HVAC companies and stuff like that, and they just are not on Facebook or on Instagram. So she started doing a lot on Instagram and was having fun, but they're not there. So nothing was happening for her. When she went back and looked at, okay, where do my people hang out? And especial with social media, really where am I going to find them? That helped her start getting it in front of them. So knowing not just who your audience is, but then understanding them enough to know where they hang out. Are they on Reddit? Are they on some platform you don't use? Do they like blogs? Do they prefer magazine articles in print?

## Alan Wallner (37:19):

You hit the nail on the head there. I mean really doing a deep dive *with* your target audience, not *on* your target audience. Sit down with some of your key target audience or customers who you trust, who are your target audience group and, and ask them where do you go to get this information? Spend some time with them; take your ideal customer and build your target audience profile around them. Or if you've got five of them, take them all and build a combined avatar around them. So you understand where they're going, what their disposition is in this current business climate, what are their biggest challenges? What

MIND. HEART. BRAND.

# CONSCIOUS

BRANDING

are their biggest fears? What do they want from you? Spend some time to really get to know your target audience.

**Susan Rose (38:15):**

The answers might surprise you. Years ago, we did that with the branding company. And the answer, all of our ideal clients told us, is that what they loved about us was not the beautiful design and the good copy. It was that we always hit our deadlines and we always come in under budget. I had no idea that's what was going to come out of those conversations. So you never know. So ask.

**Rosemary Wallner (38:47):**

With companies that I work with or writers, they do have two points. One is I always ask if they have some type of company style or a word guide. Many companies have a design guide and they list their company colors, the correct use of their logo, placement of photos, things like that, but not all companies have a similar guide for word usage and that helps a lot with consistency. If they don't have one, I build that into part of my services. As I'm doing substantive editing or copyediting, I create this list of things to make the writing consistent: the correct use of their product names, even writing the dates the same, using commas the same.

(39:47): There are a lot of formal guides out there, for example, the Associated Press that people use for their everyday writing and newspaper writing. There's The Chicago Manual of Style, which is mostly for books. And then different industries have their own style guide. Microsoft has the Manual of Style for Technical Publications. So that would be the first thing I suggest is some form of style guide. And the second is the more you read yourself, the better writer you'll become, and not just books but magazine articles, blogs. I would suggest staying aware when you're reading especially maybe a blog, if you're writing a lot of blogs, what attracted you to that blog? Was it the title, the length, was it well-written, how do companies who are similar to yours write; find your competitor and see what they're doing, how they're writing their blogs and communicating with their audience. All of us know our industry and we know what our company does. And I think it's helpful to do research on what others are doing to attract the right people.

**Alan Wallner (41:14):**

You hit on some important things that I just wanted to recapture real quick. It's knowing the keywords and key phrases that are aligned with a specific target audience group. And so that when you're proofreading and editing you can double check to make sure we're being consistent when we're talking to this target audience group and leveraging this, these key phrases, and we're not bringing those key phrases over here, which aren't aligned with this target audience because it's a completely different message and it may confuse them. So by having those standards in place and knowing what messages go with what group, you can retain that consistency over a broad range of content without causing confusion.

MIND. HEART. BRAND.

# CONSCIOUS

## BRANDING

(42:09): We've even run across some situations where pricing varied based on the different target audience groups. And you caught that the pricing for one group was put in the other group. That would've caused a ton of problems, but through proofreading, with those guides, you were able to retain the integrity of the pricing structure that they had across the different channels. And I think that's important and pretty key to making sure that you can be consistent.

**ATTENDEE QUESTION:** *Why is there so much jargon and business speak in writing today?*

**Alan Wallner:**

What we're going to do now is we've got a lot of good questions coming in from our listeners today. So I wanted to tap into our listeners. We have one here from John that says, why is there so much jargon and business speak in the writing we see every day? I think that that qualifies as an ABQ, another burning question.

**Wendy Jacobson (43:07):**

That's funny that you mentioned that because I was just writing something suggesting that businesses don't use jargon in their content because just because they use it doesn't mean their target audience uses it. It makes the target audience not only feel uninformed or potentially stupid, but also they don't understand what they're talking about. So don't assume; you know what happens when you assume, right? So don't assume that just because you use certain key phrases or jargon that your target audience does. Even if they do, I would caution on the side of not using it often, unless you're using technical writing to say a med tech audience or healthcare providers who understand that language, but really, use language that your general audience would understand. And don't toss in your speak because you think it makes you sound smart because it doesn't.

**Alan Wallner (44:14):**

Yes, and like Rosie said earlier: you know your topic really well, so you're way up here, but your customer may be way down here in that jargon and everything's not necessarily going to add clarity or make you look good. It's going to actually cause confusion and maybe make them feel intimidated and want to go somewhere else. So really get to know your target audience and where they are in that.

**Susan Rose (44:44):**

In addition to everything Wendy said, my one opinion is that it's lazy writing. It's not understanding your audience. You see that when people are disconnected from that spectrum and the fact that the audience doesn't have the level of knowledge that they have, and it's easier to write the language of the new every day rather than finding, how do I actually explain this to somebody who doesn't understand what I'm talking about? That's my succinct opinion. I think it's laziness.

MIND. HEART. BRAND.

# CONSCIOUS

BRANDING

**ATTENDEE QUESTION:** *Is complete saturation with content an effective strategy?*

**Alan Wallner (45:16):**

That's okay to say that. We have another one here. Sometimes with social media and emails, you see a ton of posts or people receive two or more emails in a week from someone marketing something. Is this complete saturation with content an effective strategy? If so, why? Cause it seems like it's very disruptive.

**Susan Rose (45:49):**

That is such a good question. And it's something people ask me all the time and saturation is in the eye of the beholder. It depends on who you are and your business, whether two emails a week is too much or frankly, not enough. First of all, saturation in an email would be different than what it would be in social media, because of the cycles and you're going to naturally be able to put out more on social media because it doesn't stay in people's feeds very long. But in terms of the email, if you are writing something that is very connected to your audience and they're interested in what you have to say, then you're not saturating them with two emails a week, but if you're just sending out something that they don't care about and you're being blind to the fact that they don't care about it, then yes, one email a month would be over-saturation if you're sending them something that they don't want to get. So that's why building your list and being really careful about who you bring on to it matters whether people are going to feel saturated or not.

**Alan Wallner (47:02):**

It gets down to the value that you're delivering.

**Susan Rose (47:06):**

I know people that send emails every single day. I was on a list for a while. And I got an email from this guy every day. And it was so good every single day that for almost a year, I read it every single day, but not many people get that.

**Rosemary Wallner (47:30):**

If you're sending your message to the right audience and the copy is well-written, no typos, your audience will welcome hearing from you on a frequent basis like that. I'm on a few bookstores' their email list. I opted in, I like reading them, but, around the holidays they started sending several emails in a week and I did consider unsubscribing. With my own side of the business, for the past year, I've emailed out a Copy Tip of the Week to my clients. Last fall I was wondering if that's too much, if I should go to monthly. And so I actually sent out a survey to my clients, asking them first if the content was relevant to them, if they still want to receive the Copy Tip of the Week email. And I asked their thoughts about monthly or weekly and most of them said they wanted to continue once a week. So again, I asked my audience, my clients, what they wanted and went through that way.

MIND. HEART. BRAND.

# CONSCIOUS

BRANDING

**Wendy Jacobson (49:00):**

I'll just echo Rosie and Susan. I think it really depends on the business, what you are trying to accomplish and who your audience is. I'm a fan of weekly emails, if it makes sense, because even if your open rate isn't super high, you're still getting eyeballs to your name. And so if and when the time comes where your services are needed, you might be top of mind. You hopefully are. And another way to determine if it is too frequent is to look at your unsubscribe rate. If your unsubscribe rate is going gangbusters, well, then maybe you need to reevaluate and figure out another strategy. And I love Rosie's suggestion of asking your audience. I mean, your audience, if you have an email list, they are somewhat loyal to you. They want to hear from you and they would love to give you their input.

(49:47): Adding value to your audience by suggesting to them that you care about their opinion is a great way to not only show that you care, but really understand what they want and what they need with social media. As Susan mentioned, things come and go in your feed often. And I do think that, depending on the channel, there might be too much, but again, it really depends on the channel. You could post to Twitter all day long and a lot of your followers might not see what you have to say. So it really depends on the channel, who your audience is, and the purpose of that piece of content or copy.

**ATTENDEE QUESTION:** *Do all writers need to write for SEO optimization?*

**Alan Wallner (50:28):**

Do all writers need to write for SEO optimization, search engine optimization?

**Wendy Jacobson (50:43):**

I'm going to say no.

**Alan Wallner (50:45):**

I think if you're writing web content definitely you need to understand keywords and how people are searching for you. And again, if you're writing with their mindset in mind, you're going to understand how they're going to be searching for you. And you're going to be including that in the way you're writing it.

**Wendy Jacobson (51:09):**

I think I'd focus more on quality than SEO, that will serve any writer well. Keep SEO in the back of your mind, but the focus should be quality and your message and, more importantly, who it's for and what you want it to do for them.

**Susan Rose (51:31):**

My answer is the same. If you have to, choose quality over SEO and SEO only really matters if you're writing something that's going to be searchable. So on your website, your

MIND. HEART. BRAND.

# CONSCIOUS

BRANDING

blog, maybe Pinterest, maybe YouTube, but a lot of social media, you've got your hashtags, but it's not an SEO thing. So don't worry about it right now. I mean, with all the other things to worry about with creating content, let the SEO go, if that's going to completely stress you out.

## Closing Remarks

### Alan Wallner (52:03):

It's like eating, don't eat too much of one thing. With that, we're coming to the end of our hour here. I wanted to thank our panelists for sharing their insights and wisdom today. I'd like to thank all of you for attending, and this is something I'm going to share, something that we have not really shared on our past episodes. But I think it's important to note to show our appreciation for the panelists and the time that they give here and the information we have on each episode of Thrive!cast. We make a donation to a cause on behalf of our panelists and this month's episode we're supporting and featuring Clare Housing, which is a local organization based here in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and they provide affordable and supportive housing options and create healing communities that optimize the health of people living with HIV and AIDS.

(53:03): If you want to learn a little bit more about them and maybe contribute it's [clarehousing.org](http://clarehousing.org), a great organization. We've enjoyed learning and helping to support them. I hope you've enjoyed the conversation today. If you have any follow-up questions, please send them to [info@consciousbranding.com](mailto:info@consciousbranding.com). and we will respond to you. There were a few questions we didn't get answered today, and we will follow up with you to make sure you get your questions answered. I'll be sending all of you a link to the recording of this episode, along with some of the bonus materials. So feel free to share this with other business owners you think would be interested in it. Our next Thrive!cast episode will be in February and it is called "What are you waiting for? It's time for imperfect action." I look forward to seeing you in February and remember, you create your world. So believe in your vision, drive it with purpose and above all take action. So until next time, go out there and be remarkable.

MIND. HEART. BRAND.