

On Your Terms Episode 121:  
Should You Call People Out in Your Industry?

**Sam Vander Wielen:** Hey, and welcome back to On Your Terms. I'm your host, Sam Vander Wielen. I'm so grateful that you're here. And today, we're talking about Kenny G. I mean, like, what could be better than that? And somehow I'm going to relate this to business because, you know me, if you listen to any of my stuff, I could literally relate, I think, anything to business. My friend, Michelle, tells me I'm the queen of analogies, metaphors.

So, welcome to On Your Terms. In case we haven't met already, I'm an attorney turned entrepreneur, and I help online business owners legally protect and grow their online businesses using my DIY legal templates and my best selling Ultimate Bundle Program. And here on the show each week, I bring you fresh legal tips and business building advice. I focus a lot on evergreen marketing. I post new episodes every single Monday and Thursday. So, I am so glad you're here.

And if you're new to any episodes in May, then I'm doing a little thing in May, where every single episode kicks off with a little tribute to my dad, Norm, who passed away this month last year. And I'm doing that by sharing a Norm Tip. Because, Norm, he was famous for his tips, for his advice.

So, Norm had a pretty staunch rule that root beer should always be served in a glass. And he said it should always be served ice cold. He really loved Dr. Brown's. If you're Jewish, you know. And he also loved Sprecher's, because my husband, Ryan, he's from Wisconsin, and once I started going to Wisconsin and I started getting Sprecher's, I brought some back for my dad in Philly and he was like, "This is pretty good." So, he really, really liked Sprecher's since I've been with Ryan.

But, yeah, that man felt very passionately about his root beer. Every once in a while, he'd go for, like, a Barq's or I think when I was little, he might have liked Mug, but then Pepsi - he might have either bought Mug or, I don't know, he thought it changed. But he is so funny because he's so like me, in that he becomes like a connoisseur of his little things. Like he loved root beer, so he became a connoisseur of root beer. I do this, too, about coffee and tea and just really random, random stuff.

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So, if in case you have a root beer or if you have Olipop, like I do - I love Olipop root beer, which Norm said was fake and he wanted nothing to do with it. I, on the other hand, like it, but if you have an Olipop on me or a real root beer on Norm, then make sure it's served in a glass. Okay.

So, in this episode, we're going to talk about Kenny G. versus real jazz. So, let me just back up and explain where this came from. So, my husband, Ryan, he loves jazz. He's a crazy jazz person. He is a crazy records person. Although he is a professor, his office looks like he's running a music store. So, you know, we live on the North Shore of Long Island, but we're fortunate that we can pop into the city and we can go see shows and stuff like that.

So, the other night we go to this really famous jazz club called Blue Note. It's in the city. It's in the village. And first of all, it was just so cool to see. We saw Ron Carter, who's 86 years old, looked incredible, was incredible, beautiful musician. And he was just so in the groove, in the zone. He was just, like, blissed out. Yeah. I don't even know how to explain it. It's so cool for me to watch.

Like, I know nothing about jazz. I really know nothing about music. Ryan has a double degree in political science and also in classical guitar, so he really, really understands music. And I'm just like, "This sounds good" or "This doesn't sound that great." That's about my extent and knowledge about music. And, also, I'm extremely liberal with my music tastes. Like, I love music and I just kind of like everything. I don't know, nothing really bothers me. So, except maybe scream rock, I think I don't like that because I don't like screaming.

So, it was just really cool to be there and just see - what's it called? - a trio. Yes, there were three of them. The trio was just so in the groove and they all just seemed so happy. And when you see people doing something that it's so clear that that's what they were supposed to be doing and everything just kind of clicks, that's how I felt watching this trio, like you could just tell that all three of them really had found their way.

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And when we were at the jazz club, I found out that there's actually this one jazz guy that I really do love. This is a very me story. Ryan will laugh about this. But I was getting a facial at a very nice place and there was this beautiful, beautiful music playing in the background. And I was like, "Who is this artist? What is this album? You need to tell me because I'm obsessed." It was like this transcendental experience. And I've since told everybody I know about this album because I'm so obsessed with it.

But the artist's name is Pat Metheny and the album is called Beyond the Missouri Sky, I believe. It's on Spotify. I know because I listen to it like every day. It is just the most peaceful, soothing music, I don't know. So, I low key became obsessed with Pat Metheny. And it's just funny because it's not the music I listen to day to day, but it's great working music, around the house music, need to chill the hell out music, whatever you need.

And we were at Blue Note and up on the board it said that Pat Metheny is going to be there this summer. And I was like, "Oh, my God. This is my one chance. Like, I actually know who this person is. Pat Metheny is going to be here." And Ryan was telling me - I forget why exactly this part came up - he was like, "Pat Metheny has been so outwardly vocal and critical of Kenny G." Like, he hates Kenny G. I don't know if he actually hates it, but he's apparently spoken out about him a lot. And he's kind of said things to the effect of like Kenny G. is a hack. He's not real jazz. He's not a real jazz musician. He has no talent, et cetera.

So, I just found this to be so funny. I mean, it's so interesting that there's apparently a jazz feud, which now has me cracking up. But I was like, "Let me look something up really quick." And by the way, I want to preface this by saying money is not only not everything. I don't care. Making more money doesn't make you better than somebody else. But I was just curious because I had a feeling that maybe part of the criticism that comes from this is that Kenny G. is low key loaded, super loaded.

So, I was like, "How much money is Kenny G. worth?" So, I look him up. Kenny G. is

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worth a reported \$100 million. Okay. Kenny G., I just cannot believe it. And I have flashback memories of driving around in my mom's Saab when I was little and her listening to like, "dananan," Kenny G. Just very funny.

So, I was then like, "Okay. Well, what about Pat Metheny? How much is Pat Metheny worth? I feel like I've given him at least \$1 million through Spotify playing, you know." So, Pat Metheny is allegedly worth \$10 million. Not chump change, but a lot less than \$100 million. Again, I could care less. It doesn't make you a good or better or worse person on any of that kind of stuff. I was just curious about, you know, maybe an artist who feels disgruntled about somebody who's really taken off versus the real artist, the real jazz, something like that.

I think at this time when this happened a couple of weeks ago, I had noticed something else on Instagram - bringing it back to our own industry - there was this RD that I had followed a long time ago because I was interested in her content. I really liked what she was posting and I used to read her stuff here and there, whatever.

Over time, I started noticing that every single time her Instagram stories would come up for me, her Instagram stories were always tearing other people apart for being a hack. It was like, this person doesn't know what they're talking about, or this idiot commented on my post and look how dumb they are, and kind of publicly calling them out. She's really-anti coach. She doesn't like people calling themselves health coaches. And she doesn't like nutritionists who aren't licensed. And, basically, anybody who's not an RD or a doctor.

Look, there's a lot to say about this. Obviously, I'm queen of scope of practice. And I know there are lots of people doing things outside their scope. I also know that there are plenty of great coaches out there who are really helping people and doing things the right way. Which is probably why you're here, right? But the point being that I just started noticing this, like all of her content was just spent ripping this other stuff apart and ripping her own followers apart. Like, somebody would ask her a question in the DMs, and then that became an education on being disrespectful about the way you ask

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a question and treating her like Google.

And that stuff happens, but there's a way to handle it. And I think sometimes we can kind of spiral as business owners and all of our stuff becomes about that. I went through a phase like that myself years ago.

And it was funny as a consumer because I actually, over time, forgot kind of what she did. I was like, "Wait. I mean, I knew she was an RD, but does she have a program? Does she work with people privately? Is she a business coach for RDs? I'm confused." I couldn't remember. And I couldn't really remember even what she stood for. Like, "Why did I start following her? Was she an RD who helps people who are focused on fitness?" Or sometimes I'll look at somebody who has a certain niche that I'm interested in. So, I don't know why. And it was really bothering me to the point where I didn't actually want to follow her anymore because I didn't want to see this content all the time that was just anti-content. I hated it.

So, what does this all have to do with Kenny G.? What does this have to do with the Kenny G. versus the real jazz artist? So, let's break this down for a moment.

Kenny G., our little friend Kenny G., he is very popular, very widely known, he's a household name or an image. At least let's say that a lot of people would know who Kenny G. was versus who Pat Metheny is or some other jazz artist. We also now know that Kenny G. is mega, hella rich. He is super, super loaded. And I would also say at the same time, he's maybe not super widely respected, but very widely loved and listened to because he has a very large, more popular mass audience, but not as respected maybe within his own field.

So, real jazz artists, on the other hand, because apparently Pat Metheny is not alone in the way he thinks, and I hear Ryan, his jazz friends talk about this, too, they kind of fancy themselves as not as popular. They've got a strong niche but they've got a really passionate, passionate group of people. It's a strong, smaller, concentrated group of people. I think that they pride themselves on being real and kind of differentiating

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themselves from the popular people on the other hand. They identify also with being the real artist or the not super rich or the broke and the struggling artist. That's a thing.

And I also think that they see themselves - and this could also be true, perhaps - as doing their life's work. They feel righteous. I don't want to say that in a bad way, but they do feel, I think, kind of righteous in that way. And I think they generally feel like they're carrying out their life's purpose.

I couldn't help thinking of a similar scenario here where a mom and pop restaurant who's busy enough but not having lines out the door. They're making their family's food and they have a small group of people who consistently come to the restaurant and love the restaurant. But they see a McDonald's or a fast food restaurant across the street who's got lines around the block constantly, cars streaming in going through the drive through. And the mom and pop restaurant thinks, "What are we doing wrong? What should we be doing differently?" And I'm like, "We don't all need to be McDonald's. We don't all need to be Kenny G."

And I want to break this down a little bit, like how this shows up in our own businesses. On the one hand, I think that we can take a little piece of what Kenny G.'s and the McDonald's and the Pizza Hut's of the world, Taco Bell - I'm going to have an episode coming out for you about Taco Bell soon - have done in their businesses, if you want to, to popularize or scale your business.

So, I do this a lot with marketing messages and tactics that I see big companies do. So, I think one of the best things you can do for your online coaching business is to stop consuming just content from people who are in your space, or other coaches, or who do exactly what you do. And instead start looking to businesses that are completely different than you and way bigger on a way bigger scale different kinds of businesses. I'm talking corporate America. And I look and I watch what they're doing. I see like, that's so interesting. I see how they took this trend.

For example, I just saw a commercial the other day for a blender that they wanted you

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to buy, like a direct to consumer blender. And this blender company used trends that we see on social media. It was basically like an ASMR type commercial where it was actually extremely quiet. And first of all, the point of the commercial was to point out to you, to draw your attention to the fact that this blender was super quiet. So, that was interesting.

It was also a pattern disrupting commercial because it was so freaking quiet that it got my attention. Because if you have a T.V. then you know that, for whatever reason, the tech gods like to turn up the volume on commercials to a crazy level. But this commercial was the opposite. It got dead silent. And then, that got my attention. And it also got me looking at how like, "Hey, this blender is really quiet." Like, I love my Vitamix, but it like blows my eardrums out. And they used ASMR. The girl was, like, tapping on the thing and she was pouring. You could hear them, like, chopping the fruit and whatever. And I thought that this was so interesting.

And I was like, that's so interesting to see. The commercial, I've never thought about doing a commercial for my product, for example, where you could do that. You could play on ASMR. You could do a little pattern disrupting. So, I'm always paying attention, that's how my brain works. I'm always paying attention. I'm always looking at calls to actions on billboards, on headlines, on major websites. I look at promos and releases for big businesses. I look at the email marketing strategies for brands and companies that I love. I look at the websites for companies that I love to see what they're doing. Not to copy, of course you know I would never recommend that, but to kind of study and understand and observe what's really going on here.

And I think we can learn a lot about consumer buying behavior and trends. So, I notice a lot from looking at the bigger companies, the Kenny G.'s of our industry. I learn a lot from them to see what they're testing and try to figure out why are they testing that or notice differences in their language and different strategies. I think that there's a lot you can observe from the larger companies and let some of this stuff trickle down to how that plays into a smaller business like ours.

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And I also think you can look at the psychology of marketing and - I don't know - how somebody like Kenny G. can play to the masses, for example, or what Taco Bell does. There's this insane article in The New Yorker that I will link to in the show notes. But there was this incredible article about the depths to which Taco Bell goes to study their consumers, to study tastes, and trends, and getting buzz and interest in their products. I just find it all so fascinating.

And I think that there are little tidbits that we can take away. Like, look, I'm not building a Taco Bell. I'm not interested. I'm not building the Taco Bell legal templates. I'm not interested in doing that. That's not what you're doing either. But I think that my point is that instead of hating on it, instead of standing there and being like, "Oh. What a hack. What a terrible company. What is this?" Let's just take what we can get from it. Let's understand. Let's use them as marketing subjects, I guess, and let's see what we can take and apply to our own businesses.

At the same time that you're observing the Kenny G.'s, the Taco Bell's, the Nordstrom's, the Walmart's of the world, you can also double down and lean into what makes you uniquely not Kenny G., not McDonald's, not all of these things. So, what do your people, for example, hate about the Kenny G.'s of your industry? Maybe that's Weight Watchers, or Nordstrom, or maybe it's Planet Fitness, or it's Nordstrom. I don't know, it's like some big thing, some big box, probably one size fits all.

You know, for me it might be like a LegalZoom or something like this. What do your people hate about that? Or even just for somebody like me and for you too, it might be what do people hate about the traditional legal system? What do people hate about going to doctors? What do people hate about working with a normal CPA? There are all kinds of things. So, I like to think, too, about, well, what's missing from there?

So, there might be less of a connection, less personalization. There are people out there who are like Ryan and who are jazz nerds and who are never going to be into Kenny G.'s because they want to double down and study - I don't know - whatever they do. He would murder me right now if he knew I was using this as an example. So will

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my production team, because they're all a bunch of music heads and they know so much about music, so they're going to be like, "Oh, my God."

But, basically, whatever people typically hate about the kind of big overhanging industry that you're working under is something that you can lean into and emphasize that you're not. Now, we don't want to do that like the RD that I was talking about because she was focusing on the wrong thing, in my humble opinion. And I certainly don't know everything. But just in my opinion, we don't want to focus our energy downwards. So, if you're an RD and you're upset that there are health coaches, I don't think the way to spend your energy is to yell online about health coaches.

I think the bulk of your marketing should be focused on positioning yourself as an expert and an authority, so you should be sharing educational content, content that's fun to consume depending on what platform you're using, content that really speaks to where your current customer is at, what they're struggling with, all of that kind of stuff. And then, letting people know about what your offers are and what you do and what next step. What next step? What do you want them to do? That's really the bulk.

And if I were this person, I'd probably be talking more to my customer and what their frustrations are than what my frustrations are. So, being an RD who talks crap about other health coaches is your frustration. But if you're working privately, for example, with clients on their nutrition or health or wellness or whatever, your clients don't care about that. Like, they don't care. They want to know how to fix their gut or become a vegetarian or whatever, put on muscle. So, that's not how we would speak to them.

You can definitely use that as part of your education, I think, of your customer to be like, "Hey, look. There's going to be other people out there as you're shopping around." Help them make a decision. Like, "As you're shopping around for who to work with to help you with your gut, you're going to see a lot of blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. You're going to see these people peddling this. You're going to see this happening."

I've talked to you about how you'll see business coaches doing this because you'll see

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business coaches telling you don't worry about legal. And I tell you that information is wrong. That information, though, is information that my ideal customer is hearing. It might be a myth that they have bought into accidentally, and I do need to educate them through the process about why that's wrong.

So, not just being like, "Business coaches are idiots," because, by the way, I don't think that. But when I talk about how there have been a few times when I've seen statements made like this or people come to me and they're like, "Oh, my business coach told me I don't need this kind of stuff," I use it as an educational moment. So, it's an educational moment, so I can use that as a way to bring leverage, to establish myself as an authority, and to shift my ideal customer through a myth.

So, instead of just being like, "Kenny G. is an idiot, or Kenny G sucks. He's a hack. He has no talent," it would be more like explaining maybe to people - I don't know, the jazz example is probably a bad one - what makes your stuff so great or show me, like show me how great your music is. Show me something that's so talented that you do and then explain to me the difference. Educate me. I don't know, I wouldn't know the difference otherwise.

The mom and pop restaurant who makes the incredible family recipes, don't stand there and just tell me how horrible McDonald's is and how they have terrible food or something. Tell me what is your food, what is so incredible, why should I come here multiple nights a week, why should I take my hard earned cash and come here. Establish a personal connection with me so that I feel so welcome and connected that I would never dream of going somewhere else because I would want to support you.

So, that's what we need to think about for marketing our businesses, not spending so much time talking crap about how Kenny G. sucks or how coaches suck or this person sucks, even getting too focused on how corporate sucks. I see a lot of people spend their time talking about how traditional medicine is terrible, how traditional finance, real estate, dating apps, you name it. And I think it's an important part of the story. I think it's an important part of educating your customer, though, along the journey.

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And it's really important for you to remember who your customer is and what they're struggling with, not what grinds your gears. You can talk to a friend, talk to a partner, talk to your colleagues about that. You can send me a DM and be like, "Oh. It really grinds my gears that this thing that happens." I'm here to talk grind my gears all day long but I sometimes have to step back, even myself, and remember that's not what you're here for.

I get copied a lot. And there's this one legal templates person who copies me a lot and mimics me a ton, made all her branding look like mine. Everything I do, she does it, all this kind of stuff. And I get messages from people every week, multiple messages a week telling me that they think that this person is copying me, that they're confused by it. They thought it was mine, you know, blah, blah, blah. And they're like, "You should speak out about this and yada, yada."

Now, I teach you every day what to do if somebody steals your content. And I teach you every day what constitutes mimicking and copying and yada, yada, yada. I have lawyers that I send things to when people report things to me. And I have people who follow them, who monitor what they're doing, and opt in to all their stuff.

So, I don't want to spend my marketing time talking badly because it turns from a teaching lesson for you to a personal beef, like a drama. And I don't need to stand there personally and make myself feel better to be like, "This person sucks. They're a hack. They weren't even a business lawyer. They didn't even practice law." Some of these people I see opening legal templates businesses didn't even practice law, you know, all kinds of things.

I could stand here all day and point out all these differences and judgments and criticisms that I have of this stuff, because I'm human and this stuff comes up. How does that help you? I don't know. I think you would be better served by an episode that's like What to do if someone steals your content? What is the difference between mimicking and stealing? When do you know it's inspiration versus stealing? I can pull lessons out

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of my frustrations and share them.

So, to the person that I used to follow who won't stop posting about hating this person, hating that person, and thinking every commenter is an idiot, you have to think about how you're spending your real estate. You have to remember who you're speaking to and what they're struggling with. And unless they're looking for some sort of Jerry Springer - may God rest his soul - style show about online business, it can be a bit much. And I think that it comes off a little temper tantrum-y. And I just think that we have very precious time and real estate with people. And when we let that stuff get the best of us, it's not a great look.

I remember my friend and business coach Naomi - who I'll link to below - from the Lifestyle Edit, I remember I was going through this phase years ago and Naomi was like, "It's just not a good energy to be in, so I get why you're frustrated. I get this person stole from you. I get this person copied." Like, I used to get really pissed about comments and then I would post the comment and then break down the comment as to why it was so mean and rude and whatever. And she was like, "You know, you're totally justified, but talk to me, talk to somebody else, talk to a friend, get it out, write it, do whatever you got to do. But posting about it every day and turning your feed into like a scorned lover kind of thing, it's not a good energy."

And so, when we see people doing the Kenny G. versus real jazz kind of thing, I just think, How do I want to spend my energy? Am I just telling people why that guy sucks? Or am I really proving why my stuff is so great. Period? Not related to anybody else, but just what do I stand for? What do I do? How do I help people? What's in it for you? Why should you be here? Why should you listen? Why should you care? That's really my primary focus when it comes to creating content and marketing my business.

So, I am so curious if you liked this episode. If you thought that this sparked any thoughts for you, I want you to send me a DM on Instagram, @samvanderwielen. Let me know if you liked it, if you listened to it. This was one of those where I was like, "This really makes sense in my head." But I was worried that nobody was going to care about

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this Kenny G. topic. So, I hope it was helpful to you. Let me know. And wherever you listen to the podcast, please give it a quick rating and review. Send it to a friend, text it to a friend real quick if you think they would find it helpful. I so appreciate you listening. And with that, I can't wait to see you next week.

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