

# TRANSCRIPT

## On Your Terms



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Episode #: 206

How to Create Unique Content (Without Copying Your Competition)

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Sam Vander Wielen:

Doing something that's really outside your comfort zone that's challenging to you is going to build that confidence in yourself and you're not going to feel like you need to look to other people to do it for you.

Hey, and welcome back to On Your Terms. I'm your host, Sam Vander Wielen. Thank you so much for listening if you're an OG On Your Terms listener. If you're new here, welcome. I think you're going to love it.

Today, we're talking about six ways to create content that don't involve looking at your competition. This is a topic that I feel very passionately about. I wanted to scream from the rooftops about. Today, I'm really excited to chat with you about it.

So, if you missed it in last week's episode talking about how you could pay less in taxes, I made a little series announcement, starting on April 8th, I'm going to have a four episode series coming for you all about how to plan, strategize, execute, and sell the heck out of your best launch ever. It's going to be based on a breakdown of my launch that was my best ever that I just had back in February. And I'm going to break down everything I thought about it, how I planned it, why I did it this way, what the strategy was, how it actually worked, what didn't work, and give it all to you so that you can take it and you can run with it in your own business. So, that four part series will start on April 8th. I cannot wait.

If you don't already get my emails, that's probably the best thing for you to do right now is just click the link in my show notes, sign up for Sam's Sidebar. That's my weekly newsletter where you get a little motivational episode from me or a little motivational message from me, actually, and you get a legal Q&A. So, I take questions from the audience and I do an answer every single week. I share with you what's going on in the podcast. I share a bit about the online news that you need to know that impacts your

business and resources and links that I am loving that week. So, definitely go down and sign up for Sam's Sidebar because that's going to be how you'll get reminders that the series is coming. And you also get to get Sam's Sidebar. People love it. There's a reason why over 30,000 of your peers already get it. So, do that real quick.

Okay. So, I wanted to chat with you today about ways to create content that doesn't involve looking at your competition as inspiration and/or ways to create content that will actually allow you to unfollow, mute, unsubscribe, whatever, from your competition, because I bet you that that will greatly improve your life. I pretty much guarantee it.

So, why do I want to teach you how to create content that doesn't involve looking at your competition? Well, for one, because I think it could be limiting you. I think it's limiting in general. And I'm just using competition, by the way, as just an easy phrase throughout this episode. I'm not trying to pit you against other people. And I don't mean it in a bad way. There's more than enough space for all of us and all of those good things. I'm just saying, it's just like when I say competition, I just mean other people who do what you do or what you want to do.

When you look at what your competition is doing, when you're constantly seeing that, when you're seeing it day in and day out when you go on social media or you check your email, you're either consciously or subconsciously treating their way of doing things as the rubric for how you should be doing things when it's not. When you see your competition doing something some way, it's just the way that they're doing it. It doesn't make it the right way. It doesn't make it the best way. We don't even know if it's successful, even if they say it is. Unfortunately, that's just part of being in online business.

It's also not how you stand out by mimicking what you see your competition doing. You need to stand out to do well. And you stand out by being different or unique or just genuinely yourself. So, I don't care if being yourself is kind of similar to a lot of other people. People though can smell the bullshit. So, when you're just trying to be like other people, that inability to be genuine or to be vulnerable, to come across as real,

people smell that. So, it's not like you have to be some Lady Gaga-size unique individual. You don't have to be so unique and stand out.

My mom was one of these people who she just prided herself on being the wackiest most unique person, and so she would wear the craziest stuff and she loved that and thrived on that. We don't have to be Roberta. We don't have to be that. You don't have to be that to get attention. You don't have to be that for people to like you or to accept you. That level of centricism, it worked for her, but it doesn't mean that's how you have to be. As somebody who I feel is not the the most unique person in the world, I'm just myself, and I think that's ultimately what stands out.

There's another bigger legal problem, though, as to why I don't want you looking at other people's content in your space in order for you to come up with content ideas. And that's because it leads to accidental copying. I see this all the time that people accidentally copy because you start to absorb so much of this vernacular of way of talking about what you do and phrases and tips and even just the topics.

Again, going back to the first part about how limiting this is, it's like you start talking about all the same topics in the same way because you're basically just duplicating what you're seeing. Even if you're not literally copying, I'm not saying you're copying and pasting their captions, but you're copying their style and the topics and the way of doing it because you're probably subconsciously treating it as the way to do it and it's not.

I would say, last but not least, the other reason why we need to have this conversation and go over these six ways that I'm about to jump into is that, honestly, I just feel like it makes you feel like shit. Seeing other people's stuff, it just feels shitty. You're human.

I was thinking the other day, I shared about how my promo went and I did one Instagram story. That was it. That's pretty much all you're going to see, except for when I do the series next month and we're talking about how well the launch went but it's to teach people something. But I literally made one Instagram Story post and I thought, "Oh, if somebody else sees

who's in my space, they might feel weird about it." I would have felt weird about it years ago if I had seen somebody doing what I was doing and I was making so much less, I would have been like, "Oh, my God. They're so much more successful than me. I'm never going to be able to do that." I would have all kinds of scarcity issues over thinking they probably gobbled up everything in the market. There's nothing left for me.

Look, the point is I would have projected all my crap onto it. Everybody has different issues and we all have different ways. We all take away different things when we see that kind of stuff. But the point is, I think, we can just all agree that when we see those kinds of things, for the most part, we have some sort of reaction. You're human. I say this without judgment to myself and to you, it's just cut yourself some slack. I don't know why you have to see it all the time.

Personally, I feel like this is the equivalent to if you broke up with someone, and then right after you broke up, you just kept following them and seeing they went on and immediately started living a happy life and started dating someone new. And you just kept watching other stuff on Instagram and seeing their incredible life. And you're miserable at home or something like this. This is just self-punishment at some point. Why are we doing this? How is this helpful?

I kind of feel like it's the same thing in business. It's like, why are we watching their stuff when we could just be focusing on yours? Honestly, if you're going to waste any time consuming content, I'd rather you go consume content of your customers because that's going to give you the best content. Not what your competition is doing.

So, personally, I just don't think it helps you feel great. I think that it leads to a whole lot of mindset issues that we don't really need. We're already human. This is already hard enough. You don't need to make it any harder on yourself.

All right. That's enough of that. I think you know why it's important to learn how to create content without looking at your competition. Let's get into the six ways to create that content.

All right. The first way is to do something expressive or creative that has nothing to do with your business. This is probably the one that I feel like nobody wants to hear or talk about or kind of doesn't believe how can that really help me or I'm not that successful yet, my business isn't that big. That's not going to be helpful. Yes, it is.

I swear that with time, I learned that the more stuff that I did that wasn't actually related to my business, the more, I don't know, if it's that you directly always get ideas when you're doing something expressive or creative, for example, or if it's the space that you give yourself to stop thinking so hard, stop overthinking, helps to give you space to breathe, to come up with a creative idea. I think it all depends on what kind of person you are, but if you're like me, then you have an easy time translating ideas from things you see out and about.

So, whether I'm watching an episode of Friends, or I go to a pottery class, or I try a watercolor class, or I go play some sport, I always see the analogies that seem so obvious to me when I'm out doing those other things about business. Because, basically, anytime that you're putting yourself out there, you're trying something new, you're feeling vulnerable, you're not sure, you're trying to find yourself, you're developing yourself, you're challenging yourself, you're really mimicking a lot of what goes on in your business and probably a lot about what happens in whatever topic you talk about, whether you talk about health, or fitness, or legal, business, money, career, mindset, all of those things are present. There are challenges. There are overcoming obstacles. There's putting yourself out there, being vulnerable. All of those things are present in whatever topics you talk about.

So, for me, number one is a big one. Like I said, I really did, I went and took a watercolor class. That was so helpful to me because I remember in the watercolor class, it was really difficult for me to do something, to do the watercolor without needing to know where it was headed first. And to me, I was like, "Well, how is that any different in business?" When you start a business, you might have an idea of where you think it's headed, but how many of us can say that our businesses actually went wherever they

were where we thought they were headed. And in fact, I think that being open to seeing where something goes is actually what really helps you to grow your business. So, I think remaining open-minded, saying "I don't have to be an expert at everything. I'm just going to see where this goes. I'm going to be open-minded and have a scientist-like mindset is the best mindset" both for watercolor and for growing your business. So, I turned it into a story. That kind of stuff really helps me.

You might have your own hobby, whatever is expressive and creative to you. I also really like reading fiction because I find reading things, especially that take place in other universes or not real life really, really helped me. Again, that's probably more to do with getting me out of my head and stopping thinking about business. I know for the first several years, I just thought about business 24/7. Now, it's like 23/7, so I'm getting better. No, I'm just kidding. But I think it actually has gotten a lot better in the last couple of years.

But, in general, I think it's just helpful to give yourself this creative outlet. It might free up space for you to create content and think of content ideas that doesn't have anything to do with your competition.

The second way to come up with content ideas that doesn't have to do with looking at your competition is to make sure that from time to time you're doing something that's challenging to you that you don't think you can do, you always learn lessons. Because you probably can do it and you will do it, and even if you don't do it perfectly or you fall off or you mess up or, whatever, you'll still do it and you learn lessons from it.

This is going to be my year, like, really the rest of this year is going to be a year of adventure travel for me. So, I have traveled the world. I've been to, like, 35 or 38 countries and I've done a lot of stuff. As I always say to Ryan, I've seen every church in Europe. I've done a lot of stuff. I've traveled all over the world. But I've not done adventure travel, meaning that the point of my travel is actually to hike and kayak and be in nature and not really go see any sort of historical site. There will be no churches involved, nothing like that. So, I'm going on a lot of adventure

travel trips this year. I'm going to Norway and Spain and Argentina and Chile, so I'm really excited.

And on those trips, I have some of the most challenging physical activities that I will have ever done. All in the hopes that next year, the beginning of 2025, after my book comes out, that I will be able to go hike to Everest base camp, and so I'm preparing for that. I'm challenging myself. I'm seeing if I can do it. I'm seeing if my brain can withstand it. If you don't know, I have brain surgery. But this is my year of starting to hike and starting to put myself out there.

And on these trips, some of the hikes, I got the itinerary the other day for our trip to Patagonia, and I was like, these are the longest hikes that I will have ever taken in my life times a million. My initial reaction was like I don't know if I can do it. And then, it was like, you know what? This is a good example of what I'm saying here, number two, I put myself in positions of doing something challenging that I don't think I can do and I learn lessons from it, no matter how it goes, no matter what the outcome is.

If anything, it builds character. I think it builds a lot of self-confidence. And I think that that self-confidence translates to not feeling like I need to look to anybody else to guide me. That I know best, not in the sense of I know better, like I'm better at creating content or I know my subject area better than everybody else. I don't mean it in that kind of cocky way. I mean it more like I'm a pretty good marketer. I have a pretty good feel for what my ideal client is struggling with, what they have questions about. I know what to pay attention to.

Especially because of what we're going to talk about in a couple of minutes, my number six is actually my favorite tip for you today and I think that one's really the key. So, I know that and so I'll have good ideas. I'll also have some flops and I'll know how to learn from the flops. And I think that's the kind of self-confidence that it's built in myself is like I have the confidence to find my way. I don't need somebody else to show me the way anymore. I don't believe that everybody else's way is automatically better than mine or that somebody must know better or that

they have some magic pill or bullet or fast track of success or a way of doing things. I have the skills and the dedication, honestly, to figuring this whole online business thing out and it's worked out well so far.

So, I think that the point about number two is that putting yourself in challenging positions, whether it's something like a hike or something at the gym or some, I don't know, whatever feat it is that you want to go do for yourself, go sing in public, act in a play, doing something that's really outside your comfort zone that's challenging to you is going to build that confidence in yourself and you're not going to feel like you need to look to other people to do it for you.

The third way to create content is to become a student of more of your industry news from experts instead of people off of social media who are your competition and your peers. I want you to start seeing your competition, regardless of how many followers they have or how big their business is, as your peers. You're all in it together. But who really is the industry expert kind of outside of social media or a little coaching bubble or something like that. And I want you to become an industry news kind of person and I want you to learn how to analyze, criticize, and respond to that news or to those commentaries without mimicking it.

So, for example, I subscribe to a lot of what I would call industry newsletters. So, I get The Morning Brew Newsletter, which is about business and kind of commerce things, things going on in business. Sometimes they're tech related. Sometimes it's AI, privacy. Sometimes it's about social media. It really depends, so not all of it applies. But my life motto is take what you need, leave the rest, so it's totally fine with me. I still look at it.

I subscribe to Nathan Barry's newsletter. He's the CEO of ConvertKit, the founder of ConvertKit. So, he always has fascinating discussions and thoughts on things. I read that. I subscribe to a website that sends me the social media news every week whether it's literally about an update on some feature on social media or it's some legal case that's going on or some regulation that's coming down on social media, because those are the kinds of things I need to be aware of.

So, instead of me looking to someone in my literal space on social media and looking to them to be like, "Ooh, what are they talking about?" And learning from them and then creating my content from more of a reactionary perspective, I'm ahead of them because I'm looking at more of the industry news. I'm gathering the stuff first and then I'm synthesizing it myself. I'm not looking to them to tell me what they think about it or how they can teach it to you or what the best way is to present it to you. I just do it myself.

I should have prefaced this whole episode by saying I don't follow anyone in my space because I think that that's the best way to just get off this hamster wheel, period, is that I don't know what they're doing so I don't even look at it. So, whether you got to unfollow, mute, block, whatever feels comfortable to you, you just don't see it. I honestly believe that's the best thing. And then, because of that, when I see, for example, one of these industry newsletters come through and I see some news, piece of new or a law or a piece of legislation that's going to be really applicable to my people, to you guys, I just create content about it. I'm not like, "I wonder what everybody else is saying about it."

So, I noticed this with the BOI guide, for example, the law that came out on January 1st. Months and months ago, I was like, I read about this law. I know it's coming. I want to start creating content around it. I created content around it. I created a freebie. It took off huge. And then, people were sending me other people's thing to be like, "After you posted this, they then basically ripped you off." And I don't know how much I always believe that. I don't own the topic. I didn't invent it. There's always ways that other people could be doing the very things I'm talking about right now. So, I don't personally always take that view, but I have seen it happen many, many times, both to myself and to other people. Those people are always going to be in response mode.

But what I'm concerned about with you is you taking charge and you being more of the leader and learning how to actually analyze and respond to, and criticize even, when it needs to, the industry news or industry facts or

whatever it is, industry myths on your own, instead of looking to how other people are doing it.

Number four, I highly encourage you to follow people who don't do anything to do with what you do who are great at social media. For example, if we're talking about creating content for social I'd be saying follow people on social media. If you're trying to write better email newsletters, follow people's email newsletters, sign up for them who write great emails. I don't care if they write about gardening and you are a career coach. It does not matter. The more different, I think, the better.

So, for me, for example, there's an RD that I really like, a dietitian that creates great, great content for her niche. Her niche is not even something I like. I just think she's really, really, really good at creating content. And for some reason, whenever I see her content, my brain immediately thinks that's how I can adopt that for me, for my industry. So, it's not even close. We're not talking about the same thing. I'm not ripping her stuff off because we don't talk about the same stuff. It's just the approach, like the twist, kind of the mindset. I can always tell what she's getting at.

So, for example, she had a post recently that was Four Things I'd Never Do as a Dietitian. And as soon as I saw it, I was like, I could do X number of things I would never recommend as a lawyer because I knew that the point, first of all, the title was intriguing that I would never recommend doing this, which you're like, "Wait. What wouldn't you recommend?" because everybody wants to know. But it was also a sneaky way for her to position her expertise by saying that she was a dietitian in a field where there's a lot of competition, but there's also a lot of battle for legitimacy, and who knows most. And so, with me, if you're going to talk about legal stuff, you better tell me that you're a lawyer because I don't want to hear it from anybody else.

This ended up being my most successful post recently so much so that I did it first as a reel. And then, I told my team this reel was so successful, take the content of my reel and turn it into a carousel post, and that did

really, really well as well. It's actually consistently adding people to my email list.

So, again, we're not copying. I didn't even look at how her caption was. I don't care what the content on her slides were, anything. I didn't even look at it. It was just like, "Oh, that's a good idea. That's a great way to pitch it. And I'll go through my number of things I would never recommend that you do as a lawyer." So, that's that.

All right. Number five, instead of mimicking what you see from your competition, if for some reason you are still seeing it or you choose to still follow people in your niche, then instead of mimicking what you see, react to it. Actually, start to form your own opinions about it. Share your hot takes, share a different approach. This is your chance to stand out from the crowd, which is necessary to do well.

Now, I don't mean that you literally have to. I know some people, their whole like shtick is that they trash other content creators. I've seen this on YouTube a lot, where people react to people's videos and they leverage the searchability, I guess, of that person's name. That's not really what I'm talking about, unless that's what you're trying to do. That's your own prerogative.

What I'm saying is if you watch somebody's content and it really drives you nuts for some reason, instead of you creating a video being like "I will watch Sam's content. It drove me crazy and here's why. And she doesn't even know what she's talking about." What I'm saying is why. Why do you disagree with whatever I'm saying? Now, go and make a piece of content that gives me your way instead. You don't need to mention me. It has nothing to do with me. Just go and create reactive content instead of mimicking content.

All right. Last but not least, I kind of buried the lead here because I feel like this is the most, if you don't do anything else that you've listened to in this whole episode, do this one. Number six, I want you to listen to your community. That is the best way to create content without looking at your competition. I want you to look at what people are asking you. And every single question that people ask you, every single

conversation you have, every coaching call, every interaction, wherever you're having it, in person, out and about, on a - what's it called? - every Reddit thread, every YouTube video, whatever it is, wherever you look to and learn about your niche, every piece of those things, like questions, concerns, comments, whatever, I call those sizzles.

So, I kept a sizzle file when I started my business, which was literally just a Google Sheets doc, where every single time I got a question, an email, I had a coaching call and somebody had a problem they presented and they were telling me about it and we worked through it, I would put a little note in there. And over time, I had thousands and thousands and thousands of responses. That's how I started.

Nowadays, what I do is, every time I do a webinar, for example, or a Q&A of some sort, I always save the chat and I have a Google Drive folder where I have all the chats saved. I would have enough. I couldn't create that amount of content in my lifetime, but I have all of that saved. Every time people emails questions, somebody on my team takes the question, we put it in Asana, we have a Questions Project in Asana, and we've even broken it down by topic. My main topic types, so we have one about general business questions, LLC, scope of practice, finances. They're all broken down so if at any point I need to create a piece of content about scope of practice, I would go and click on that and they are all the questions that people have asked me. And we even include the information just in case I need it to give them a shoutout or include it in the email or whatever.

If people aren't asking you questions yet, I invite you to look wherever they are asking questions. Because if you're just starting out, you might not know what people are asking you. I would also say, though, if you're like, "I don't know what people's questions are. I don't know what their concerns are," and I'm talking about your ideal clients, that is a cause for action on your part. That is a cause for you to go out and actually start having these conversations. You've got to seek it out. You can't wait necessarily for it to come to you. So, you've got to seek out those conversations. You have to put yourself where your ideal clients are. And you need to start absorbing part of what they're struggling with, part of

what they want, what questions they have, what they can't find, why they're looking for it, all of that kind of stuff.

I want you to shift, if anything, from this episode, I want you to shift from creating content like your peers or because of your peers or in response to your peers to creating content for your community. We're not creating content for other content creators. You've got to remember at the end of the day why you're here and who you're speaking to. You are speaking to your ideal clients. You're speaking to the people who you're trying to attract, and you're trying to really speak to where they're at, what they're struggling with, and what they wish things were like instead. So, we've got to speak to them.

And the way that Sally down the street or down on Instagram is speaking to them, might not resonate with your people. Here's an example. The other day, I got a DM on Instagram from an Ultimate Bundle member and she was saying that because she follows me and engages with my content, she gets targeted with ads from other lawyers who do what I do all the time. And she was writing to me just to thank me for not being fear-driven and not approaching legal in this way. And she was kind of commentating on what she did not like about this other lawyer's content. That person, my ideal client - she's already my client, so she's ideal in many different ways - she obviously resonates with the way that I do things. And when she saw a way that somebody else did something, it did not resonate with her.

She still needed that person's product. If she didn't have my product, like she's the type of person, she has a business, she cares about legal protection, she wanted to get her business off the ground, she would have needed legal protection, but she didn't resonate with that person. She resonated with me. There are people who see me who do not resonate with me. I get nasty comments all the time saying, "Are you even a lawyer? I would never buy from a girl in a hoodie." Okay. No problem. You don't need to. Luckily, there are plenty of people still wearing suits out there that you can go and work with. I'm not for everyone and that is completely okay.

So, I'm not trying to create content like my peers because the way that they do things, it might not speak to my people. What speaks to my people

is being myself because again, going back, they can sniff the authenticity. So, being yourself is what's going to attract other people. It's not even like they just want to be like you. They want to be the kind of person who can be themselves. They want to be the kind of person who can be confident or out there or vulnerable or trying challenges, doing all the things that we've talked about today. Their desired challenges or creative outlets might be different than yours, but they're going to respect the fact that you're doing it.

So, you've got to just be yourself. I know that's such a cliché thing at this point, but it really is true. And I feel so passionately about you not using your competition as a rubric. You not even using them as inspiration. And I hope that I've given you some food for thought today.

Will you do me a favor and send me a quick DM on Instagram, @samvanderwielen, or send me an email, sam@samvanderwielen.com, and let me know what you thought of today's episode, how this spoke to you, if this was helpful. I would love for you to write me and tell me that you're committed to trying this way. You can even tell me if numbers one, two, three, four, five, or six were most impactful, like that's what you're going to try, but let me know. I can't wait to hear from you.

And I definitely can't wait for my new series starting on April 8th, so you have that to look forward to learn how to build your best launch ever, and now you know how to create great content for it. So, this episode will definitely be helpful for that series.

Like I mentioned at the beginning, if you don't get my emails yet, make sure you go down in the show notes and click the Sam's Sidebar, sign up. It's super easy. You'll get my weekly email without having to go through any sort of marketing signup thing. So, that's great. Make sure you get all signed up there. And I can't wait to see you in next Monday's episode. See you then.

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