

how to leverage
social media and
content marketing to

microDOMINATION

build a mini-business
empire around your
personal brand

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Dedicated to my family and friends (on and offline!) for their ongoing support, encouragement and conversation.

I also dedicate this book to all the smart and generous micro mavens mentioned within these pages, without whom there would be no phenomenon to write about. These people have inspired not only me but also, collectively, millions of people around the world; they've done it by sharing ideas, telling stories, and putting their thoughts and views out in the public domain (which can be a scary space sometimes). Ladies and gentlemen, I salute thee!

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About the author

Speaker, consultant, content creator and start-up entrepreneur, Trevor Young is a true PR Warrior on the front-line of the communications revolution!

A recognised blogger and marketing communications practitioner, Trevor's goal is to help companies, organisations and individuals increase the intensity of connection they have with the people who matter most to the success of their business, cause or issue. He does this through his hybrid consulting, training and publishing practice.



Over the past five years, Trevor has built a reputation as a speaker and commentator on the topics of PR, social media, content marketing and what it takes to be a 'connected brand' in today's hyper-networked marketplace. He writes regularly for *LeadingCompany* and *Samara Magazine*.

SmartCompany.com.au named Trevor's blog one of the 25 Best Business Blogs in Australia in 2011.

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MAVEN *noun*

A maven (also mavin or mayvin) is an expert in a particular field, usually one who is self-appointed and who seeks to pass his knowledge on to others.

Source: www.websters-online-dictionary.org

Introduction

Welcome to the world of the micro maven

The emergence of the social web has seen the rise and (continued) rise of a new breed of entrepreneur who is creative and connected, prolific and passionate, socially savvy and community-minded.

These new-look entrepreneurs are the product of today's ideas economy, fuelled by new media technologies that allow them to expand across the virtual globe, winning fans and advocates, allies and supporters—and, importantly, generating business—often from the comfort of their own home (or even on the road somewhere). Whether their home base is in an exotic location such as Costa Rica, Chile or the Philippines, or an ordinary suburban house or city apartment somewhere like Boston, New York, Vancouver, Melbourne, Queenstown or Reno doesn't matter—where they are based is less important than what they represent and how they operate.

These individuals are at once digitally smart, self-sufficient and generous with their knowledge and experience. They've built their personal profiles by thinking and acting like publishers and media proprietors: they are first and foremost prolific creators of rich and interesting content—text, photos, video, audio, illustration—which they share freely and willingly online. Critically, they have a point of view that people gravitate towards—a flood of ideas like-minded souls hook onto and spread via their own networks, in addition to a set of experiences that fans and followers alike take note of and learn from.

These entrepreneurs are canny enough to understand that marketing today is about educating and informing—about giving rather than taking; interacting rather than blasting one-way messages all the time. They focus on building and nurturing a genuine community or tribe of fans, advocates, enthusiasts, allies and supporters of their thoughts, opinions and ideas, and then leveraging this support in ways that are respectful and considered.

These personal branding machines have managed to turn their passion into products; their knowledge and expertise into multiple revenue streams that, combined, often far outweigh what they had earned in previous positions working for someone else.

I call this new breed of entrepreneur *micro mavens*.

In parts I and II of this book we introduce the concept of the micro maven against a backdrop of broader societal and technological trends. We then put them under the microscope, working out who they are, how they operate, and what characteristics they share. Indeed, we paint a picture of what's possible if you too consider treading a similar path.

Part III explores this path a bit further; in some areas we take a deeper dive. What's involved in becoming a micro maven? What is a platform and how do you develop one? How do you build your personal brand and grow your business so you can ultimately live your dream?

And finally, in part IV we look at the micro maven in action and get up close and personal with a cross-section of people who epitomise what this book is all about. These profiles are wonderful stories of smart and generous entrepreneurs who are out there making it happen.

Why this book? *Why now?*

The goal of this book is to identify, define and articulate a social and business concept—a phenomenon, really, that's becoming a worldwide trend thanks to the emergence of new media technologies and the public's appetite for social connection and compelling

content produced by citizens other than journalists and those in the traditional media.

This concept—the idea of the micro maven—is a reality today.

My hope is that, by showing examples of these micro mavens in action, by explaining how they're going about building their brand and their business, you too will be inspired by their achievements and potentially visualise a similar lifestyle-based business for yourself.

This is not a social media book as such, although the topic, as broad as it is, is a common thread throughout.

There are heaps of awesome books available on specific topics associated with the micro maven concept: books that cover social media and content marketing generally, as well as those that zero in more specifically on the likes of Twitter, Facebook, Google+ and LinkedIn. There are books that inspire, motivate and celebrate personal achievement, books that examine the concept of personal branding, and titles that show how you can raise your profile using personal PR and marketing techniques. There are also countless books devoted to running your own small or micro business as well as those that teach you how to generate revenue through speaking, coaching and consulting, plus creating and selling your own information-based products such as e-books and online training courses.

microDOMINATION cuts a swathe through *all* of these areas. It's the one book that looks at how you can develop your own platform, build your personal brand and grow your business with the long-term goal of living a fulfilling and financially independent life. It cherry-picks aspects of social media and content marketing, PR, personal branding and developing a revenue pipeline—all the while motivating and inspiring via a constant stream of real-life stories.

Phewww!

It sounds like a lot (and it is) but, in reality, this book is designed to be an easy read, a broad brush across a landscape that is new

and ever-evolving. I have structured it in such a way as not to overwhelm but to provide a vivid picture of what's possible today, providing examples, key learnings and practical how-to tips along the way.

We haven't got the space to dive deeply into any of the above areas specifically, but that's okay—there's no shortage of good books available (as well as online resources and training programs) if there are specific areas you want a deeper knowledge of.

You may be a blogger who needs help in developing and growing your personal brand.

You may be a subject matter expert with a profile but no platform to speak of.

You may be an active content creator with a name as a rising star in your field, but you're struggling to come to grips with what's next from a monetisation or business perspective.

Or you may work in a corporate job but have a side hustle you would like to take to the next level.

Whatever your situation, I want to open your eyes to the exciting prospects that are out there—the seemingly limitless opportunities to follow your vision. To harness the fire that burns within you; to package your knowledge and your expertise so that you can not only build a strong personal brand but also create a business that helps others and puts you on the path to financial independence.

I can't say for sure, but I suspect that many of the examples in this book—along with the hundreds of micro mavens I have researched along the journey—haven't necessarily had a solid plan to get to where they are currently.

The trailblazers have led the way during a time when many people didn't know of, or understand, blogging or social media. In the early days, the micro mavens experimented a lot (and probably still do to a degree, although many of them seem to be thinking a lot more strategically these days); they took chances and shared

lessons and experiences with each other and their friends and fans. Together, we have all learnt a lot along the way, but we still have some distance to go before this road-less-travelled is nicely laid out for us.

Darren Rowse is one of the world's leading bloggers, with a combined monthly audience around the five million mark for his two blogs—ProBlogger and Digital Photography School. However, in the early days he didn't really know what a blog was. But thanks to Rowse, and others like him, many of whom he has probably influenced or inspired in one form or another, we now better understand what's involved in establishing a sustainable business enterprise around one's profile and reputation.

Why maven?

I have loved the word *maven* ever since author Malcolm Gladwell breathed life into the term in his best-selling book *The Tipping Point*.

Gladwell described three consumer archetypes that need to be involved if an idea, product or message was to spread across society like a virus: he called them mavens, connectors and salesmen.

According to Gladwell, Mavens are the information specialists, the go-to people if we have a question about something; they are constantly involved in the gathering and sharing of information.

Connectors are the people who bring the world together. They operate in a number of different circles and are adept at cultivating relationships with people of influence.

Salesmen are persuasive types who thrive on getting others to act on their recommendations and suggestions. Along with the two other groups, they play an important role in spreading information by word of mouth.

In retrospect, many of the micro mavens I write about in this book might personify Gladwell's definition of maven, but they also have a fair sprinkling of connector and salesmen about them—that's what makes them so interesting!

microMARKETING

Marketing futurist and author Greg Verdino builds on the concept of maven in his 2010 book *microMARKETING*, in which he introduces the term *micromaven* to describe video blogger Steve Garfield and others, including technology expert Chris Pirillo, fashion blogger Jane Aldridge and entrepreneur Gary Vaynerchuk.

Verdino writes: ‘Steve Garfield is a micromedia mogul, a *micromaven*, a Web-savvy *new communicator* who understands that content is a valuable social currency and community is king’.

While there are definite similarities between our respective descriptions of what constitutes a micro maven, especially in terms of content creation and personal influence, I have broadened the notion of the term. My focus is as much on building a business enterprise around one’s personal brand with emphasis on generating multiple income streams including, but not limited to, information products. I also spend considerable time identifying the characteristics many of them share with a view to providing a more definitive picture of what I call the micro maven movement.

Introducing the PR Warrior

Let me introduce you to a chap known as the PR Warrior on the front-line of the communications revolution—I know the subject well ... *because it’s me!*

In the early to mid 2000s, I was one of two founding partners in a marketing PR firm called Spark Communications. My profile outside the immediate PR industry was negligible. Yes, I was known sporadically in marketing circles because I had co-founded what went on to become one of the first creative PR hotshops in Australia, plus we had also established a brand experience agency called Ignition Marketing. This in itself was quite unusual for a PR firm and all very new and cutting edge at the time—we quickly won a series of major consumer brands as clients and, as a result, our agency was noticed quickly and was talked about within the industry. But apart from presenting at an occasional marketing conference and

contributing some articles or columns to the local industry trade journals, in the broader business world I was Mr Invisible.

However, that all changed when I started blogging in mid 2007. Not immediately, mind you, but it set in train a series of events that has resulted in you holding this book.

I was already on LinkedIn at this point (I joined in 2005) and made the move to Twitter in 2007. Since then I have steadily built my platform via my blog (www.prwarrior.com), Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook—along with the occasional podcast and online video thrown in for good measure.

Then, over time, two things happened. One, I was asked to speak to groups about this thing called social media and, secondly, the media (traditional and web-based) started contacting me, either to contribute a quote or two for stories, or a column piece under my own name. I was also regularly interviewed by various bloggers.

The combination of public speaking plus media exposure was a real boon for my profile but, more importantly, in tandem with my PR Warrior blog, it helped me build *authority* in an industry where there is no shortage of smart, talented and experienced experts.

What's the difference between an expert and an authority?

An expert knows a lot about a particular topic, and there is hardly a dearth of them. Typically, we aspire to become an expert in our field—it's often something we strive for, whether professional or otherwise. And there is nothing wrong with that: it's a good thing!

An authority, however, is someone people listen to, take notice of, recommend to others and buy more readily from—and there aren't anywhere near as many of them in most fields. An authority is someone the media comes to when they want a quote for an article, a person whom bloggers and podcasters

want to interview. An authority is someone the marketplace trusts and respects—their blog posts and articles are shared; their tweets are re-tweeted; people watch their videos and listen to their podcasts.

As a definition from Merriam-Webster dictionary suggests, a person with authority has ‘the power to influence or command thought, opinion or behavior’. In short, an authority stands head and shoulders above the throng of experts. They’re visible, influential, trusted and talked about. More often than not, their reputation leads to opportunities that translate into business revenue.

In the early days, I spoke for nothing. Many times I sat on expert panels and I gave keynote speeches at conferences and at regular events run by professional organisations and industry associations, with audiences ranging from CEOs, non-profit executives, company directors, advertising people, small business owners and start-up entrepreneurs. Occasionally I gave workshops for which I got paid but, by and large, I was learning my craft, getting noticed, driving people back to my blog, building my LinkedIn network and growing my Twitter following.

As the blog’s audience grew bigger and recognition ensued, I saw my personal influence grow.

Looking back now, I see that the PR Warrior blog—along with my growing Twitter following in particular—was the foundation of my platform. This is not why I started the blog in the first place, but it is how I look at it now (and have done so for a couple years). We look at the concept of platform later in this book.

In September 2011, Brad Howarth wrote in online business magazine *SmartCompany.com.au*: ‘Trevor Young has built PR Warrior into one of the world’s foremost showcases of what can be achieved at the intersection of public relations and social media’.

Today, I am represented by a leading speakers’ bureau and I get paid well for speaking engagements. A highlight in 2012 was an eight-date national tour for a global insurance brand (I also wrote

an e-book for them based on my road show presentation). This multi-date job led to an overseas keynote presentation in Bangkok.

Since embarking on this path, I have established another communications consulting business, subsequently merging it 18 months later with the Melbourne office of Edelman, the world's biggest PR firm. More tellingly, due to the opportunities that have come my way as a result of blogging and speaking, I have returned to my entrepreneurial roots, only this time I'm building a diversified mini-enterprise—a hybrid consulting, training and publishing business.

Today, in addition to speaking, I also hold training workshops and events; I coach and mentor start-up entrepreneurs and budding micro mavens; I consult to a select group of progressive organisations; I develop training programs and create content for myself and others. And obviously I also scored myself a deal with major publisher John Wiley & Sons to write this book.

I tell you this not to brag (not my style) but to explain firsthand how opportunities—paid and otherwise—have the potential to start materialising once you embark on the micro maven path. I have experienced it, and continue to do so on a regular basis. Not, however, that I knew all this when I started. But with the benefit of hindsight—and from spending thousands of hours studying others and being involved in the space personally—I've been able to stitch things together so it makes some semblance of sense.

Bottom line: over the journey I have discovered what is potentially my true calling, that of a teacher and educator. While I still consult across the PR and marketing communications universe (these days skewed to social media and content marketing), I am now following a parallel path teaching and helping others through my speaking, training and writing. After more than 20 years as a practising PR consultant, I have been able to change course and hit the refresh button on my career. I know I'm not the only person to want to do that!

But enough of the PR Warrior—this book is seriously jam-packed with meaty examples of far more talented people from around the globe who are channelling their knowledge and their zeal into truly

awesome micro maven packages. These people are in many ways remarkable. They're doing noteworthy things, living their lives on their own terms, creating and making money from their ideas, their passion and their sheer will and brainpower.

When I started to look around at the people I followed, whether via their blogs, books, videos or podcasts—or more likely a combination of any or all of the above—I started to recognise some commonalities between them. Then I spread the net wider still to areas not necessarily in my field of vision—beyond business, marketing, PR and social media—and examined subject matter experts from across a range of different fields. Still, similar patterns and characteristics among these people began to emerge.

Then in 2011 I attended BlogWorld's New Media Expo in Los Angeles and quickly latched on to the fact things were moving way beyond blogging to serious multimedia content creation and, broadening from that, bloggers (and podcasters and vodcasters) were starting to build impressive personal profiles in their niche and beyond.

Closer to home, I looked at what I was doing myself as the PR Warrior; how in my own small way I was developing a profile and growing in influence and, as a result, attracting opportunities that in all probability wouldn't have been open to me had I not gone down this path. I discovered patterns were forming and a definite trend was emerging on a global scale, and with the kind of speed one expects in today's hyper-connected world.

To some people who have been operating deep inside the bowels of the social web for some time—established bloggers and active social media enthusiasts, for example—this trend may already be evident to you. To the broader world, however, it's a definite eye-opener—the notion you can harness your expertise and your passion, develop a online platform, build your personal brand and grow a sustainable business enterprise around it, literally from the comfort of your own home and without much in the way of financial investment. This is the stuff that makes people sit up and take notice!

Too many bloggers, I think, tend to focus just on the blog itself and how they can boost traffic in order to monetise it. However, eyes open and ears cock when bloggers are confronted with the realisation it's not the blog as such that makes the money, but the brand you build as a result of producing worthwhile content and connecting with a broader audience using social media tools. It's the brand, or reputation, that attracts allies, advocates and supporters, and that ultimately leads to sales, partnership opportunities and personal benefits.

And finally, as I give a lot of talks to organisations and business groups around the country, I'm often intrigued to learn that top-line bloggers such as Chris Brogan, Darren Rowse, Marie Forleo, Mari Smith and Gary Vaynerchuk (all of whom appear in these pages) are simply not known. Granted, they're not exactly household names, but I'm surprised that people, in business circles particularly, do not know who at least some of these people are and what they have been able to achieve.

So who *will* benefit from this book?

microDOMINATION will appeal to anyone with a passion for, expertise in or knowledge of a particular niche area, topic or subject, who is keen to increase their profile in that space with the aim of developing a sustainable living from the personal brand they build.

This includes a range of different types of subject matter experts, such as:

- *Vocational professionals* including marketing consultants, financial planners, e-publishing gurus, property investment advisers, business coaches, fitness instructors, lawyers, physiotherapists, management specialists, WordPress designers and app developers.
- *Lifestyle experts or hobbyists in any number of fields* such as dating, interior design, health and fitness, sewing, dog training, vintage fashion, vegetarian cooking, minimalist living and budget travel.

- *Bloggers, podcasters and vodcasters* including anyone who has a growing online platform in a particular space and is keen to kick things up a notch and start making money from, or building a business around, their expertise.

Who *won't* benefit from this book?

It's important to acknowledge what *microDOMINATION* is not. This is not a get-rich-quick book. Seriously. It's not about making your fortune working just four hours a week and selling millions of dollars of products via the internet while sipping margaritas by the pool. Like anything in life, hard work and a laser-like focus are required if you want to break through and make a name for yourself in your chosen field, and thus reap the rewards accordingly.

If you want to make a million dollars quickly and with minimal effort, please, this book is not for you.