



DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

SESSION 146

CREATING CONTENT WITH A PURPOSE

WITH SARAH GILMAN

BETH: Hello, this is Beth Brodovsky, and welcome to Driving Participation. Today I have Sarah Gilman, who is the director of the National Resource Center on Lupus, with me. Sarah and I met on an online chat recently, and I loved the comments that she made, and I knew I had to meet her and bring the things that she knows and the things she's working on to all of you. She is a specialist in content strategy, and I know it can be really confusing about what content strategy is and how it's different than content marketing, so she is coming on today to help us clarify that and understand what those things are and how to use them. So, Sarah, thank you so much for joining me today.

SARAH: Thank you, Beth, for having me with you today. I'm so excited for us to chat a little bit more.

BETH: I always love to start off asking people how in the heck they ended up wandering into this world. So how did you get your start in nonprofit communications?

SARAH: Well, I'm actually a public health program manager by training and have spent about 15 years in the world of public health, but I also have a really deep personal passion for education and for writing. So when this opportunity came along at the Lupus Foundation of America almost four years ago, I really jumped at the chance to combine all of my passions into one world. My role at the LFA really focuses on sort of the content strategy piece as you mentioned, but what I love about content strategy is that in essence, it's really sort of project management for content. So it's actually a really great fit for me.

BETH: One of the things that I'm always interested in is a lot of people that work in nonprofit organizations come in with a deep professional knowledge in





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their native subject matter, shall we say. You know, public health for you. How challenging was it to bridge, to kind of jump across from sort of maybe a more scientific or subject matter expertise into this maybe more you could call it marketing side of things?

SARAH: You know, in my case it wasn't a challenge at all. It was more of a relief.

BETH: That's great.

SARAH: The reality is that one of the things that I've always loved about public health is taking really obscure or complicated research and then translating that into concrete findings in simple language that anybody could take and use at any time and so for me, this was really perfect to sort of take the knowledge that I spent years accumulating in the public health area and to finally have an outlet and a way to help people to have those same skills in a simple way.

BETH: So in the work that you do, the question that I always love to really dig into with people is this idea of participation. It's what we talk about on this show all the time. So in this work that you're doing, trying to communicate this public health issue, how does participation show up? What do you guys pay attention to in a way that helps your organization thrive?

SARAH: That's a really good question. I agree that I think it's different for every organization. So for us, our mission is really to improve the quality of life for all people that have been affected by lupus, and we do that really through three main areas and that's research, education and advocacy. So for us, participation is really about watching people go from simply being exposed to messages in any one of these areas to actually being actors in all three of these areas.

BETH: What do you mean by that, actors in the areas?

SARAH: So depending on the area, so for me, I'll just focus on education, but in education, you know, we can send a link to our website app and somebody might





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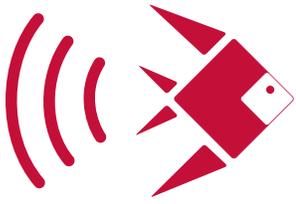
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see it, but what I want to see when I think about participation is that somebody not only learned what is lupus, but also took a self-assessment to see if they might have any of the symptoms of lupus or if somebody read a piece of content that they thought was really good, that they signed up for our newsletter so they could continue to receive that in an ongoing basis. I think it's different depending on what you want. In our research program, one of the main things that we look for are people seeing that we have opportunities for participation in clinical trials and if they're seeing them, are they then signing up for clinical trials because that's an area that's tremendously important and we're always looking for people to understand that they can shape lupus research by choosing to participate in those trials.

BETH: I love how you are really clear on what are the metrics that matter in your organization. We talk all the time, especially when we talk about participation, it's so easy to get kind of swayed by what I call interim metrics. Look at how many people read this article. Woohoo, and let's report on that we got 10,000 people to read this article, but if that's not a metric that proves to the world or your funders or that you actually have seen that it generates positive health outcomes, that's a movement metric, an interim metric, but it's not really a terminal metric of something that actually shows the positive results of the work that you're doing. It just shows movement, and so I love that you know in your organization which are the things to track to say we're moving in the right direction and which are the things you're tracking to say we've gotten there.

SARAH: Yeah, I think that's tremendously important. We love the idea of sort of creating content in a series and packaging that content as a series so that as people go through their journey, let's say that they're going through a diagnosis journey, they sort of move through each of those pieces of content and we can measure that. We can see that people are going, let's say, from a piece of content on checking symptoms to a piece of content on preparing for your first doctor's appointment and going from there to another piece of content about now I've gotten a diagnosis, what do I do now. So those are all really important things





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because even though we can't actually be with a person and follow that person and know that for sure we're improving their health, we can follow their digital footprint so to say and that gives us some sort of a picture of the fact that we are making a difference in their lives.

BETH: I'm sure that people are listening are going, "How do you track that?" and I'm going to get back to that, but before we jump into sort of that detailed level, let's make sure that we get everyone that's listening sort of on the same page with what we're talking about when it comes to creating this kind of content that has this kind of a purpose. So let's start off with just the very simplest question. What constitutes content?

SARAH: So I've spent a lot of time thinking about this because I was a public health person who sort of fell into content, and one of the first things that I did was to go out into the broader content community to attend content marketing conferences and really try to figure out what is this thing really about and then try to apply it to public health, and at first I thought, "Oh, content is just right. It's just words," and that's content, but what I've learned over time is that content is really an experience. It's an experience that you direct towards your audience, you encourage your audience to have and that experience could be an article, it could be a video, it could be a podcast, but at the end of the day, it's an experience that you want them to have. The second sort of characteristic that a piece of content should have, but doesn't always have is that it should ideally both be informative and useful and that is what I call good content. I think a lot of the time when we talk about content marketing, we just automatically say it's content that informs or it's content that informs people and that they can use to improve their lives or improve their businesses or whatever it is they're trying to achieve, but the reality is that content is just an experience you direct to your audience. Good content is an experience that's educational and useful to them.

BETH: Oh, I love it. So I would love to know what your take is on the brass ring, the thing that people always are shooting for, the viral video, the humorous type





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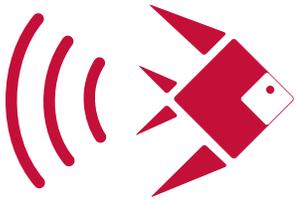
of content that we see so much of out of there. What's your opinion on the value of that?

SARAH: You know, I think it really depends on the message that you're trying to drive and the tone that you're going for. From my perspective, setting up the Lupus Foundation of America we always have to have a very consistent tone and our tone is clear, expert, urgent and trustworthy. So for us, you know, sending out I don't know, a viral video of an elephant trying to take a bath in a bucket of water, which is personally one of my favorite things to see, isn't really going to achieve what we want to achieve for our audience, so I think you really have to think carefully about what from an organizational perspective, I may love this as a person, but from an organizational perspective, is this helping me to meet my organization's strategic objectives and it doesn't mean we have to be serious all the time. We can have fun with things. We recently posted, I think it was last year, we posted a video for a fundraising challenge of the entire staff of the foundation having a water balloon fight with each other and it was so fun, but it didn't mean that we had to be boring, but it does mean you have to think about what are the objectives we're trying to achieve and does this help us achieve those objectives.

BETH: I think that is so important and I actually just talked about things similar to that about personality and tone and how you be more visual, how you use visual content on episode 142 of the podcast. So if anybody hasn't gone back and listened to that one, that's something where we very specifically talk about that idea of you know what is your personality and what are the ways that you could create content that would align with that. I think what you're saying is so important, that it doesn't mean that you don't have to have fun, but you have to think about your goal before you think about answering a board member's request that you come up with the next ALS ice bucket challenge.

SARAH: Absolutely, and I can tell you as a chronic disease organization you know, it hasn't necessary come from board members, but we have heard, "Hey, you should do the next ice bucket challenge," and at the end of the day, you know, we





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really need to think about is that gonna achieve the goals that we've set.

BETH: Right, and what many people don't know is that the ice bucket challenge didn't come from ALS. It actually came from the community and just blossomed there. That's one of the interesting things that sometimes these things can happen in their own space, but as an organization it may not be directly aligned. I think they did a really good job of embracing it, not shutting it down, but also not taking ownership of it.

SARAH: Yeah, I would totally agree with that. I think they really embraced the idea that rising tides lift all ships and instead of saying, "This didn't come from us, and we're not gonna participate and we hope that will fizzle," or "We'll let them do them," cause I doubt that they would ever say something like, "We hope this will fizzle," but I do think you know in a different organization someone might have said, "You do you and we'll focus on us." I think it's really great that they actually listened and said, "Let's participate and let's be a part of this."

BETH: Right, and it's rare. It's hard especially when you put money into your brand or figured out your tone. When you said what your tone is, like you rattled those things off like right off the tip of your tongue. You didn't even have to think about what your organization's personality was. When organizations have put that time and effort to making sure that everyone that works there can do that, like letting something like that happen can be very, very uncomfortable.

SARAH: Yeah, I would totally agree. It takes a tremendous amount of time and resources and to be clear, I never participated in that branding process. So it's really remarkable, I think this is really evidence that anybody at any point in the organization should be able to rattle off those four sort of key characteristics of our tone, and I think it is because our marketing team spent so much time and effort talking about the importance of having a consistent tone, and I know that as a content person where it really comes into play, and where I really think about it dozens of times a day is when I'm editing a piece of content or making a decision about whether to publish or not publish a piece of content. Those two





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scenarios are scenarios where I really have to think carefully about whether this is part of our tone, whether it speaks the way we want to be able to speak to our constituents.

BETH: It's so huge. I talk about this a lot when we do branding for people and when I teach branding is that the purpose of it, you know, a lot of times people think it's to look good and to be visually consistent, which is all true, but those things are that hook really at the heart of it. As I say, it's like putting cattle chutes around things so that you know you can ride your bicycle between the fire hydrant and the driveway and it helps people that interact with you really understand who you are, but the side benefit that people underestimate a lot is every single person in their organization when presented with a decision about whether to do something or not do something has a super clear framework. Imagine how much faster I bet you can think about how much faster that decision is for you now, about whether or not to publish something or how to do an edit because you have a framework that you go, "is this in or is this out?"

SARAH: Absolutely. I mean it's so helpful and it really reduces conflict in general throughout the organization because we're all on the same page. If something comes through my door and it's not the right tone, that's all I have to say. I mean, we may have a conversation about whether or not I'm right about whether or not it is the right tone, but I think that as long as something is clearly not the right tone, i.e. elephant taking a bath in a bucket, everybody is in agreement and everybody understands this is just not going to be a good fit for the foundation.

BETH: It's so great because I mean people see that all the time with staff. Smaller organizations often see it with the board coming to them and saying, "Oh my gosh, we should do 'whatever.' Why don't we have a Snapchat filter?" The problem is without those guidelines, without those cattle chutes, you're sort of left going, "Uh," and stammering through why it shouldn't be done, which tends to read as, "I don't like your idea, and I don't want to do it," as opposed to having this structure, having a guideline around your content that basically says, "Well,





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here you can see this guideline as clearly as I can. Do you think that this fits in? This says this to me,” and it makes those conversations faster and just like you said, I love that idea of less conflict. It reduces those points where you have to find your constantly negotiating and convincing people or advocating for something.

SARAH: Yeah, and the other thing that we found really helpful is creating or using because there are actually existing tools out there, a checklist. Just a really simple one-pager that when we developed it, we actually created a checklist and a content guide and the content guide has a number of things, but one of the sections that I love about it is it says instead of, for example, lupus with a capital L, we say lupus with a small l. That’s just a small example of, instead of patients suffering from lupus, we say people who have lupus. So it’s really a good way to also clarify this is what I mean when I’m talking about the tone. These are specific examples of how you can write to get that tone across and here’s a checklist that includes some of those things and may also include some best practices in writing, like having a strong call to action and putting your main message up top and having simple headlines. Here’s a checklist that you can use before you send it out to anybody else, whether that’s an editor or an approver to make sure that you hit all of those points, and what’s really great is if they haven’t hit those points, there’s no argument. It’s clear as day because you can go through that checklist and you can point to that section in the content guide and you can say this is what we believe, this is what through a lot of hard work and research we come to and this is where this report needs to be improved and 9.9 times out of 10 everybody understands that and wants to improve their piece of content. So for us it’s really been a non-issue.

BETH: That is fabulous, and it’s such good advice because that consistency over time, it’s not just about using the right color. It’s about you can’t have in one document lupus this way and lupus the other way. You don’t want to have that word “suffering” sneak out in there if your entire brand message is about support and health and not looking at the world from a negative perspective of an





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inability to change things.

SARAH: Exactly, that's exactly right.

BETH: It's funny for people to not realize that words matter. Like words mean something and over time they build up into becoming who you are. If you haven't taken the time to think through this, the thing I always tell people is you have a brand. You just may not have been curating it and shepherding that brand, but with in-cautious language, over time you're letting that determine who you are.

SARAH: Yeah, I would absolutely agree with you on that. It's really important to pay attention to the words that you use, and we've spent a lot of time articulating what words we want to use and how we want to use them and in what context we want to use them and it's certainly been an investment in terms of time and energy, but it pays off in spades.

BETH: So another thing I wanted to ask you is there are these two terms: content strategy and content marketing. It's really sometimes hard to understand; what's the difference between the two of them?

SARAH: So that's a really good question. Let me start by talking a little bit about content strategy and then you know, we can talk about content marketing as well. Content strategy is really about what's the substance of your content? What is it that you're gonna write about? What don't you have? What do you need more? It's about your structure, so how is your content prioritized and organized. It's about how you make decisions about content and it's about your workflow. So how do you make sure that you're addressing your content needs effectively? Content marketing, which is much more popular and many more people know is really about how do you package and promote, sometimes create, but mostly how do you package and promote your content to achieve your organizational goals. So the way I tend to think of it is content marketing is about how do you package and promote your content to achieve your organizational goals and





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content strategy is about how do you make the right content in the right way at the right time so that your content marketers can do the best job they possibly can with it.

BETH: Right, so it's sort of like the difference of what are you going to do and what are you going to do with it.

SARAH: Yeah, that's a great way. That's a really great way to explain it.

BETH: I love that, and that's really helpful because the term sounds so familiar and honestly both terms are fairly new in the marketing world. I mean, the concepts have existed for a long time, but that terminology being something really recognizable is not that many years old. One of the things I like to do here is let's create a safe space to talk about the stuff that we think we understand, but we're not totally sure.

SARAH: Yeah, and I think I'm a prime example of that. Coming from the public health sector, I can tell you that content strategy is not something that is talked about at all in public health. We might have other words for what we're trying to do, but content strategy is really not something that has even come up at this point in time and so for me, it was really a process to educate myself about content strategy, but as a program manager, what really resonates with me about content strategy is that at the end of the day it's about not making life harder than it has to be. You want to put out good content. You want to use that content to achieve your goals. So how do we do that without making our lives any harder than they have to be?

BETH: Yes, answer that question. How do you make your content as easily as possible because when we're thinking about content, we're thinking about things like all of the words and pages on your website to white papers, to the stats that go into an infographic to blog posts, to all kinds of different, there's so many different types of content, how do you make all of that happen and still make





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your life as easy as possible?

SARAH: You know, I think there's a lot of different ways to do that and we could do a monthlong daily series talking about that, but for me, I can tell you what it sort of boils down to for me. For me, it really boils down to managing your work flow, making sure and by that I mean really plan your content so you're not reacting to fires every single day and be strategic about how you're planning your content and it also means getting organizational buy in from high up. So we've had incredible support from our CEO as well as from all of our VPs really investing in content strategy or content marketing, and it has been incredible to have that level of support because it's allowed us to do things like you know, for example for me to be able to attend a content marketing conference. I have a master's in public health and in program management. I'm certainly a subject matter expert, but for somebody to say you know we want to invest our limited resources as an organization and have you go and understand what the cutting edge is right now in content strategy and content marketing and then we want you to spend your limited time back here translating what all of that means in terms of public health education and public health programs has been invaluable and without somebody at the top really supporting me, that would have been impossible for our organization.

BETH: That is so huge. Another thing that comes up a lot when I talk to people is the idea of participation really, the success in that coming out of the spirit of collaborations. So content is one of those areas. It's a boatload of work. So I'm curious in your organization and in your work, how does collaboration show up either within your organization or outside of your organization to help support your creation of content?

SARAH: Yeah, I mean collaboration is so important and in the area of content, you certainly can't do anything in a vacuum. So everything that we do is not only team-based, but it's also across teams as well. At our foundation we tend to, what we call education content, which is really the help content for people





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with lupus tends to be housed under the education and research department, but the overarching marketing activities happen under the marketing activities department, but as you can imagine, for somebody who has lupus, most of the content that they're going to want to hear about is gonna be health education or health-oriented content. So we, our two organizations work together. I'm sorry. Our two departments work together a lot and one of the things that I am really the proudest of that we've been able to achieve at the foundation is that we have gone from having you know regular updates where the two departments meet and say I'm working on this and you know, ER, educational research says we're working on this and marketing says great, we're working on this and maybe we can help you with this other thing. So really involving both departments at the outset of a project and having really hands on meetings every week where we sit down, look at a detailed workflow, we're all on collaboration, online collaboration tools and we sit down and we say this is the project. From the outset, how can we collaborate on this and what does it mean that this piece of content is going to end up looking like and that is really special I think to be able to have two departments bringing a piece of content from A all the way to Z as opposed to A to N and then saying, "OK, now it's your turn. You guys take it away."

BETH: Exactly, and I'm curious. I'm obsessed with tools. What collaboration tools are you using?

SARAH: OK, so this is my big chance because I have to say second to my husband, my child and my dog, my true love is Trello. I love Trello! I can't talk about it enough. It is, the way I explain Trello to people who have not used it, is that Trello is as if a Post-it and an Excel spreadsheet got married.

BETH: That is a great description! I love it!

SARAH: And Trello was born. For me, I think I tried so many different collaboration tools. I'm a big fan of them. We're often not all in the office at the same point in time. I don't like having my inbox cluttered up with emails. For me,





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Trello is perfect because if I sign in once a week or I sign in three times a week, it's all right there on the Trello board, all of our conversations, all the content is just right there. We actually have a couple different Trello boards that really take a piece of content all the way through from idea all the way to having been promoted and posted. Once it gets promoted and posted, that's really not the end of the conversation because we continue having conversations with our marketing department about how that piece of content performed, what they heard from other people. If we put it out on social, what kind of comments it got. What level of engagement that piece saw. It's a great process.

BETH: Another factor is in having content that really connects with people is understanding what people you're trying to connect with and one of the challenges I would think in public health is you know, how do you narrow that audience down to a level where you're creating valuable content that is understandable and connects and drives that next action without making it, balancing that broadness of I want everyone to learn this and know it with really getting it narrow enough so that the people you desperately want to and need to know this information are connected with it. How do you target your audience? How do you define what you're focusing on?

SARAH: That is such a good question and I think it's one that we have to ask ourselves with every single piece of content that we produce and it's a conversation that we have at least daily because in lupus, and I think this is probably true of any chronic disease, there are so many people that are impacted. You know, you've got adults who have the disease, you got children who have the disease, you have caregivers, people who have the disease, you have people who don't have the disease who don't know anybody who has the disease, but who you're trying to teach about the affects of it so that they'll care about your cause. So there's a lot of different audiences and I think what we try to keep in mind as we write a piece is that if you're writing for everybody, you're writing for nobody. Sometimes you have to make really hard choices. Sometimes if we want to write a piece that's aimed at caregivers, maybe the same information is applicable to





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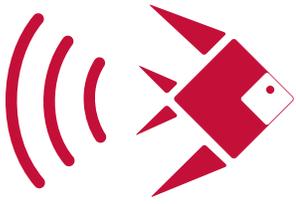
adults with lupus. Maybe that same information is applicable to children with lupus, but those are three totally different audiences and the way that we write for each of those audiences has to be different. So rather than take that one piece and say we wrote one piece. It's for caregivers, it's for children and it's for adults and we hope you all read it and get what you need from it, what we do is we say okay, we're gonna write one piece and this piece, we actually did this recently, this piece is gonna be called caregiving - what you need to know and it's gonna be aimed at caregivers, and we're gonna speak directly to caregivers and in the future, we're gonna write another piece that's aimed at adults with lupus and then we're gonna write another piece that aimed at children with lupus, which as you can imagine is almost a completely, the concepts are the same, but it's really a different piece of content. So it's about re-purposing your piece I think and just continually asking that question. I am always surprised that you know we always have to ask ourselves that question every day with every piece of content and actually we have a team of writers at the foundation and one of the things that they do is they ask themselves, there's a tool called the clear communications index and it was developed by Centers for Disease Control Prevention and part of this tool is to ask who are you writing for, what is your main message, what is your main call to action, what is the main thing that you want this person to be able to do after they read this piece and what is the literacy level of the person who is reading this? Before any writer, before we'll look at any piece that a writer has written, those four questions at minimum need to be answered.

BETH: I think that would be a good guide for anyone writing anything. I mean as you and I were actually talking a little bit before this started about how left to our own devices, we all focus on trying to impress everyone and all of a sudden the four-syllable words come out and the nonsense words like maximize.

SARAH: Optimize.

BETH: Optimize and empowerment. That's my favorite nonprofit word is we're gonna empower a community. What does that mean? So really thinking about





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does that mean something, I always tell this story about my son had a French exchange student that came over here in high school and he sent me a message on Facebook, and I was like, “Oh, this is so exciting,” and I emailed back or sent a Facebook message back to him that said, “I’m looking forward to meeting you,” thinking those are all very simple, normal, clear words and my son later told me he had no idea what I was talking about because this kid’s grasp of English wasn’t actually that great, and when you’re just learning the words, looking forward means something literal and he couldn’t understand why I would be looking forward. I was like, “Wow, I didn’t even realize that looking forward was, what is that, a metaphor,” there’s a word for what that is, but the things that we don’t even realize in the most normal, most common language can be lost on somebody and that’s obviously between two different languages, but you know, there’s plenty of people that live in the same country that on the surface seem like they speak the same language, but don’t.

SARAH: Yeah, I mean I think that it just sort of goes back to knowing your audience and not ever really taking the easy way out and saying I’m writing for everybody because you’re really not serving your audience when you do that and it’s very rare where you’ll have a piece where you say I am writing for everybody where that piece is really gonna be a standout piece. It’s much more common to say I’m gonna be tailored, but I’m gonna be really useful and that person will find it incredibly useful and that’s really how you make a strong impact I think.

BETH: Exactly. I had somebody tell me once that you have to trust that the right people will come along in the wake, that if it’s a message that resonates with them that the right people will find it and connect with it.

SARAH: I love that.

BETH: I want to jump back to something you also mentioned. You used the word repurposing and this is something that we talk about a lot. As a creative firm we do a lot of taking something that started out in words and turning it into an





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infographic or taking an infographic and turning it into a video, taking a video and turning it into a podcast. This sort of changing things around. I want to talk about the ways that you repurpose and the difference between repeating the same content, repurposing content in different ways. So how do you guys think about those things?

SARAH: Well, we're really big fans of re-purposing and really just repeating and I think what I mean when I say that is that when you think about repeating a piece of content, it's exactly that. You polish a piece of content, five things I'm gonna do in the new year to improve my health and then next year you publish the exact same piece of content. For me, that's what repeating means. When I say repurposing, what I really mean is that I'm taking that opportunity to re-review the piece, perhaps update it or make it better in some way and then to take that piece and potentially even repackage it. Maybe it was a blog post. Maybe now it's a video or maybe it's an infographic that I've made from the blog post. Maybe it's still a blog post, but I'm peppering in quotes from people that we serve that we've gotten off of social media. Adding a little bit more of a human element to it. So we're really updating, repackaging and then taking that content and you put all that hard effort into and reusing it. Another way that you can repurpose is as I talked about before is just adapting something for a new audience. So if I'm talking about you know, these are the ten most important things that you need to do if you have lupus for adults, I'm gonna really want to repackage that if I'm talking to children, particularly young children and maybe not even use ten. Maybe figure out how I can bring it down to three or five or something that you can tie to one hand. So that's an important distinction, the distinction between re-purposing something and just repeating it, but despite that, I think that repeating content is, I think everybody is on the same page about repurposing content. Repurposing content is great and you know, we should all be trying to do it and if you're not already doing it, you should consider it because it's a great way to really use the resources you worked really hard on and to get benefits in lots of other areas, but repeating is something I think has really been under estimated.





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BETH: Absolutely. I completely agree and I actually love it. I don't know if you remember but when we first planned this, yo9u said something that was like a total "aha" moment for me about motivation. Do you remember what you said?

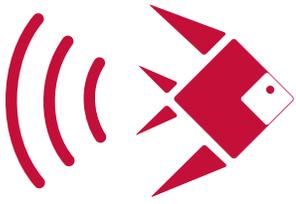
SARAH: No!

BETH: You said, I wrote it down it was so good. You said for motivation to progress to action, repetition is required.

SARAH: Oh yes, of course and that's just the learning process. Right. For me, that was something that was clear to me because of my experience in public health because we're focused on education in public health education so for us, if I'm trying to teach somebody to wash their hands the right way, and there is a right way to wash your hands, we can do a separate podcast about that. You know, I'm gonna ask them to repeat it a number of different times because that's just part of the learning process and that's something that I think advertising, the advertising industry knows really well. I mean, how many times do we sit down to watch a show and see the same ad play, even in that same one- or two-hour time slot. In order for us to be able to recall something and then act on it we need to see it a lot of times, and I think that sometimes content producers, myself included, are so deep in a piece of content or a topic that we think to ourselves, "That's not fresh enough," or "That's not new." I need something that's gonna have impact and we don't realize that people may not remember that we put a piece out because we are not the center of their universe.

BETH: Right, it's so true and I talk about this all the time with people. It's like that curse of being inside, like in the bubble. You're inside this bubble and you get bored, and we're a creative firm. Let me tell you I got a whole bunch of designers out there that do nothing better than say, "Let's do something new and fresh." Like if anybody ever says to you fresh, question it deeply. I'm creative. I mean we love doing new design when there's a purpose for new design, but those fast changes, like making your event look completely different every year. You know,





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changing your logo because you have a new marketing director who wants to put their own spin on it. That kind of stuff happens all the time at organizations because there is a lot of transition amongst staff. Like a new person comes in and goes, “I hate all that stuff.” Basically they kind of like an animal getting used to its new space, they want to be able to say, “I did this.” I always tell people be wary of the resume builders, the people that want to clean stuff up to say that they did that as a project and think about what’s really good for your organization and not just for your organization, but for your community.

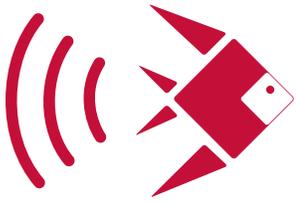
SARAH: Yeah, you know, I think that’s really wise and I don’t think that people necessarily do it with any sort of ill intent or even knowing that they’re doing it. From my perspective, I think people get and even speaking for myself, it’s exciting.

BETH: It’s enthusiasm.

SARAH: Right, and I have to rein myself in all the time, but you know, this year, this is a year that I find myself saying over and over and over again in our meetings at the foundation this is the year for us to make what we have better. You know, we love producing new, and we love making a big splash, but I think that what we really need to be focusing on this year and this has been sort of my party line for the past year and I’ll continue saying it like a broken record over and over again. We need to make what we have even better than it is so that we can use the time and energy that we saved by doing that to doing other things. When you re-purpose and repeat content, if you choose the right content to repurpose and repeat, it will allow you to spend your time and energy creating the right kind of new content instead of saying “I’m gonna do five out of the ten on every piece of content that I create.”

BETH: Exactly. You’re so right, and it’s so easy to like create a blog post, put it up and then turn and face a new direction. What’s next, what’s next? You end up with a trail of podcasts or blog posts or articles and newsletters behind you that





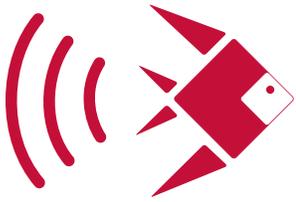
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never get looked at again, and I'm trying to encourage people to before they even start creating that next piece of content, write down three ways that they're gonna use it. Like so one approach is to go back over and look at what you have buried there. I guarantee people, you will find, "Oh my gosh, look at this." You'll find these gems and great stuff. We just had this happen in my, just so you know, I'm not beyond making this mistake myself. We hired an expensive writer to write some new content and we weren't exactly loving what was coming out and went back and we're looking and researching something totally different, and I found this thing that I wrote that was perfect. I thought, oh my gosh. I can't believe I went and did something new when I had stuff, but it's easy. Content gets buried. So really think about that and I know we need to wrap up now so I just kind of wanted to close. Since you did just give one gem, normally I would say close with your one best idea, but I think I'm gonna ask you to close with something different. How do you keep track of your content in all of your archives? How do you store it in a way that when you do want to repurpose something, it hasn't disappeared?

SARAH: OK, we probably over-document as opposed to under-document our content, but I'd rather do that so that it hasn't disappeared. What we do is there's really three main ways I think that we document our content and not only just going out of our way in terms, it's all just part of our normal workflow. It's just that we developed a workflow that enables us to be able to track our content down at multiple steps. So it doesn't take extra energy to do any of this. The first layer I think is really through our writers. So we have people usually in-house, but we might have freelancers who write a piece and they send us the very beginning of that piece is a word document. So they're saving that word document in our internal files. Almost every organization has their own network or internal filing system and so that's sort of the most obvious place to store your content, is to have a designated space where you store those, but the second space and I have to say for me, the second space has been more useful, is on the actual collaboration tool that we use. So on Trello, every time that a writer writes a piece, whenever it's ready for review or approval, it goes right on Trello. If you're





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using a different tool, that's fine. I mean as long as you can attach a document to it you're fine. That enables you to be able to at a glance see not only that piece of content, but every version of that piece of content that came before it, every conversation you ever had about that piece of content is right there. It's not buried in emails that you have to search and track. For me I think that's really been the most useful way, but the third way is through you know what we call content management system and it's basically just, it's essentially the back end of your website. When you input your content into the website, it's all retained right there. So if you manage content in any way, then you would know how to go into the content management system and take that content out.

BETH: Is yours a, what's your content management system?

SARAH: Well, we used to use Expression Engine and we recently switched over from Expression Engine over to Craft, which is wonderful.

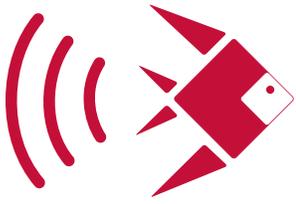
BETH: Wow, it's one I never heard of.

SARAH: Craft is wonderful. It's very simple. It's incredibly intuitive and I mean Expression Engine was great, too, but when we started using Craft it was really kind of a revelation for us.

BETH: That's really good to know. My only other question about that is we use WordPress, and I find that unless I know what I'm looking for it can sometimes be hard to find because what shows up in the listing is whatever you put into the title. Do you do things like, does Craft do a good job of handling tagging? How are you able to search in the content management system to find what you want?

SARAH: It does do a really wonderful job in terms of the tagging part of it and the other feature that I love about it, we had this I think in Expression Engine too, but the other feature is that if you're logged in, you can just navigate around your website as you normally would and then hit a button and it will immediately take you to the back end.





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BETH: That's great.

SARAH: That's a really nice feature. I think at the end of the day, being able to find your content is less really about the content management system that you're using and more about how you set up both your work system in terms of how you develop and save your documents and then how did you set up your website. You know, was it set up in a way that's sort of intuitive? Are the tags things that really account for and organize every piece of content that you have. It's a little bit of, it takes organization, but I think that you know, anybody with at least an internal filing system and a content management system can make it work, and I can't speak to the benefit of collaboration tools enough.

BETH: Fabulous. Sarah, thank you so much for all of your insight and sharing everything that you know and have been working on with both me and our nonprofit community.

SARAH: Thank you so much for having me. I really appreciate the opportunity to come talk and learn from you. The questions that you asked are really thought-provoking, and I've learned a lot as well.

BETH: Oh, I so appreciate it. Well, thanks everyone for listening, and we'll see you next time.

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