

THINK TO STAND OUT

5 Expert Practices that Get You Creating Fresh and Effective Content

Understanding and then leaning into your own unique methods and approach to how you practice your expertise is rocket fuel for your expert-based business.

It yields stand-out content for:

- signature talks,
- online courses,
- books,
- single-and multi-day events,
- coaching programs,
- masterminds and more.

So how do you get to your own unique and remarkable content?

By engaging in practices that have you discovering and developing fresh approaches,

... by understanding and developing the pieces into a methodology,

... by relying on--and pushing--your thinking.

When you do this, your expertise shines and your authority grows. Here are 5 expert practices to get you started.



TEACH
what you do

1 Get serious about being curious.

UNDERSTAND YOUR METHODS

Stand-out experts schedule regular time to THINK on their own practice of their expertise. That means digging into processes, tools, strategies, frameworks--anything that can reveal more about getting effective results and finding new approaches.

During a “thinking” session, it’s important that you write down/journal on what you’re thinking about. Focus on a question from the list below, and then go where it takes you. Don’t shortcut this. Do the work. Push a little farther even when you think you’re done.

You’re courting curiosity here. Follow the trail to where it takes you.

Questions to jumpstart your curiosity and thinking:

1. Why do the people who want the transformation you’re offering want it? (and then ask why again...and again)
2. Why is one approach that you often use in teaching particularly effective? (Or why is another approach not effective?)
3. How could you get the results that one technique yields with different tools/constraints/starting points?
4. Why are some of your students getting results while others are not?
5. What is the hardest part of what you teach for new students? And why is it hard? And what could make it easier? Should it be easier?
6. Why do students often want to focus on A when they should be focusing on B? How can you make B the starting point?

2

Be a documentarian

TRACK YOUR METHODS

In his book *Show Your Work*, Austin Kleon tells artists to: “Start a work journal. . . Keep a scrapbook. Take a lot of photographs of your work at different stages in your process.” He notes that “this isn’t about making art, it’s about simply keeping track of what’s going on around you.”

Here’s why being a documentarian of your work-in-progress matters as you develop courses and products based on your expertise:

Documenting your process as you go creates breadcrumbs you’ll use as you develop a signature methodology.

A first step in developing a signature methodology is to understand just how you do your work in a unique and effective way. In the absence of a work-in-progress “scrapbook,” you’ll need to deconstruct already completed work. The practice of being a “documentarian” will also encourage and guide you to understand parts of your process that might be intuitive (and, thus, previously unexamined).

The other thing you’ll have when you do this work is a ready supply of examples, illustrations, and stories that can supplement and enrich your teaching.



3 Court happy accidents

DISCOVER NEW METHODS AND IDEAS

Stand-out thinkers and teachers need to not only teach essentials of a topic well--they should be a source of new methods and ideas.

One way to discover these new methods and ideas is to do things that break old patterns of doing and thinking, to risk getting it wrong, to court happy accidents.

Set aside time to experiment, to try things that might not work out: things that might require you to backtrack OR things that might require you to move forward in a new way in order to counteract an accident.

Do this so that you can happen upon new results, discover new techniques, and more deeply understand the work you and your students do in your area of expertise.

- If you're a creative, try a technique or a product combo or an approach you wouldn't usually consider.
- If you're a coach, think through new dialogues, practice with different sequencing, try new communication tools.
- If you're an expert, challenge conventional wisdom on a project.

Ruth Wakefield, owner of the Toll House Inn, created the quint-essential American cookie without intending to. One day in 1930, while baking a batch of chocolate cookies, she realized she was out of baking chocolate. Thinking that it would melt and create a chocolate cookie, she used a broken-up bar of Nestle's semi-sweet chocolate she had on hand. The Toll House chocolate chip cookie was born.

4

Practice combinatory play

SUPERPOWER YOUR METHODS THINKING

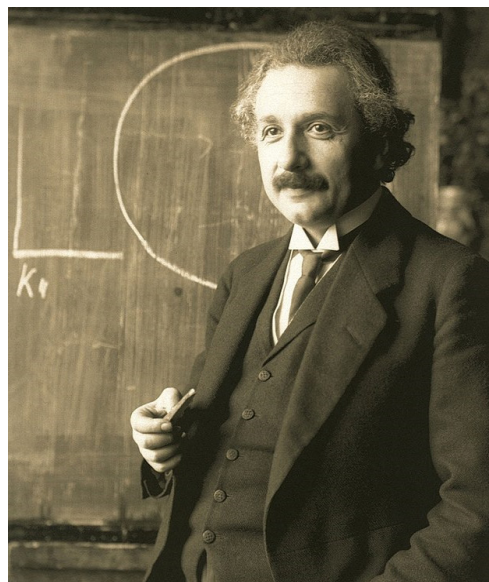
To build your own rich and powerful methodology, spend time studying and playing in different but related fields.

Einstein had a practice he called combinatory play. He referred to it as “opening up one mental channel by dabbling in another.” If he was stuck on puzzling out a mathematical problem, he might play sonatas on the violin. That play with music often yielded the mathematical solution he needed.

Steve Jobs acknowledged the importance not only of mind-distracting play but of being exposed to a variety of ideas and fields.

Jobs said: **Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That's because they were able to connect experiences they've had and synthesize new things.**

The first task for you here is to identify the related field for your play and study. If you're teaching mixed media, you might study the psychology of perception. If you're teaching memoir writing you might study screen writing or allegorical painting. If you're teaching spirituality, you might study astronomy. Be open and try different fields.



Through play and study in related fields, discover:

- Stories and illustrations to use in your teaching
- Approaches and techniques that are relevant to your work and that could be adapted to what you do.
- Models that can be layered with your teaching.
- Inspiration and motivation.
- An ability to make intuitive creative leaps in thinking.

5

Watch trends

GIVE YOUR METHODS CURRENT TEXTURE

One more way to fuel stand-out thinking is to follow trends.

The things that are going on in our world currently will affect what people are drawn to and interested in.

When you keep an eye on trends, you'll have ongoing inspiration and fodder for combinatory play (see practice #4 above!).

Not sure what trends to watch? Pantone (with their famous color forecasts) watches ALL of these in their trendwatching work:

- social issues
- the economy
- technology
- lifestyles and playstyles
- diversions
- entertainment, and
- the needs, moods, fantasies and aspirations of consumers

3 Ways to Watch Current on Trends.

1. Read current news and cultural publications. Choose two or three magazines that give you a look at different angles of current culture, for example: Vanity Fair + Wired + Forbes. You're not looking for direct connections to what you teach. Rather you're being open to the key trends in our world right now and thinking about them with your expertise as a complement.

2. Follow one or two trend-watching websites and subscribe to their email updates. Trendwatching.com is a place to start. When you see the trends they are sharing, be open to connections. Be forward-looking as you generate examples and stories for your students. It's about being able to place your training in the current world.

3. Find a way to clip and curate. Build Pinterest boards or a clipping file in OneNote or use whatever is easiest for you. Don't be rigid about this. Make it play. When you spot a trend, clip the article or image or note. It might be pics of small dogs, or paisley prints, or beaded jewelry or things with feathers on them. It might be an article on a topic that you keep seeing. Develop a practice of clipping and curating things that interest you and that might connect to your work.