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Llama Commerce Show: Content Marketing for eCommerce



Kurt: And welcome back to the doubleheader morning here, on the Llama Commerce show, where we are continuing to demystify eCommerce into digestible, actionable bites. **We have Ezra Firestone here, who still has the coolest name we've ever heard. He's been sharing his secrets with us this morning.** We are now talking about...We are going to be covering content marketing with Ezra and what he calls, Brett?



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Brett: Community commerce.

Kurt: Community commerce.

Brett: This is a trend. This is a brand new trend. **It's a phrase Ezra has coined, called 'community commerce'**. I love this idea because what's so cool about it. Ezra, you mentioned this last time I had you on the show. You were talking about the hippie commune and wanting to sell there in the hippie commune. In a commune, sales online are really the same. Like, the same principles hold true. I think this trend, your trend you're calling community commerce, continues that. So, what works, what builds really successful offline companies and offline brands, that works online too. I think that the nut you've cracked is how to really make content marketing work.

Kurt: So, as always, we have our trusty one-armed table [player trophy here, and whoever is providing the most value in the show gets the trophy at the end of the show.

Brett: I'm going to slide it to me right now, because I felt like that intro was a little bit better than Kurt's.

Kurt: I did most of the intro, though.

Ezra: Kurt got a hat, bro.



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Kurt: True that. Thank you very much, Ezra. OK. So, Ezra, now you're saying smart things. Continue by explaining this community commerce concept.

Ezra: Let me tell you. I come from a content marketing background, from an information publishing and marketing background, before I started selling physical products. When we look at the eCommerce landscape... What are you guys laughing at?

Kurt: We're laughing because Brett is stealing the trophy already. Sorry. I'm so sorry. You're talking about super awesome things, and we're goofing around at the back of class.

Ezra: So, here's the deal. **When I got into online retail, you really could just slap some products up for sale and rely on a single channel, like Google, and do very well, and I did that.** As the online marketplace develops, we end up with far more channels that we have available to us as retailers. We've got social. We've got Amazon and eBay and comparison shopping engines. We've got traditional query-based advertising methods. We've got contextual advertising methods.

My goal in all of my businesses is for them to be diverse, for them to be holistic, for them to have not a single point of failure. I fell into the trap that most eCommerce business owners did of having a single failure point in Google. That was a really painful experience in my life. So, I started looking at what are the best ways for me



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to not have that be the case. I'm going to share my screen with you. What I realized was that we live in a social economy. Can you guys see that screen?

Kurt: We can now. Yes.

Ezra: OK. **We live in a social economy.** People now expect, when they are purchasing products online, that they will be able to engage with a brand, with a company, beyond just purchasing a product from them, that they'll be able to live chat with someone, that they'll be able to get emails responded to, that they'll be able to engage with that brand or that face or that person on social media, when it used to be that the only way to engage with a brand was to write them a letter when traditional advertising methods were TV and newspaper. There was no way to engage with brands. In this new social economy, brands are now becoming more like people. **You need to have a relationship with your community of people,** because when we look at selling physical products, our goal is not just to generate visibility for a product and retail it. Our goal is to generate visibility for our product, retail it, provide an awesome experience with that customer and that community base who is engaging with our products. Build a relationship with them beyond just selling them products. **Talk to them about topics, conversations, problems that are relevant to their lives.** Then, make them additional offers. That's how you build a business that's able to scale, because you're able to then repeat sales from that



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same community that you're building.

When I look at selling my physical products, I'm looking at building a community of people and engaging with that community of people in every way I can and making them offers that I believe are relevant to them, based on the information that they're giving me. The best way I found to do this is through content. On our eCommerce businesses, what we are doing is every single business, we have a face or multiple faces of the brand, and we create content, usually in the form of short-form video content, like this. Short-form video content or long-form audio content, in the form of podcasts and videos, in the form of videos.

The reason why we do video or audio is that different people prefer to consume media in different formats. So, if you're doing video, you can then transcribe that. You can create a .PDF out of it. You can strip out the audio so that people can listen to that. Some people will read your stuff. Some people will watch your stuff. Some people will look at your pictures that you create.

If you look at what Google is doing, every Google search query has multiple different media formats in the search result. There's going to be a video. There's going to be an image. There's going to be a news reel. There's going to be a blog. There's going to be a channel for a physical product query. So, Google understands that different users prefer to consume media in different formats.

So, **we create this content that is not necessarily focused on our product. It's about topics and conversations that are relevant to the lives of our**



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community. For example, if we're in the cycling community, we're talking to them about the Lance Armstrong debacle, what's going on there, and what our opinion is of that. Because what people want is to know what you think about the topics and conversations that are relevant to your community.

So, we create this content. We transcribe it. We put it on our blog. We email it to our community. We then share it out on Facebook. We share it on Google. We share it on Twitter. We share it on Google+ and LinkedIn. We pull out the audio, and we upload that to iTunes for a podcast, and that's enough. Right?

Just creating content and sharing it with your community. That's good for search optimization. That's good for engagement. But what we realize is it actually helps us in our direct response marketing, because what we do is we run ads on Facebook. We promote each piece of content. I've lost Kurt completely.

Kurt: That's alright. I'm coming back. I just went to grab a notepad. I've got to ask questions here.

Brett: You know what's really good, though? I'll interject this since we stopped for just a second. **I think what merchants have to understand is that the product is just part of the story.** Right?

It's part of the process. So, you have to have a great product. You have to have the products people want, but real success is much more than that. **It's about**



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developing that customer and maximizing the overall customer value. That really comes through relationship. So, I think that what you're saying here is you got to move beyond just the product. Right?

Ezra: That's right. **You don't necessarily only have to retail your product.** We cross content marketing into all of our businesses. We do webinars and educational courses. All of our physical product businesses have now become content and information publishing businesses as well, because it's just a community of people, a community of people who are interested in the same type of thing, who are interested in physical products, interested in experience-based things, live events, interested in courses and content and coaching. It's a group of people who you're communicating with. Yes, you're offering them physical products to start with, but that's not the only thing you're offering them. What we realized was...We promote each one of these videos on Facebook. Right? We run ads to it. These videos, of course, have a link back to our product page or our website. This one doesn't. This is just a link back to YouTube. The videos are solely content. Now, these videos end up making us money and soft-selling, and we do end up making money from these videos.

What we realized was that when we would then run a direct response ad on Facebook to that same group of people, it doesn't have to be our fans. It's just the same targeting group. So, the same targeting group on Facebook sees our videos in their newsfeed for two to three weeks, just content videos. They see our brand. They see Cindy's face, in this



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case. And then, all of a sudden, they see a direct response ad for a product. **The response to our direct response ads for products went up 1000%, when we started what we call 'third-contact direct response marketing.'** So, we're not hitting them with a direct response. Did I lose you guys? Guys? Dudes? Dudes?

Kurt: Flex this together or something?

Kurt: No. No. Definitely not. That's very unusual. At least I think so.

Brett: We are back and live.

Kurt: Hey.

Brett: We crashed the internet. There was so much eCommerce brewing, so we crashed the internet. Now, Ezra is calling again.

Kurt: We are an internet company here.

Brett: We are back on now, and I'm going to share this with you again. Then, we can pick up right where we left off, hopefully.

Kurt: See, we were just talking about being raw and relatable, and so we thought we would demonstrate that...



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Brett: Oh. We are.

Kurt: By actually having the internet crash and having all these issues. We just talked to someone on the cell phone, live on the show. So, this is about as human as it gets.

Brett: I think we're more likable now. I think people will love the show more.

Kurt: My wife is in the background. I don't know if you can see her. OK. The trophy goes to Ezra already, because his internet stayed.

Brett: His internet works better.

Ezra: Where did you guys lose me?

Brett: We lost you at... Kurt was dialoging about...

Kurt: I was trying to dialogue. You're just so fast that I was having a hard time jumping in, but then we thought it was your fault that we dropped. I was talking about how relatability is really important in the brand.

Brett: Yeah.

Kurt: And how actually, the imperfection of humanity plays a really key role in creating those relationships. Whereas before, it was like the clandestine, untouchable brand that was the name to pay.



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Brett: Million dollar production value always had to be.

Kurt: Totally.

Ezra: Low production value is better. Shoot it on your iPhone, with a little road law of microphone, so you have good audio quality. You don't need high production value. That's one of the things that freaks people out. They feel like they can't create content because they don't have high production value, but you don't need it. Yeah. I don't know what else I was saying. Basically, **I think to summarize this whole thing here is that what I believe you should be doing is creating at least one piece of content per week in your business, not just for the SEO value, not anything for that, but that you believe is relevant to your community of buyers and subscribers.** And if it is, they will engage with it. It's not sales content. It's just content that you're creating to engage with your community of people, beyond just retailing them products. Of course, you still do your sales promotions. Of course, you do everything else. You just add on this engagement, and you end up building up communities. I do this over and over with clients.

I helped a gal in the Waldorf School. She has the biggest Waldorf toy store on the internet. We built her a massive community, really quickly, through weekly video content. She now has an educational component to her business, and



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it just completely transformed this business from just a physical product business to a relationship/community/content information marketing business as well. It's ripe for the picking, and nobody's really doing it, and it's not very difficult. **And, I have a free course on Shopify's eCommerce University that teaches my whole 15 videos that show the whole model of how I do it.**

Brett: Awesome. **What's so cool about that is that whether you're wanting to keep your eCommerce business, or whether you're wanting to sell it, either way, building that community makes it infinitely more valuable.** Either you're going to make a lot more money long-term, or whenever you go to sell that, it's going to be a lot more valuable because you built that community around it.

Kurt: Although, can I just say? Don't ever build an eCommerce business to sell it. Build it because you believe in the value you offer the market. That will actually drive the best sale, if it ever does happen. **You want to sell your business because you just can't refuse the offer being made to you, not because you're looking to sell your company.**

Ezra: Channel diversity gets you an extra multiple. I've sold eCommerce businesses. I know. If you've got one channel and one single failure point in Google or Google AdWords, that business is not as valuable as one that's got multiple



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channels.

Kurt: Less dispensable. Yeah. Exactly. Very good. Well, hey, this is great, like golden stuff from Ezra Firestone, who is practicing this, guys. This isn't just a matter of his theoretical approach to eCommerce. He is in the trenches, practicing this everyday himself. So, phenomenal stuff. Ezra, thank you so much for sharing your wisdom and your experience with us this morning. I think we'll have a lot of people that are served by these interviews. So, thank you very much. You definitely get the one- handed table tennis player trophy.

Brett: How does that feel, Ezra, to win a prestigious award like this?

Ezra: Like going to Disneyland. No, no. It feels good. This is fun. I like this. I think that you guys are doing something so brilliant here. There's a few little tidbits of eCommerce-specific regular content. My blog is one of them, and I don't even do just eCommerce content. You've got a couple podcasts, but there's nobody really has a video format show that shows specifics and technicals and visuals. It's a really cool thing. It's bite- size, and it's digestible. I'd like to participate in it more. **I think that you guys are going to build an awesome community of eCommerce business owners, and I'm going to market both these videos that we just did. I'll put them out to my community.** I'll run Facebook ads to them and stuff, because I think that this is a really special thing that you



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guys have built that we should all be participating in as a community of eCommerce business owners.

Kurt: Well, Ezra, we really appreciate that. Of course, you're just complying with that endorsement clause in the contract we had you sign before the show. Good job.

Brett: That's awesome. Well, thank you, everybody. Get out there and create some content. Hopefully, this inspired you to get your own content, to build your own community. With that, we will say keep it classy.

Kurt: Llama commerce.

Brett: Llama commerce.

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