

Ben Settle - 30th Anniversary Interview

Ken McCarthy 00:00

It. Hey everybody, we're rolling along with our 30th anniversary. And this was a fellow that I had to have on, and thank God he was available. Welcome. Ben settle

Ben Settle 00:16

well. Thank you, Ken. I absolutely appreciate you having me on for this very, very historic thing. I remember you sending me a video of that first conference you did when we first met, like, back in 2005 and so I've definitely kept my eye on that, you know, like, how this whole thing started. And I think it's cool just to be a part of it,

Ken McCarthy 00:38

yeah. And speaking of of the of ancient times. I'm looking at the year 2007 book, the copywriting grab bag. That's when I knew, Oh my God, this guy's amazing. He's writing books. Everybody else is, you know, writing blogs. He's writing a book. This guy's going to make it.

Ben Settle 01:00

And I did not have to use AI for it either. So,

Ken McCarthy 01:03

oh yeah, man, having to live life without AI writing your copy for you.

Ben Settle 01:09

Yeah, it's, you know, that that was a that was the thing, that was 2007 or whatever. And you back then, nobody was really like content creation was still kind of a novelty. Now it's like everybody creates content, but most of it's crap. So now it's like a whole other game to make your content, sell your content in a way that gets above all that stuff that's out all the noise,

Ken McCarthy 01:31

right? And the and the AI revolution is going to really help, is that will produce even more crap that we can rise above.

Ben Settle 01:39

I think Amazon even has things in place now where you can only upload one book a day or something. Because, yeah, that's what I heard. Something like that was very I'm not surprised. I mean, people think they can just prompt out books all day. It's just that has to have negative repercussions on just the whole platform of Amazon. Just people don't know what to read at that point, right? There's no way that can last, so I don't know.

Ken McCarthy 02:04

Well, it's, it's, it's going to be interesting, that's for sure. Because, you know, as you know, I mean, you you print your own books and you fulfill them yourself, yeah, because that's, that's the smart way to do it. I'm I fulfill, I fulfill my marketing books myself, but my other books, I do let Amazon do all the the dirty work, but they've made it so darn easy. I mean, it's literally, it's literally not much harder than driving to the Xerox place and having them run 10 copies for you. No,

Ben Settle 02:34

I like that. Bam. I do have some books on there, right? Like my novels are on there, and those villains books I wrote around there because they're the low ticket stuff. There's no way I'm going to do that personally, because it's just too much of a pain. But, you know, with shipping and all that, like nowadays, you can't even get things delivered via mail on any type of consistent basis. It's kind of breaking down. Even FedEx won't take, you know, they give you this guarantee, but they, I think, kind of, honestly, since, like, 2017 or 18, since I started using FedEx primarily, I if I've won four or five fights with them where they actually admitted they didn't deliver something, even though I had proof they didn't deliver. That's a lot like, it's that really, it was really bad with COVID. Oh, man,

Ken McCarthy 03:20

you mean, you mean, it's not a matter of delivering late. They're not delivering at all in

Ben Settle 03:24

some I mean, I'm not saying it's like, hugely flagrant, but, you know, okay, so if I, if I mail out 500 to 1000 something, or books, newsletters, whatever, a month, it's not unusual for to hear back from five or six or seven people who, like, didn't get it or something. And half of them, for the you know, to be fair, to FedEx, half of them gave, you know, it was there, but the spouse put it out of sight or something. But then there's a few that really did not get delivered. And then I put in with the printer I used that they'll go to bat for me and put a notice in saying, hey, he hasn't delivered this. And they always act like, No, it was delivered. So you have no recourse. You might as well be dealing with the post office when it comes to that. Well,

Ken McCarthy 04:06

you know, I didn't, I didn't think we'd get on this track, but we might as well, because it's reality and it's helpful and important. You've have, you pretty much given up on, on shipping anywhere out of the United States.

Ben Settle 04:17

Well, I'm, you know, Ken, I'm getting to there to that point because there, and there's two reasons. One's very politically incorrect, but I don't really care. There's just some countries that are just full of flaky people. And I'm just, I don't, I cannot deal with people like that just as a seller of information, right? They just, I don't know, there's like, an entitlement thing going on in some of the European Union go to say that France, for example, Spain, they're the two big ones. But I kind of, I kind of soften up sometimes, and I'll turn it off in the cart, right if there's something really special coming out with email players, for example, like you. I had the 13 year anniversary issue in August, which was double size, and I included a, you know, this, the 60 page bonus and all that. I'm not letting flaky countries buy that

because it's like they didn't just, I'm just not doing it because they're, they're going to cause drama, and especially something that big. So I turn it off, but then I'll turn it back on after that. So I kind of like selectively punish some countries. And I, by the way, I know there's people in France and Spain, and I'm not trying to just pick on them, believe me, there's much worse places, you know. I know there's some good ones, but I am not above throwing the baby out with the bath water. I'll just put it that way.

Ken McCarthy 05:37

Well, I've, I've had so many male mailings. Just return, just come back. You know, you put 30 bucks postage. It's like, okay, I'll pay the money. Why not? The guy wants the book, and I the postage is more than the book, but yeah, I'll pay it, you know? And it comes back. And I'm like, what you're kidding me? So I have to say, I pretty much. And guys in the other countries, you know, we do a lot of virtual stuff, but I it's getting so hard to ship. Well, I actually knew a lady who had a really successful book shop in London, and she was doing a thriving business mailing to the United States, and she had to stop. And this was like 1215, years ago. They had jacked up the prices so bad, and the deliverability got so bad. So, yeah, we're talking about the hardcore reality of physical products, but, but you and I both believe in physical products. I know,

Ben Settle 06:27

Oh, yeah. And, and, you know, it's not necessarily always the customer's fault. There's some countries where they charge the customs and delivery fees that we have no control over that vary from depends who handles it right. And, you know, and I get, I understand that sticker shock, something like that. I mean, I have to tell them, I should. I have no control over that. I mean, we try to make it at the printer. There they've been. I use this company called Selby marketing. I've been using them since 2009

Ken McCarthy 06:57

the tricks, oh, Selby, S E L B Y, yeah, s

Ben Settle 07:02

e l b y, marketing, and they, you know, they've been around a long time. Richard Selby, it used to be his company. I think he sold it. He has another printing company, but they own it with his name. And I don't understand all the particulars, but they've been around for a while. They know all the tricks you know, for getting, get, you know, the putting the value and stuff so they don't pay as much, not but, you know, these governments, maybe they're just hungry for revenue or something, but they, yeah, it, that's the thing. And it's not like, I'm not going to stop selling physical stuff, but I keep telling people, now is the worst time ever to launch a new type, probably physical information, subscription based thing, at least because, man, it's, it's not like it was 10 years ago, 15 years ago,

Ken McCarthy 07:43

and that's really different game. That's from the deliverability point of view. Yeah, that.

Ben Settle 07:48

And also just inflation is driving all the prices up. Like I would say, every ever, every few months, I get a notice saying USPS is raising the rates, FedEx is raising the rates. And I gotta tell you, man, the service is not getting any better, even at UPS and FedEx. You know, it used to be great, right? I mean, they

were the gold standard at FedEx, especially, but it's just not what it was. I think, I think I even read Dan Kennedy's, one of his recent newsletters talking about that, but it's just not what they used to be.

Ken McCarthy 08:17

Gotcha? So, um, some, some shop talk about, about the realities of stuff. Now, one way you've gotten around that, though, is when you sell a book, you don't sell books for, you know, \$9.95 or \$19.95

Ben Settle 08:36

No, it would be more like \$995 or \$1995 I mean, I try to, I push it up pretty high, but I do that for a lot of reasons. I mean, one of the biggest reasons, and this is one of the earliest lessons I learned in this game, was it's just as hard to sell a cheap product as it is an expensive one. See, mines are just selling an expensive one, right? It's the same work, maybe even more. In fact, I think your copywriting course even mentioned that, if I remember correctly, that, you know, it's just, you're gonna have to do the same sales job if it's \$5 and if it's 500 right? And that's one fact, yeah. And you

Ken McCarthy 09:16

know, what we're selling is discretionary. You know, nobody has to take course on the things that we teach, you know, you you know, it's not like food or rent or something like that, you know, so. And then I, even, I have this experience, I'm holding in my hand a book that retails for \$19 and I knew this book existed, and I kind of, like, page through it, and I kind of got some, you know, some stuff from it. Then, because I the problem that I had was more than trivial, I ended up signing up with a, basically a, basically a coach, you know, on this particular issue, and he's got an interesting deal, \$3,000 lifetime, right? It's all group coaching, though, and which is pretty good deal, really, if you think about it's a good deal. But the gap between, what did I say 19? Yeah, \$19 and \$3,000 was quite significant. Well, paying \$3,000 really focused my mind, and I am getting, and I'm getting the same exact things from him that I got in the \$19 book, except I'm paying a lot more attention. And of course, I can ask him questions, which is, which is different than a book, but still, you actually don't necessarily do people any service when you when you're a teacher, to make it really easy to be a student.

Ben Settle 10:31

No, and that's the thing people, there's this thought Now I know you know Vance Morris, because I first heard him. I wanted your interviews. Actually, we interviewed him several years ago. And the Disney guy, yeah, and he now he sells a book about service, right? And it's, it's a good book. I like it quite a bit, actually. And I think I even gifted it to, like, all my newsletter people

Ken McCarthy 10:56

remember when you did, yeah, that was awesome. Yeah. Like, it's great. Now,

Ben Settle 10:59

fast forward a year later. So I'm like, you know, Vance, I'd like to sell your Disney course, which I don't think he sells anymore, but I'm like, I want to sell this thing. And he goes, Okay, I'll give you access. No, no, no, don't give me access. Let me pay for is like, \$3,500 is you Sure? I'm like, Yeah, because I'm going to take it more seriously that way. Or I wonder, I'm going to go through it. And I went through it, and it was a lot of the same information in that book. But I gotta tell you, I remember that, course, a hell

of a lot more than I remember the book. And that's, I think that's a good I know people don't want to hear it, but it's true. In fact, in this last Dan Kennedy newsletter that went out this month, the gold one that he does at Pete the printer, yeah, I know he does another one, I think with Russell Brunson. This is one with Pete the printer. Yeah. And he talked about a Steve Jobs book, like Memoirs of Steve. It was like,

Ken McCarthy 11:45

right, right. I heard now, remember that? Yeah, make it, make it wonderful, or make it marvelous. Yes, something like, I

Ben Settle 11:51

just read this last night, and I'm like, Okay, I'm gonna go buy it. And I go on to Amazon, and there's only one copy left, and it's \$395 I bought that thing, man. And guess what? I don't know what's in that book, but whatever's in there, I'm gonna I will know it a hell of a lot better than if I spent \$10 on it. And same with Gary Howard's boron letters, which I think was one of the best books ever. Like for direct marketing Crash Course, the 2003 I was broke. I mean, you know, they say you're so broke you don't have a pot to piss in a window to throw out. I didn't even have a pot. I didn't have a window, I didn't have a house, place to live, to have to throw it out like I was broke, right? But he was charging \$97 for that thing.

And I somehow found the money for I don't know how, but I did it and I bought it. And, I mean, I think I went through it at least 50 times. I copied it out in my own handwriting. I could recite parts of that put chapter by chapter, verse by verse. A few years later, he decided to give it away for free. I recite right, and I was so happy I'm like because nobody's going to get the value out of that that I did because I suffered for it. I guarantee you, nobody who got that free, or is buying it on Kindle right now for \$8 is getting even 1% of the value I got out of it because I paid a lot for it, at least at that time, that was a lot of money for me. So that's kind of how I look at it. So I maybe I'm projecting this onto my customers, but I never get any complaints. I never, ever get a complaint that, oh, that book was not worth it because they paid, they paid a lot for it. They take it very seriously. They benefit from

Ken McCarthy 13:21

it? Yeah, it's a, it's a very interesting dynamic, and we're lucky that we're in a discretionary kind of industry. And also we know that if somebody takes one idea how we give them, yeah, it's going to be worth I mean, I did. I literally did. Who is it? Tom Tom woods. Oh, yeah, Tom Woods is great, yeah. I did a consult with him and and I charged him \$4,000 was two hours. He added \$400,000 in sales to this program that he thought he would only he thought he his previous biggest hit was x, and we made some major, major changes to he showed me what he wanted to do, and I said, I don't know about that. Tom I think he could do better. And he did. And instead of making the 150 that he usually gets, he made, was it six, six and change. So 4000 to 400,000 and change. That's 100 times, you know, so we do have the potential to do that in this realm. So that's a reality, right? You know, if somebody can just, you know, convey one thing to you, it can be life changing in this business, yeah,

Ben Settle 14:34

okay, I got a great example of this for you. Since you're a health guy, and I've learned a lot about health, and you know, certainly the medical system from you and all the awesome research you've been doing.

And so last earlier this year, I signed up for a tele like a telemedicine company. Now it's like five grand a year or something like that. I enrolled myself, I enrolled Stefania. I enrolled my mom. I. Work. And, you know, I want everyone in this right, because they do good work.

And at the time, I had some really bizarre, wacky blood test levels that, you know, hormonal related, right? That didn't make any sense, because I felt pretty much okay. But there were definitely some, you know, I didn't realize how much energy I did not have at the time. Let's put it that way, and I'm talking to this doctor for an hour and a half, and you know, he's like, you don't try this. He goes, I what? You get up so early in the morning, you're up at like, 3am and you're in the dark. Try to go to bed after the sun goes down, because I was going to the sun was still out, and try to get some morning sun and hit your eyes in the morning and get, you know, go out in the sun when it's out, and don't wear sunglasses, because that's just telling your body it's dark out when it's light. He was just try that, and he was, you don't need a pill. And I kid you not. I think my I mean, some of these numbers went up, like 2.5x within a couple months. And I'm like, full of energy I didn't even know I didn't have at the time, and it's all because of just you don't it didn't have to cost anything. Now someone would say, well, sunlight was free, really, Ben, you could have learned that in a book I don't know. Man, I would I have taken a book that said that as seriously as someone I just paid five grand to probably not. And I can tell you, man, probably

Ken McCarthy 16:21

not, probably not. I mean, I got all kinds of books on this, this thing I'm getting coached on. And, you know, I could, I can, you know, summarize what's in them, but in terms of actually digging in and doing it and making it happen, not so much. Yeah, not so much, exactly.

Ben Settle 16:40

Now, that's the thing. I mean, it's all relative, right? If it solves your problem, does it matter if you paid? You know, I'm not saying we should gouge people. Don't get me wrong, personally, I don't pay I don't charge anything. I would not be comfortable charging like a loved one for but I know if I don't charge enough, it's not going to get you taken seriously. It's not going to benefit their lives and they're not going to do anything. Will there be the occasional outlier? Yes, okay, but that's not the norm. Like that's, as you know, that's definitely we just had this discussion before the call, right? How do you get people that like do things that you know they should do, that you've been preaching for years and decades, and they still don't do it until it's too late, right? So to me, a high price forces them to at least, if it doesn't hurt a little bit when they buy it, they're probably not going to use it.

But if it does, they're not just going to put that over there and, you know, let get lose it. They're not, if it's digital, they're not probably going to just put it somewhere in that folder that they've been accumulating ebooks. Like, it's going to get looked at like, I think it's our I think it's I really do. I really believe it's our our duty to do this doesn't mean I don't sell inexpensive stuff. I do sometimes, but for the most part, if I really want to get something across, I really want to do something that's going to have an impact. I put a premium price on it.

Ken McCarthy 17:56

Yeah. And in the old I always revert back to the old Chinese martial art tradition. It probably existed in other countries too, but I'm just more aware of the Chinese part of it. And you couldn't just walk into a traditional Chinese martial art school and say, give me a lesson. Like it didn't work that way. Yeah. Like, first of all, the old school, if you were in a family member, or you lived in the village, they weren't going to teach you anything at you know, but even people that would take students, I mean, and this, and this sounds like make believe, but this is real. There are certain you know, postures you know, like standing with your arms hold it, which sounds easy, try to do it for an hour and see how long you last, right? And that was like just the price of admission just to be able to walk into the school to maybe be accepted as a student.

And that did two things. It definitely kept the flakes away, because you had to work up to be able to hold that posture for an hour and two holding that posture made you a good kind of set you up to be a good beginner, because that that posture was an important body building exercise for the martial art that you were going to do. So any other thing too, in traditional old school, like I'm talking about old old school stuff, they wouldn't verbally explain anything. If they would show it, they would demonstrate it. It was your job to see it, steal it and figure it out, or figure it out and steal it, whatever they're, you know, yeah, and, you know, and now everybody, well, I gotta have my hand held, and you gotta, like, explain everything to and I feel like we're, we're in the western, modern world.

People need things explained in detail, you know, but, but, but still. But still. It made for much smarter students, less students, but it made for much smarter students because one of the skills they developed, and in addition to, you know, put your arm here, and this is the stance, and this is the you know, what you do, they also had to learn to see and pay attention and figure stuff out on their own. If. Fact, is another tradition in the old school Chinese martial arts was this principle. They didn't put it in this language, but it was how they worked. It would it was like, I'll give you a dime, come back with \$1 and I'll give you the next lesson. In other words, I'll show you a move. Alright?

Now it's up to you to take it home, figure it out, make it your own, you know, put some spins on it, get some insight into it, come back and wow me with what you've done with that dime I gave you. And that's the dollar, right? And if you've, if you come back with \$1 I'll give you another dime, and the process repeats, right? That would be a really good method for for teaching people to actually learn how to do something. But we have to make people we have to let people be self selecting and figure out, you know, what it is they want to learn and get what they want to help them learn. But I like, I've always liked that model, and I've only done sort of coaching with two people, you being one of them, by the way, and that's kind of how I did it, like, if, if someone's not coming back with at least 50 cents, yeah, I'm like, I don't know if this is going anywhere, but yeah, so that's the old school way to teaching and and so you, your methodology actually includes some of that attitude, which is, you really you, you know, I Remember once I said, Wow, Ben, I had to buy that book because the bullets just got me, you know. Now we've known each other a long time, but I remember you saying to me, yeah, but read it. Don't just make sure you make sure you actually work it, you know. And I was like, Yeah, you're right. Thanks for reminding me, it's not just buying the book and being satisfied with that.

Ben Settle 21:40

Well, I mean, you know, the bullets are a double edged you know, they're bullets, they're actually swords, right? They're double edged swords because it they make the sale, but sometimes they bring people in when they shouldn't have come in. And that, by the way, this is a very real danger that I have faced many times earlier. I think it's a good problem to have, don't get me wrong. But you know, at the same time, you really want to have to deal with people who are not qualified for what you have, because they got turned on by a bullet point. They don't even know what it was about. They just they're dopamine addicts. I I talked to my friend Shane hunt, right? We I call them dope heads because they are people who just want that dopamine drip. That's all. That's only reason they buy.

And, you know, a lot of people have a sort of a mercenary approach to direct marketing, and I'm not even going to, I'm not judging them or anything. I get it. I get that's why I understand it intellectually. I'm not comfortable with it myself, and so I've never liked doing that, where it's all, get the sale at any cost. It doesn't matter. Well, when you run your own informational publishing business, you got to deal with the fallout of that. And they never talk about right, like, I'm, you know, the copwriters are the worst with this. They really are. They they'll do anything to make the sale. But they don't have to deal with the fallout of that bullshit claim they just made, right, right? They don't have to talk to the FTC guy. They don't have to deal with the charge back. They don't have to deal they're just like, man, no, you got to run it. Don't be, you know, come on, man, it's like, look, I understand doing ballsy marketing. Don't get me wrong. But you can't be twisting the truth and lying either, you know, and like, that's the line I see people crossing all the time now, well,

Ken McCarthy 23:16

I remember I was, I think I said this in the, in the master class, the copying masterclass. I said, if you, if you're relying on fear and greed to get people to buy, you're going to end up with a lot of fearful, greedy customers, which won't be much fun.

Ben Settle 23:31

That's a very good I like that. I mean, that's perfect. That's exactly it. It's like, do you really want them in that state? Yes, you want to make sure they see. Who's that? That life insurance guy. You want to make them see the hearse pulled up to the curb? Yes, but, you know, you want to give them some hope coming in. You know, you just, yeah, I totally get that, and it's a perfect analogy. Well,

Ken McCarthy 23:55

you know, I also find people are motivated by either inspiration or desperation. Now, a lot of people will just provide the desperation, you know, they've got it, and they've got to figure something out, and that that energizes them to learn and to try things out and so on. But it's much more pleasant to be drawn forward by inspiration. And you know, that's, that's what I think, that's what we do, and we're doing what we do best.

Ben Settle 24:19

Yeah, you know what I I don't know if this makes me a bad person or a good person. You tell me, you be my moral compass. I'm about to say, I just know it works for some markets and it's you, but you can't do it in a way where you're trying to, like, Screw anybody. Let me be very clear brain with listening. So

one of the most I don't know if I've ever invented much with email, but I did, I do think I'm doing that first verbalize what I'm about to say. I just put it that way. Wait, many years ago, like 2015 I had this customer who sells acting boot camps. He's a method actor instructor. He's very well known. He's, you know, students that are in Hollywood movies and all that. So all that. And he sells his boot camp like \$13,000 boot camp every year, and in December is he usually gets no sales, right, or maybe one sales. And that's when he asked for my help, and I said, Well, I want you to do this with your emails over the next week and tell me what happens. Took me about 30 seconds to explain it. He goes, Okay, he goes off and does? He goes, Ben, we got more sales in this December, then we get all year, like I was like 100k in Bucha, then the next month in January, like almost tripled it. Just doing this, I'm about to explain, and he goes, This is crazy. He I think he still does it to this day, nine years later, because it works so well.

And basically I call it like it's almost like a passive abusive relationship you create with your list where. And at night time you send two emails a day, at night, you make it like it's the voice of doom. It's Carl Denninger, okay? It's like everything sucks, everything's dying, like everything's This is the worst, right? You want them going to bed in like this scared, kind of like paranoid state. And you know, the people he was selling to actors, and he told me this himself, most, many of them, are abused people. That's why they do acting. It's like therapy for them. I mean, it helps them. And they're not, they're just not. They're kind of fragile people, and so, and then in the morning, I said, you want to have a nice, cheerful inspirational email, lift them up, and it's like this weird, heaven, hell dynamic, right? Where, when they read that inspirational one in the morning, they're like, much more receptive to going to the sales page and seeing what the offer is, right?

And I gotta reiterate, this is not like a trick, right? It's not something you do because you want to be mean, right? But it's, it works, right? And it can be done with simple story telling, real life stories you know, about the market, where they made someone's a really bad decision, or something really bad happened. Doesn't apply to every market. Like, I don't do it selling email players, for example, because it's, I don't, I don't. It doesn't work with that. But for like, emotional markets, right, where there's a very clear problem that you're talking weight loss, whatever, and it works. And that inspiration, I believe, because that's usually where the sales will come from, from, what I understand, at least, is what draws them in. They don't really, you don't really want them buying in an agitated state. You want them coming in, leaning in, wanting to learn more, but very, very, very cognizant of what, what could happen if they don't buy, right? If that makes sense.

Ken McCarthy 27:28

Well, I you know, you're joking about the life insurance ad with the hearse and stuff. Well, the reality is, if you've got, you know, a family, you really should have life insurance, because things happen and you kind of need to put a scare in somebody. I mean, not an abusive way, but just write it out. It's not going to be good. You know, you go to work every day. You're working hard, make things good for everybody, and something might take you out. Then what's going to happen to these people you care about if they don't, if no one's going to buy life insurance without that picture painted for them.

Ben Settle 28:00

Yeah, this guy that I just love, studying his stuff. I mentioned him all the time. His name's Jim camp. Oh, yeah. I mean, he was just the master at what he'd say, creating vision, which was always that it wasn't even pitching anything. It was just talking about the problem in their world and making it very clear what that problem is, and just trying to progress the next step in the negotiation from there. And, you know, the guy was not called the world's most feared negotiator for nothing. It wasn't tricks. No, he didn't use any PowerPoints, right? Didn't do anything. It's just, it's all relationships and talking about the problem.

Ken McCarthy 28:38

Yeah, it was so interesting, you know? And this is another I had his book, but until you told me, check him out, and then I think I got a tape set from our mutual friend, Michael Sarnoff. Oh, yeah, yeah. Until I got that introduction, you know, that strong introduction, I didn't realize how great that book was. And and I thought, wow, this is really interesting. This is one of the most, you know, revered negotiators, and he's a big part of his work is vision, making sure people have the vision it.

Ben Settle 29:09

He is like the in a weird way. He is the best copywriting teacher someone could probably ever learn from. Even though he did, he actually, I had a chance to talk to him once before he died on a call that David Garfinkel knows him really well. I guess he was a student or something. He had me on the call just to kind of listen in and meet the guy, because he knew I was a big fan. And he was like, you know, I don't Jim camp's like, you know, I really want to understand this copywriting thing. And I'm like, Dude, you already know it. And it is. It's like, all vision, and it's just real simple principles like his, his best thing for copywriters that no one ever does, I try to do it in almost everything now is this negative strip line, which is where you're more negative, more skeptical than the customer and your own copy, right? You can't be lying to people like that. You're. Them like they may not buy but at least they know you're not lying to them and you're giving it to them. You know, these days, everybody's rightfully jaded, right? Like everywhere. So it's like, just give it to them, give them that just be a little little more negative than they're saying. I understand why you look I think this is bullshit, what I'm saying, but here's why I it's real and I'm gonna be proven right. And, you know, it works, and it's great, and if you can do

Ken McCarthy 30:26

it, you know, it's so interesting about copywriting. It's a definite profession, it's a definite skill. It's definitely something you can read about, learn about. But to think that he didn't realize that he was already a master copywriter is very funny. But you know another copywriter, Gary Bencivenga, said that his biggest inspiration for copywriting was Frank Becker, who was actually, I believe, a life insurance salesman. And Becker wasn't a copywriter by any stretch of the imagination. So how would it be? How could it be that a non copywriter could inspire copywriters? And I say to anybody that asked that question, if you were a copywriter, you wouldn't have to ask that question, because we're looking for, if we're if you're real about it, you're looking for what works, wherever it comes from.

Ben Settle 31:18

Yeah, and that's the thing. And I always like the way you describe the typical, what I call guru family copywriter, where it's just all choke holds, right, tricks, it, and there's a place for that stuff. I wouldn't say there isn't, but it's that's like the you know that that can be used or not. It doesn't matter, because if

you're doing everything else right, it's like, literally what I was talking about. It's like, before you start taking a bunch of pills, why don't you go get some sunlight? Eat, right? Exercise, see what happens first, right? Because maybe that's what I look at like list offer copy to me is, it's literally sunlight. Exercise, eat, right? You know, sleep, good. Like, let's do that first and with copyrights. The same way, don't get your get your dialed in on the fundamentals first. Then if you want to throw a little twist here, whatever you play play.

You know, I'll give you an example of this. Ken this next week, I believe I'm dropping some postcards. We're going to test some postcards with the trading offer. And, you know, it's funny, because we're talking about internet marketing, right? And I was one of the guys that kind of got started on the internet, and now I'm going from internet to direct mail, right in this 30 years. It's like the opposite of right? But so I wrote these two postcards. I have no idea how they'll do. I honestly have no idea. Nobody knows, right until you drop them. But I do know I'm applying everything we're talking about here, and I know that everybody's like, No, you got to do this. You got to put the URL all over the postcard. I'm like, first of all, if someone's like, they need to read the thing. I don't want them just going to the page because they see a URL on a good headline. That's I want them prepared. I want them to come in right, correct. You know, the offer we have is not for people who just want to skim. And you know, some of the people I was talking to, they didn't really understand intellectual Oh yeah, I'm like, sometimes curation is better than curiosity, and that's how I look at it, you know,

Ken McCarthy 33:14

you know, the very first thing I ever got from Dan Kennedy was a one sheet print on both sides. It was six point type. It might have been even smaller. I mean, it was absurd. You know, the paper was the cheapest paper in the universe. The text was all jammed up there. You know, it was the most unattractive looking thing in the world. There was no apparent offer until you got to the very end. And by the time you got to the very end, you were ready for an offer. Now, if he'd come on with gloss. In fact, it that this is the first contact I ever had with Dan his that one page was an insert in somebody else's newsletter, which was glossy paper, four color ink, and what the and I it was my first receipt of the newsletter ever. And this thing, Dan's thing, had just been stuck in there.

I totally ignored the four color, you know, perfect newsletter that was marketing, correct. And I read this piece of garbage. It looked it looked like garbage. It looked like some just split a piece of printed garbage newsletter, it looks so bad. And then by the end of it, you're talking about buying a \$95 book. I bought my first \$95 book off that sheet of paper, and again, Oh, that's awesome. And it was a stretch for me, too. And you know what it was? It was Dan had gone through, you know, he's, he's the they used to call it when he was a young man, long, you know, long ago, they used to call him the professor. That was his nickname among the old timers, because he knew so damn much. And so what this book was, was just basically his file cabinet, is swipe file of all these crazy direct marketing and mail order offers he'd seen, right? That's all it was. And I paid \$95 for it, and I was I valued it very highly, and it was revelatory for me, because I saw all these different businesses, or this was when I didn't quite know what direct response. Was, I kind of read a lot of books, but when I saw, you know, like, I don't know, was it three or 400 pages of every kind of conceivable offer, sometimes not very well laid out, sometimes not very sophisticated, it just made me realize, oh, okay, there's a lot of people doing this. It must work. I don't have to be perfect, you know, all those kind of things

Ben Settle 35:25

that's, that's perfect. I mean, it just, you know, it's like that gene Schwartz thing, where he's like, in the world of beauty, the ugly thing sticks out, you know, it's just a perfect example of that,

Ken McCarthy 35:39

right? And then there was something else I wanted to go back to about. We didn't say it in so many words, but being normal, in normal in copywriting, yeah, you want to be dramatic and keep people's attention and everything. But remember when I gave that advanced copywriting course, I gave it live one time, one of the students was a guy that owned a big dance school. He taught people how to dance all the different social dances, and at the end of the seminar, which, which is a really good thing for everybody, when you do a seminar, make time for people at the end to stand up and talk about what they learned, because other people will learn from them, and you'll learn from things you didn't even realize. And what he said to me was, this course is such a relief, because now I realize I can just be the expert that I am, and when I describe what I do, I don't need any tricks. I just have to describe, you know, in vivid, you know, make it vivid. Make it you know, obviously attractive, yeah.

But if i i already, I already have the reputation and the skill and the knowledge and and I know, I know how to get people when they're in it, when they come into the studio. I know how to get them to become students. But he'd taken all these copywriting courses, and he'd been taught like this choke hold and this trick and that trick and this NLP nonsense. And he believed it, because he didn't think he was a copywriter. He actually was a verbal, an oral copywriter, to anybody that walked into the studio, and he had perfect Well, the great Gary Halbert. What was Gary? One of Gary Halbert great pieces of advice for anybody trying to sell is get a voice activated sell by mail. Get a voice activated tape recorder put it in your pocket, and every time someone comes in the showroom or wherever it is, where you're describing what you do and is answering their questions, get it transcribed and organize it into a sales letter. Because there's your sales letter, it does not it's this is not about tricking people, which is maybe the most important thing to teach people. A lot of people, they'll teach you as if that's what it is, but it's really, it's, it's really one of the this is an old school thing. I really love that. He goes, Look, we're the glass on the, on the mirror, on the on the store window.

Ben Settle 37:53

Yes, yeah, that was a, I think that was short, wasn't it? He's, like, that's what your product is. It's just, you don't want to call any attention to the glass.

Ken McCarthy 38:01

Yeah, you want to make sure people can see the whole thing. What you have to offer, you know, the good things about it, the fact that it's a value, all these things, you know, make that but don't be the guy with all the bells and whistles and stamping your URL everywhere,

Ben Settle 38:14

yeah, just like, it was stuff like that, and it has to have bullets. It has I'm like, man, just, I'm the copywriter here. Just back off. It's like, I love it. If it fails, it fails, man. I put my own money on this so I don't really care for like, it's it. I was telling my business part. I'm like, Dude, I'm paying for this. Don't let

me do this because I don't want to hear anybody bitch at me. I'm gonna do it my way. They're gonna do it. Do it your way. I really believe that, which is like an old Gary Cooper thing acting trick,

Ken McCarthy 38:43

then you'll know, then you'll know when you'll get the reaction, and you'll learn something. If you do somebody else's way, you haven't learned a darn thing. You

Ben Settle 38:49

don't know. I was like, I will learn so much. If this name bombs, it'll be, it'll be worth every penny of it. And I'm okay with that. I'm totally okay back. I'm counting on it, because I'm going to learn some stuff that's going to make it better next time. It's expensive, but so is buying info products, right? So,

Ken McCarthy 39:07

yeah, you know, there's a guy can't. I'll think of his name later, but he used to say, you know, life's a seminar. You know, sometimes it's a really expensive seminar, and you never forget the lesson.

Ben Settle 39:25

Oh, man, if you know? I mean, you write all these books about the health system and all that, and we're like, that's a perfect that's the best example I can even think of. Is how many people learn things the hard way? Because, for example, they listen to the so called experts. You know, they never would have learned that if someone told them they had to learn it the hard way. Sometimes you gotta touch stop, right? I mean, just what it is. But

Ken McCarthy 39:51

what's funny is, is this experience you're having where, where somebody's telling you how the copy should be. We're talking about 2024 right? We're not talking about. 2003 or something when you were just Yeah, so people, and it reminds me of a really funny story that everybody should know, that Gary Bencivenga told me once he wanted to, he was part of a board, you know, on a board of a charity, you know, that helped

Ben Settle 40:15

children. Oh, yeah, you sent me the letter for this. Yeah, it's such a great story.

Ken McCarthy 40:19

So if anybody doesn't know who Gary Benson is, we might have some young people that are new to business. This is one of the, you know, the ultimate of all you know, just he's right up there on Mount Olympus for, for all time, you know, one of the best of the best of the best. So he's, and he's a very modest, easy going, yeah, no, you'd never know how great he was. So, so he's in this board meeting, and the issue comes up, hey, we need someone to write the letter, the solicitation letter. And Gary says, Why I could pitch in on that? And the lady running the meeting goes, Oh, everybody thinks they're a copywriter.

Ben Settle 40:55

That is one of my I think I even used that as a story to sell your copywriting. Course, it was perfect, but I love that one. But that's

Ken McCarthy 41:04

how the real world really works. It is one last thing I'd love to talk about, if you still have some time. Oh, yeah, go ahead. I am a subscriber, I and I'm a reader of your newsletter, and the only other newsletters I read are Doberman Dan's and Dan Kennedy's, and that's it, yeah, and I learn as much from the content by how you do what you do, which is always, always the way, if you're, if you're, if you're attuned to what's going on, you're going to learn at least as much from how the teacher teaches in addition to what he actually teaches. So you put this great insert. It's a, it's a like a transcription of an interview called the Get off my lawn, Zoomer friendly direct marketing cheat sheet. And this thing is both incredibly useful, very true and absolutely hilarious.

And I have to, I have to say this, just so people know this, because there are a lot of people who are listening to this that have heard of the system seminar. They didn't attend the system seminar because I stopped doing them in 2011 and they don't know how much of what is currently practiced was was originated at that seminar. And I gave that first seminar because I had a classmate from college or schoolmate, and he said, Oh yeah, someone's going to charge me \$25,000 to do a website. And I'm like, Howie, Howie, for \$25,000 and I'll take you back and forth to the moon. I mean, that's for a website. You got to be kidding me. And then when I said, What are you going to do with that website? He goes, Well, we're just going to put a bunch of pictures up there, some stuff. This was the state of the art in 2002 as late as 2002 I said, how you know what? Come to my seminar and I'm going to show you what you actually need to do. And he came, thank God. And now he's the author of two books. Is Howie Jacobson, he's the author of two books, Google advertising. You know, I'm proudest of how many of my students have written really good books on marketing. That's my, one of my, my, my pride points. But, but so anyway, we're talking about about this.

So, so I'm at the seminar. And I'm like, Guys, it really is this simple. Give them a reason to opt in, believe it or not, in 2002 the the biggest, most dramatic way to get people to opt in was join my newsletter. That was it just a line, join my newsletter. And I'm saying guys that did work in 1994 because it was so amazing, you could join somebody's newsletter and they would actually send you email. It was like, wow, but hey, it's 2002 now, and that's not working. So I said, Look, you gotta think about getting people to opt in. You gotta give them a reason to opt in. And then I said, after they opt in, don't abandon them, like, don't make them. Turn them into orphans, like, they opted in, man, follow up. Nobody was following up. I mean, a handful of smart people were, but nobody was following up, you know?

And then I said, You know what? You can actually write long copy, and you probably should, and everyone's going like, well, isn't is anybody going to read long copy on the internet? I said, if they care, they're going to read long copy. Now this was in 2002 it's 2024 and you and I are still trying to get people to understand that this works like you don't need 10,000 Tech Advisors with 18,000 apps and 14,000 metric measurements to figure out how to make a living on this thing. So could you talk about about your experience? Yeah,

Ben Settle 44:49

um, it's so interesting because remember, before our calls like kind of a meaning to ask you is 2024 basically an echo, or maybe even look like it'd be. Repeat of the.com crash. What 2000 was? What? Yeah, in 2001 and it's, to me, it's this is one of the reasons I see this. Because now I didn't even get into this business till 2002 but that was one of the first things I learned, was the fortunes in the follow up. So why would you not follow up forever? And so it got me thinking about these days on social media, because I'm very like, I say active, but I definitely am on Twitter. Now, Twitter is a completely different world than it used to be for now. I mean, it just is like, it just like you can actually talk on there without worrying about getting deep, unless you go really crazy on something, then maybe they'll do something. But, you know, it's good. And so I pay attention, I see what everybody's doing, and it's like I had been off there for like five years. I just left all social media for like five years, and I came back last year.

And people are in that same mindset that Holly was, that you just described, in the sense that it's like they don't even know this stuff exists. They don't think about it, or it's too arcane for them. It must not work because nobody else is doing it. Everything is, you know, the bio, their bio, the link in their bio will be to a YouTube page, right? A podcast. Like, why are you just what? Why are you doing this? Like, why would you send your best people to freaking YouTube? What the hell is wrong with you people like this is like, not even 101, market. This is like marketing point duo or something remedial. And this is what you described. Sounds like we're kind of back at that place now. This 20 years later, and this is what makes pirate This is why I think it's so cool. You're doing this 30 year, not I mean, this is the timing. Could not be better. And so that Zoomer to bring it back to that Zoomer friendly marketing cheat sheet, I don't have a lot of Zoomers on my list.

I try to actually chase them away, kind of like Clint Eastwood and grand Torino on the lawn, you know, racking the shotguns to get off my line. It's not because I don't like them necessarily. There's some really good people, don't get me wrong. But, you know, this is the generation that 30% really don't even know what gender they are. I can't help them, can I? It's not, it's not that I want to. It's just, I just can't. Right as a whole, and the few that work their way up into my world, fine, great, and that was written for them, the ones who have crawled through all the crap that they have to put up with. Because I actually have sympathy for people who work in the zoomers.

Ken McCarthy 47:32

I don't, I don't know if I could have hacked it if I'd grown up in this either man.

Ben Settle 47:39

I don't either. I really do. I just know I'm not the one to help them. I I tell them, Look, get my villains books. That's where you start. Okay? Because that'll help. But I other than that, I don't have time, so I do have a few Zoomers in my you know, players, newsletter membership. And I said, I gotta do something for them, because I've been neglecting them, right? These the ones who are in there. They are troopers, right? They don't even probably know half the shit I'm talking about, and yet they still subscribe every month, right? And they just, they're in there, right? And so I love that. I'm like, I'm writing something for them, and this guy had just recently interviewed me for his that's what it was. Was just a transcript from an interview I gave by email, so it was already written, and you have to do any

extra work. And I said, this is perfect, because I'm just telling them exactly what I would tell the Zoomers in my customer base, but not just the Zoomers, pretty much everyone else, like I was telling you that every you know, nobody wants to build an email list. And it wasn't until the lockdowns in 2020 when they were about to do lockdowns. And I did this live. I don't really do this kind of stuff very often, but I did a live call Q A because I wanted to know what people were scared of at the time, because I knew people were freaking out and all that. And it was like 50% of the questions were about building a list. And it's like, you guys realize that the time to build the list was 1234, 10 years earlier. It wasn't now, right? And so I'm trying to do my part. I really am to just ingrain the basics into it, you know, build list, mail it every day, and when they buy something, sell them something else, like I just try to narrow it down to the most basic route that I can think of. And, you know, if it gets one person to listen, then I think it's done its job.

Ken McCarthy 49:21

Yeah, I mean, that's all we that's all we can hope for. And, you know, we, we were joking, but, you know, we, really, we, I, I'm a huge booster of the of the young guys, you know, and gals that are that are working on this. And I wanted to let them know that we started out clueless. Oh, man, I'm still clued. Maybe you didn't, but, man, I couldn't have been more clueless.

Ben Settle 49:47

I'm still clueless. But I got to tell you, Ken when you know, I cut my teeth learning from guys like you and Dan, Kennedy and Gary Halbert, and I just said, Okay, if they say to do it, I'm doing it. If Gary Halbert says, copy these 500 Bullets and headlines out and then find another 1000 to copy out in our hand. I just did it right. I didn't question it, and I just did, you know, if he said, write a whole sales letter out by hand written by, you know, John cable, I just did it right. I didn't question it. And if someone gave me criticism and said, this sucks, I said, Okay, tell me why. Okay, I won't even argue it probably does suck. Now, tell me why. That's the problem right now, with the younger guys, they don't want to do the work and they don't want to take criticism, and, but those are the only two things you can't get around it. I mean, I don't have to tell them, there's no nobody's born this. We're not born, you know, with a keyboard in our hand writing copy. It just doesn't work that way.

Ken McCarthy 50:39

Yeah, absolutely not, absolutely not. And, and I will say, as a general rule, definitely follow the the old direct response guys, you know, that would be the Dan Kennedy, that would be Gary Halbert, and going back to John Caples and, you know, Claude Hopkins. And you know, we don't just recite these names because we have nothing else to do with ourselves. We recite them because their stuff was really, really good. And so if you're looking for a path, I say, you know it was, it was the path in the turn of the 1900 and it was the path in 1994 when I was getting started with all this stuff. And the truth is, the internet, even, even though 99.9% of the industry doesn't want to acknowledge it, it's a direct response medium. Now you know, Google is a direct response company, Amazon is direct response company, catalog company, all the social media channels, they love to call themselves social media. They really are direct response they just happen to have to use people's conversations as their content. So So whether you know it or not, we're we live in a direct response universe and and the sooner you tap in to that cosmic reality, the quicker you're going to make progress. And the good thing for all of us is all these great guys, and I'm going to include you Ben in that have taken a lot of time to write down what

works, how it works, speculating as to why it works, talking about what won't work, what doesn't work, it's all out there to be discovered and uncovered, and it's not hard, necessarily hard To find, if you understand what you're looking for and what you're looking for are the guys that did the direct response took the direct response path. The social media thing is, oh, well, it's dope, dopamine dope. It's, oh, I got 100,000 views. So what I once had it was, I once had a video. It was outside of my purview. It was one of my I have a number of crazy projects that I do, just because I like to do crazy projects. And this fellow got 5 million views. I'm not sure that I made a penny from those 5 million views. Uh, whereas, you know, I when I was really active, I could mail to, you know 20,000 people and make you know 200 grand you know. So it's like, it's not about it's not about creating a little dopamine hit for 5 million people. It's about finding the right people using direct response, cultivating them using direct response, and coming up with intelligent offers. It's old school. We're This is an even though it's the internet, it's an old school medium, in my opinion, if you hope to make it work,

Ben Settle 53:28

you know, one of the I have ownership in a couple few different companies, and one of them is a newspaper, like regional newspaper in my state. And so I write a business a marketing article for, like, the business people. And this the last one I wrote was, I titled it, so God made a marketer. And I was talking about the 2013 Super Bowl ad that everybody was talking about, which was, so God made a farmer, right? And it had, you know, Paul Harvey's voice doing his so God made a farmer. And it was selling Dodge Ram trucks there. And I'm like, you know, I'm sure it did a good job making people respect farmers and all that, but nobody can really prove it actually sold any trucks. It did 100 it had 108 million views. They spent \$16 million on it, which is like 21 million in today's money, to get 100 8 million views. And nobody will ever know if it sold a single truck, because they didn't capture names, you know, they didn't put them on a list. They didn't nothing. I mean, they could have done back then. You could have just had them text the number and quite right? Something,

Ken McCarthy 54:31

yeah, anything to show life that someone's responding, direct response.

Ben Settle 54:36

Can you imagine that, I think, uses the new hits, right? Which is like, how idiot,

Ken McCarthy 54:40

right? Right? Website, big deal.

Ben Settle 54:45

What was that like? How idiots track success, right? So it seems like every I'm telling you, it really maybe I'm just envision imagining this. It just seems like everything's coming around Robin from the beginning. And that's why I think the timing of this event you're. Doing is just perfect, man, it really is

Ken McCarthy 55:02

great. Well, that's, that's very encouraging to me to hear that, and it kind of makes sense. I mean, I'm doing it because it is the 30th, but you're right. You know, we've got, you know, the AI bubble that's just getting ever bigger. And AI is going to do everything. It's going to wash your car and shine your shoes

for you, and you'll never have to get out of bed. Yeah, and that's not going to it's not going to work out that way. And we have people chasing views, whereas before, they used to chase hits. What we really want to do is Chase, you know, getting the right customer into our circle. Well, Ben, thank you for the time and for all your inspiration. I'm I read the newsletter, it always sparks me and keeps me going like, Yeah, this is good business I'm in. I'm going to keep at it.

Ben Settle 55:46

Yeah, definitely don't drop out. Don't leave me with the Zoomers, man. But yeah, no, it's good. I appreciate you having me on. I really do you.