Episode 86: How 6 Summits Are Still Bringing In Success With An Evergreen Strategy
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Dr. Mark T. Wade: Hey summit hosts, Dr. Mark T. Wade here, founder of the Virtual Summits Software and your host on the Virtual Summit Podcast. We are in for a treat on this episode. We're going to be talking about a pretty sexy evergreen promotional strategy. Now, before we jump into that, I got legendary Marc Guberti here with me and he is going to be given us some gold, so I am super excited to have you here with us Marc.

Marc Guberti: Thank you so much for having me on the show.

Dr. Mark: It's going to be a blast week. It's like I'm talking to myself here, Mark with Marc on marketing, super meta, but we're going to jump into some really amazing tips, gems. And some strategies. But before we do that, Marc, I would love for you to just take a quick second and tell our audience just a little bit more about yourself.

Marc: Sure. So I started my first blog at 11 that evolved into 25 books, three podcasts and six virtual summits. It was most of those virtual summits now being evergreen, the ones that are not evergreen, I'm in the process of making those evergreens. So, uh, I basically help people who are interested in leveraging podcasts and YouTube and summits through coaching services. But pretty much, I started at 11 really fell in love with the whole concept and now my mantra, age is not a limit to success. I want young people all around the world to believe they can achieve their dreams too at a young age.

Dr. Mark: That is incredible. You started at 11. I have to dig into this just a little bit, like, tell me about that story. What was happening? What did you start with and like how did it go?

Marc: So they say part of being in Trump ignores being different. And I'd say I've been different like straight from the get go. I have a ton of food allergies, which made me different. I'm a Red Sox fan in New York, which made me different. So the idea of starting [00:02:30] a blog about the Red Sox means you can't find people in New York who are Red Sox fans was pretty much than next path for me. So I created that blog about the Red Sox. I don't do anything with it anymore, but it was one of, it was more of like a, this is what's possible for you. Like that blog never really took off, but it showed me that blogging is a thing. So I blogged and then I saw podcasting, I saw virtual summits and all these different stuff, but it really started with that one blog.

Dr. Mark: That is absolutely incredible at 11 years old. And then obviously you've had six summits, so that's pretty cool. Um, why don't you, uh, walk us through what were those six summits and, and kind of tell us just a little bit about why you decided to host them, what they were, and then we'll jump into some of the other strategy in a little bit. But I'd like you to just familiarize us with what those summits are.

Marc: Sure. So I always host summits based on what my audience wants to see, which of my content has the most engagement, like my free content, blog posts, podcast episodes, YouTube videos, and then I create summits around those. So the first one I did Content

Marketing Success Summit. It started with 50 speakers and now has over 70. Productivity Virtual Summit, 50 speakers. The Wealthy Author Summit that was 30 speakers. Profitable Podcasting Summit, Biz Blog Summit, and Advanced Affiliate Marketing Summit, each of those with around 20 speakers. So that is my virtual summit experience so far.

Dr. Mark: And so when you were setting these up, because those are all very different summits, this is, this is very intriguing. So when you were setting those up, like which was the first one and why did you decide to do it? How did you come up with that topic as well?

Marc: Content Marketing Success Summit was the first one out of all the content I produced. Because you know, I talk about Twitter, I talk about Facebook, I talk about individual social networks, I talked about mindset hacks, I talk about I not as much as I'm the mindset hacks, but content marketing thousands topic back consistently outperformed all my other content and I knew people in that space. So I decided I'm going to start a virtual summit around this topic. So I had that summit and, and I thought, how can we spin this off a little bit? So like Profitable Podcasting Summit, Biz Blog Summit. Those are branches like podcasting and blogging branches within content marketing but at the same time they're more specific for that person who, uh, you know, may not want to learn about all these things in content marketing but wants to specific education on podcasting.

Dr. Mark: So you've done six of these. I'm assuming by the time you got to the fifth and the sixth you've got some kind of template framework or formula that you do to kind of speed up the process. Is there any like what's the one or two things that you're like, okay, this is a huge time-saver, a huge benefit for you when you do a summit,

Marc: Reach out to the speakers first because the, your ability to do a summit is based on you getting enough speaker interviews within the allocated timeframe. So if you reach out to speakers and you get those interviews out of the way quickly, it's easier for you to focus more on the backend. Uh, because for my first virtual summit, like it came out of like the June, 2017 very beginning of June. But like towards I think the final weeks of May final to like one or two weeks. I had like 33 interviews. So I just remember like I was able to still have a really good summit and the launch went really well. But I remember like, I mean it was very close. So you want to get a lot of the interviews done in advance. Uh, you can give yourself a two month window even like I would recommend that if you're just starting out, but whatever window you give yourself, you should consider, you really want to interview the people first so that you don't have to be doing that last minute.

Dr. Mark: And when you're reaching out to the speakers, do you have any kind of special process or way that you reach out to them? Like how do you position it to get them to say yes.

Marc: So at the beginning, because you know there's no social proof for your summit, it's just an idea at the beginning. I'll just say that, you know, I'm coming out with the summit. I'd love to have you as a speaker here. So here’s the past stuff I've done, like I mentioned my social media audience, I mentioned, I've written books, I mentioned some of the work I've done pre-summit to pretty much they're like, Oh wow. Like this person knows

what he's talking about. So then those people say yes and when you get enough people to say yes, then your next pitch to people is um, you know, like I'm doing the summit, I love to have you on it. We have a few confirmed speakers, including this guy, that guy and the other. And when you're able to say like, you know, three people have committed or more than that, you start to get a lot more yeses, especially if these are like big name people who everyone knows.

Marc: So, uh, like not you can always get those kinds of people, but even if you get at least three people, you could say, like, this person, this person, this person has committed to speaking at the summit, uh, it's going to be really beneficial. And also talk money. Like people like summits, it's pretty obvious the model is, uh, that person speaks on your thing. You grow your email list from your summit, that person, the speaker, promotes your summit. They make money from affiliate sales. So if you can say like, you know, you get like we have a lot of potential, you earn money, like you're an all access pass and this wonderful backend stuff asking to get more people to say yes also, who think about like what's the best affiliate offer for me to promote.

Dr. Mark: That's so good. And let's kind of switch gears up a little bit here. Um, well actually before we do that, so the primary focus with your, your summit, I'd like to see the progression. It's not very often when we get to interview somebody who has done six summits over the past couple years. So when you first started out with that first summit, um, you probably promoted it a certain way, or maybe it was just primarily with the speakers, but have you seen any kind of shift or change in how you're, how you're doing the promotions? What was the first one and then kind of how is it now?

Marc: Uh, I would say for me it's been pretty much the same consistent play. Like you just want to get speakers for the summit, you want to get affiliates to promote the summit. Ideally look for speakers who could promote as an affiliate. Some people will say that you need to have a minimum number of email subscribers to be a speaker. I don't like to play that way. Uh, just because you know, like if someone can provide value and you're going to deny them just because they don't have a big enough email list then you're not in it for the right reasons because yes, every time I host wants to make money, but at the same time, you don't want to say no to some really valuable person. Uh, just because they don't have a big email list. Like it's one of those things with the virtual summit, you have so many people helping you grow your audience. Why not pay the favor? Pay in return for someone who may not have as big of an audience but can really wow your audience. So that is definitely something that I don't want to have left unsaid. But really in regards to promotion, nothing's really changed. I give affiliates swipe copy. I give speakers swipe copy. They promote it, I promote it to my audience and it's pretty much been the same formula.

Dr. Mark: I love that and I am really glad you said that because I do think that is very important and valuable there. Now when it comes to the summits, like you've run some six of these, so are these one off types of summits or are you doing them like annually or maybe one of them is annual, kind of what? What? What's your mindset and if they're not annual, are you going to be doing more and kind of, how are you going to come up with that?

Marc: So I don't do annual virtual summits. It's just whatever ideas seemed to make the most sense in that moment. And the reason is that I could just make these virtual summits evergreen, keep running as from, I don't have ads up for any of my virtual summits yet. I'm kind of lend me as Amazon have my books, but not nothing for my summits. So that's something I will be doing. But even then I do continue to see sales to this day for my summits because I promote on social media and I occasionally share with my email list. So my thing against the annual summit is that you do your summit, it's a big success and then you gotta wait 300 days at least until you get to run that thing back again. And it's a shame because you know if you actually have a really good conversion rate, like you get like on average $5 per subscriber or something like that.

Marc: Do you really want to turn that off for the next 300 days or do you want to find some way to make it evergreen? So that's why I do evergreen summits. I've done six of them at this point. So the thing with me now is I'll get speakers to speak at those summits instead of creating a whole bunch of other summits each year. Like I'd be happy if I just do one or two virtual summits each year instead of like the three or four I was doing when I first started because I could get speakers for my old summits, promote them in the same way as if it were a new summit. But I don't have to create a sales page. I don't have to create more backend offers, I don't have to do any of that stuff. And I'm not searching for speakers. Like you have to get 20 speakers at least usually for summits, I'm okay if I just get a new speaker a month for my existing summits. Obviously I want more than just one a month, but the fact is I can scale up, I can scale back, uh, to my desire when it comes to how many people I interviewed for my existing summits. Okay.

Dr. Mark: So this, this is intriguing. I think we, now that we're jumping into the evergreen aspect of this, you just mentioned you get a new speaker once a month or twice a month. What do you mean by that? So like unpackage that. Like, you get a speaker and what do you do with that and how does that fit into the evergreen process?

Marc: So I'll reach out to someone who could be a good fit for a summit. Let's say content marketing success, because that started with 50 now we're at 70 speakers because of the evergreen model. So reach out to someone who could be a good fit and I could say, Hey, I organize this virtual summit. It's now evergreen. Do you want to be a speaker? People say yes, and then you get them in. And now the interesting thing about evergreen is that they only have to promote once, two or three times if they want to, but they only really have to promote ones and it's whenever it works for them. So one of the problems I run to with the live virtual summit is that I'll set these dates, I'll give the promo plan and I'll have someone say, wow, I'm so excited about your summit. I love to speak, but I'm doing another affiliate promotion at this same time frame so I can't really commit to promoting your summit.

Marc: Uh, so if you get enough of those people, you know, that's gonna really hurt your, uh, growth that you get from that summit. And summits' a big time investment. Now, I still take the overwhelming majority of those people as we said, because you don't want to turn down someone who could provide value, uh, just because they don't have the big enough audience. But the fact with evergreen is that since you could do it any time you want, it doesn't impede on anything. So if you want to, let's say you have something planned for Black Friday, you don't have to promote my summit on Black Friday. You

can, but you don't have to. Or if you have something planned for Christmas or if you have something planned for Valentine's day, if you have something planned for 4th of July or any of these holidays or just you feel like promoting someone else's launch, you can do that. But just promote my summit, you know, whenever you can,

Dr. Mark: Wow. This is an intriguing strategy here. I don't think I've ever actually heard this before is, so what you're saying is you have a summit, you run it, it does what it does and then after that you continue to reach out to speakers, you know, one, two a month, whatnot. You put them back onto that summit and then you have them promote it. So essentially you're constantly promoting each of those summits every month, all year round.

Marc: Yeah, exactly. It's, and I have three podcasts, so I pretty much interviewed people for like a living, like I love interviewing people, but I was thinking like, you know like if I started a fourth podcast, if I started a fifth podcast I got to you know, interview more people. But just by bringing people on the summit instead, if I want to interview 200 people in one month, I can, if I want to scale back because I'm on a vacation I can easily do that because there is no, you have to publish a new interview each week when it's an evergreen virtual summit. And also when people are like, I'm going to promote this interview when it comes out obviously, but when people promote the summit interview, when it comes out, that's opportunity for you to grow your email list and make money, which is different from podcast.

Dr. Mark: True. I mean obviously we are on a podcast here and this adds value and it's a great brand play and relationship play, but like you said with a summit, we're driving people two leads so it just unpackages for everybody listening. I mean you create your summit, you put all the time and energy into having that summit offer, you know the all access pass, whatnot and then you continue to add speakers to. This would work perfectly for us with our software, the virtual summit software. We have the ever summit feature. Now, I know you do a different variety of this and I love to like listen and discover all the different ways of doing it. So we were talking about this in our pre-interview chat unpackage how you set up your summits so that they can be evergreen ongoing.

Marc: Sure. So for me it's like you need to have these tools. Like that's the issue with my strategy. Now it works for me because I have the tools, but you know, you need to have the tools. So like you need the, like a order page like that you're gonna need live for evergreen, you're going to need that. But, uh, the way I make my summits evergreen is they are all built on to optimize press. And I use specific plugin, it's called dynamic dates plug in like that where it's a little bit of code that goes on the optimized press page that says show tomorrow's day and then showed a date in by four days later, something like that. So that's why if you are listening to this whenever on like February 17th or you know, whenever, uh, if you're listening to this February 17th and you go to my summit Content Marketing Success Summit, you'll see something like February 18th to the 21st and if you go on February 18, you'll see 19th to the 23rd, 22nd. So that's the basic setup that I use. It's optimized present and having that dynamic dates plugin and then using that to show up the dates. And then once you have the dates show up that way on the a sales page on the welcome like the page that people opt in, the landing page, uh, when the other day show properly. Then it's just a matter of having that reflect on the email list as well. One that you emailed people in all of autoresponder.

Dr. Mark: Well let's, let's go with that because that is a challenge. That's a challenge I, that we've all faced is when we set that up, if you can use optimized press, you have optimized press for those listeners in the Virtual Summits Software using the Ever-Summit Feature. It does that as well. So now that we have people into the summit and they're going to get those emails, how do you create the emails in a way that can be evergreen?

Marc: So I always recommend starting with the live launch because that's how you're going to get a lot of speakers to promote at the same time. So you have to do the live launch emails anyway and then it's just a matter of copying and pasting all of those emails in the autoresponder based on what worked. You also remove references of like, you know like June 6th or whatever. Just say like here's day one and here's day two, here's day three, here's day four here. So however many days you want. But if you do it by days instead of the actual date, then and you can make it evergreen very easily.

Dr. Mark: Well I like that. So instead of putting reference to Monday, you know, February 13th or whatnot, or seasons, great points. So essentially neutralize all the email copy, refer to. Okay, day one is now going live or day one is now ending day two. Okay, I love this. So this, this helps us understand how to kind of set it up so that we can run it as an evergreen. Now let's talk through how do we continue other than, for example, I love the speaker, a reference there that you can constantly bring a new speaker onto it and use that as continual promotions. What other strategies do you have to continue to promote or drive traffic to that evergreen summit?

Marc: So to continue promoting that summit? I mean ads, that's the one thing I haven't done yet, but I would treat it like any other podcasts, interview or any other piece of content like you promote on social media, you tell your emails about it. Occasionally I like to, I sometimes add a PS or I say, you guys should get your free ticket to this event and when I do that in email, I will set it up. So the people who have already registered in the past for that specific summit do not receive that email because I don't want a Content Marketing Success Summit attendee from 2017 to get an email today saying register for to Content Marketing Success Summit since they already registered and you can do that using, I use ConvertKit I feel like practically every a reliable email marketing servicing has that, but make sure you do that because you don't want to tell it past attendees that they can attend like you know.

Dr. Mark: Especially if they've purchased the all access pass.

Marc: Yes, especially if they purchased the all access pass.

Dr. Mark: So let's dig into that with the like, let's go with ConvertKit. We have a lot. Uh, Nathan's, a great friend of mine, Nathan Barry over there at ConvertKit and uh, and I'm sure this will bleed over into any of the other CMRs as you've just mentioned, but let's unpackage how do you set that up so that certain people see it and certain people don't?

Marc: So when you go into the email broadcast, uh, email blast or if you're on a clock, I'd like to call it email broadcast because that's what ConvertKit's gets, says, uh, they let you see who you're sending it to. And then there's the section where you can exclude

people who fit a certain tag. So I set it up so that when someone subscribes and joins my email list, because they register to be an attendee, they're on a separate form from my regular email. So I've got like 20 different forms at least in ConvertKit and like 28 different tags. So I can go into like the form, like, you know, CMSS attendee and say, I don't want these people to receive this email that I'm going to send to the rest of my email list about, Hey, go get your, um, free ticket to the summit.

Dr. Mark: Excellent. That's great right there. So now we've set up this evergreen summit. We figured out how to do the emails. We've actually even said it to make sure that we don't, we, you know, we don't, uh, send it to the people who've already seen it. And we've talked about essentially, uh, how we can continue to have speakers on it, which is pure genius to continue to promote it. We've talked about a little bit of paid ads. What other additional ways have you seen that are working to help drive traffic to these evergreen summits?

Marc: I mean, I'd say that's pretty much it. Just like the social media, the paid ads, and getting affiliates and leveraging your own audience. I'd say those are like the main, a promotional resources that practically everyone uses.

Dr. Mark: Excellent. So now you've done six summits let's, I want to dig into one of them. Let's go with which, whichever one was the most successful. You can let us know that in a second. So which one was the most successful and what do you think or see as, what were some of the key reasons that was so successful?

Marc: I'd say Content Marketing Success Summit. Uh, that was because I had over 50 speakers, but all the speakers were also affiliate speakers. So there were a lot of them who were able to drive a bunch of through affiliate sales. And I mean, yeah, it just, it part of it depends on who you have to promote. Now, in some cases you can get affiliates who aren't speakers to promote the summit. That is a little harder, but again, people think of it as an affiliate promotion thing. So if you could say like, you know, all access pass makes you this much per sale, but we have this a order bump and then we have this upsell that has more potential for you to make more money. That's a way to get more people involved.

Dr. Mark: Perfect. There. I love the order bumps in the upsells, increases profit per customer per lead there. Um, let's dig back into one of the ones that we're maybe not as successful. You can tell us which one that was or not. Um, and look at why you think like maybe one or two things that happened at summit, uh, that were, were a cause of the reason it wasn't as successful as the others.

Marc: I think one of the big reasons that, you know, one of my summits wasn't as successful as because of the burn out and with virtual summits it is a lot of work. You want to figure out how many, many people you can reasonably interview with in what timeframe. So that's why I'm now shifting for like one to two virtual summits each year I'm going to space them out a little more as well because the more you space out the summits, the more people you're able to bring on on an interview. And I'd say that's pretty much it because some can, you know, they can burn you out, especially if you do a lot of them back to back to back. So that's part of the reason why I'm shifting to just interviewing

people for my evergreen summits. And then if I see some of these people do really well promoting and getting sales or they just, it's a really great experience.

Marc: I could have a new summit and theme it around something that all of these people have common expertise. And so essentially I'm using my existing, I'm leveraging my existing, uh, speakers, uh, for past summits, for past podcast appearances because I'm at the point and we're just like a little more organization and work. Like I can really get to the point where I have a whole database of speakers and I don't have to really hunt down speakers because that's very stressful. Especially if you're giving yourself a hard deadline and you feel like you aren't there yet.

Dr. Mark: Yeah, I agree with you on that. And you seem like you are juggling lots of interviews. I mean you were doing multiple summits at a time, four different podcasts. Do you have any strategies or, or how do you set up your day in your time to be able to handle all of these different interviews successfully?

Marc: I pick one day a week to do a ton of them and then I just do a little bit here and there. Like, I use the interviews also to wake up when I want to wake up. So I will intentionally do an interview at like 6:30 AM or 7:00 AM because, um, it's one thing to, you know, just hit snooze forever. It's another thing when you've got someone waiting for you at 6:30 or 7:00 AM. So I'll do two interviews in the morning on most days just so I actually wake up at that time and get stuff done early. Uh, but I do pick one day a week where I could be interviewing as many as 10 to 15 people just because I'd rather bunch it on to one day, then spread it out because there are a lot of things in my plate, books, uh, like scheduling content, uh, like promoting the summit. There's so many things I do outside of virtual assignments and podcasting. So that's why I usually bunch it in one day.

Dr. Mark: I love that man that is inspiring right there. And I love that. Like, have to get out of bed because you have an interview set up. That is the first time I've heard that. That is awesome. So let's jump in. Uh, as we start to wrap up this episode here, I'd love to hear about your summit offers. So when you would six different summits, um, do you have a format that you use to create those offers? Are they completely different? Like talk to some package how you do that?

Marc: So some of the offers are the same. Some of the offers are different based on the summit. Uh, well I like to do as all access pass right away then like upsell, like a $27 mini course on something related to the summit. Uh, the more related it is, the specific it is, the more profitable it tends to be a, then that gets led into an upsell. Sometimes I'll create a new course. Other times I'll use my virtual summit blueprint course, because if you're in a virtual summit, you may think about organizing one at the same time. If it's like, like one of my summits was the Productivity Virtual Summit, you could go into that summit and have no interest whatsoever organizing summits, but like for something like the Content Marketing Success Summit, you might be of that mindset where, Oh, I might want to do one of these someday. So if I have a bunch of different offers already, courses, all that stuff. So it depends on if there's a perfect match. If there isn't a perfect match, then I'll just go ahead and create a new course to create that perfect match.

Dr. Mark: I love that. Awesome. So as we wrap this up here, Marc, um, I'd love for you to give us a top takeaway for our summit hosts listening in here right now. What is something that they need to know that you believe they need to know for their success as they go to create a virtual summit?

Marc: It's all about relationships and the more people you have who you can easily tap into and say, well, I'd love to have you on my summit, the easier it's going to be for you. So as you do your first virtual summit, I would immediately think about how can you interview as many people as possible. I literally started a third podcast just so like to interview more people like that was like a main motivation because I saw a lot of people on my show Breakthrough Success. We were talking about how they ditched their jobs. That led to the job podcast. Now I got to interview two more people each week. Even more than that because of scheduling episodes and having that buffer. But have as many reasons as possible to interview people like launch the virtual summit but also start a podcast and made your virtual summit evergreen. The more you interview each week, the better this is going to be for you.

Dr. Mark: Absolutely love that. Some great advice, great wisdom from a summit expert over here, six summits in the bag and counting, all turned to evergreen. Thank you so much for taking this time to share your wisdom with us Marc.

Marc: My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

Dr. Mark And thank you all you summit hosts for spending this time with Marc and I over here at the Virtual Summit Podcast. I'm Dr. Mark T. Wade, founder of virtual summit software, and just remember your message matters. So go out and make an impact in the world. Don't forget to checkout links and access to all these amazing things Marc's just been sharing with us in the show notes over podcast.virtualsummits.com/086.

Dr. Mark: Now I want to end this episode by saying to all the summit hosts listening right now, I believe in you and you can do this. Summits are by far one of the most powerful ways to quickly grow your list, launch your platform, make more money, and most importantly, make an impact in the world, even if you're just getting started. So don't get caught up in analysis paralysis because the world needs to hear your message, and there are people who are waiting for you to help them just get started because imperfect action is always better than no action. Thank you and see you on the next episode.