

THE **small** BUSINESS BIG **MARKETING** *show*

INSANELY EFFECTIVE
MARKETING

Episode #458
How a podcast
contributed to 10X
growth for a small
solar energy business



www.SmallBusinessBigMarketing.com

Nigel Morris Interview Transcription

Tim

I started off by asking Nigel to explain exactly what the solar analytics business does and a little tip here. He nails his elevator pitch beautifully.

Nigel

Sure. What we do is we help people save more money by optimizing their solar and understanding how they use energy in the home. Pretty much it in a nutshell. We do it through the installation of a little device that allows them to measure energy in the home. And then we apply a whole bunch of really nerdy artificial intelligence and machine learning and run all sorts of clever algorithms over that information that we collect and then displayed in a really simple way on any device a phone an app a computer anything they want to be able to understand to demystify how they're using energy and make sure their solar is working as well as it possibly can.

Tim

You know you have done clearly a lot of work on how to pitch your business. I'm not going to because I want to talk podcasting I want to nerd out about podcasting but if you were to dissect and I would encourage listeners to dissect what you just said the way you've pitched your business is very clear and precise so well done to you.

Nigel

The are the elevator pitches always is always hard and it's very hard and our business is not necessarily a simple business but everyone wants to save money on energy so if you keep it focused on the core of that then you get close I think.

Tim

Yeah yeah. Well exactly I mean identify the problem hit them between the eyes with an elegant solution and you did that beautifully. In regard to solar analytics Nigel how were you marketing it prior to landing on podcasting?

Nigel

Yes. Pretty much like most businesses and we've mucked around with how we're trying to get to the market a bit as we've evolved the business we're still technically in startup mode but like most businesses it started out with web advertising and a pretty detailed Website trying to tell stories something that we started very very early on. So we've got a pretty extensive blog. Into the traditional media. So trying to find true traditional sort of PR opportunities to tell the story. And and then the regular sort of print advertising expos trade shows those types of things.

Tim

Tell me about stories. Love it when I hear a business owner talk about stories. What do you mean you're blogging I notice you're blogging sort of monthly are you finding interesting stories to support a point that you want to blog about. Is that what you mean?

Nigel

That is absolutely what we mean. We've got a network of hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of installers and dealers of our product around the country who we deal with and we also have a direct relationship with the end users of our product because they subscribe to our service. So we can extract stories. In fact we get stories thrown at us almost every day from end users or from installers who go oh wow you know I was wanting to find the answer to this question that I had and I stumbled across the answer in your app. Thanks so much. Or I had a call from a customer who installed solar 4 and I jumped on the app and I was able to analyze it remotely and help them diagnose this problem and so they get so excited about these stories and so passionate because they realize how we can help them that they often come to us. And then what we do is use in-house experts who are good at writing to to turn that into a story that we can then share with other customers so that we can give them examples of what we can do and how we can do it.

Tim

So two things there. You have got a radar on looking for stories because it means so many business owners we were told stories all the time from customers from prospects from suppliers and I'm guessing most of the time they just sort of float over our heads and we don't acknowledge them as potential sources of great content.

Nigel

Their gold.

Tim

They are gold.

Nigel

They're absolutely gold Tim and especially we're in a fairly early emerging part of the market too so we're pushing a new solution that people aren't necessarily used to. So we really have to focus on the story I mean any business can do this any business can go to stories and I'm a massive fan of them and we'll talk about that later I'm sure. In an emerging industry we're all where you're developing where you want to educate customers about something that they may not understand well it's all about stories. If you can make it real for someone and if you can explain to someone in a language in a context and just one bite size here's how we solve this problem for this person. Look at this real life story. It resonates with people. And so yeah I'm a massive fan.

Tim

So understanding how you then bring them to life. You said you've got in-house experts. Do you have an in-house copywriter or who do you hand these stories out? Who do you tap on the shoulder and go listen to customers just told me this can you turn it into a blog post?

Nigel

Yeah look we've actually got a mix of people in-house so we do it in several ways. One is some of it comes from our sort of techie engineering kind of guys where they go or girls and they go Hey we heard about this and I've kind of written something up. Can you wordsmith that. And then we've got a marketing person who's a very experienced blogger who is end user focus so they're B to C focused and so she really understands how to talk to end users. And then we've also got a communications and marketing manager who sits in our B2B team. So she is an expert in how to write in a language that works for installers.

Tim

Again you know a great lesson to share that content creation around us as long as you can hold the voice of the brand and the tonality of the brand. You're sharing the creations content around which again holds so many business owners back because if as a smaller business they're like oh I can't do all this I can't do it all on my own.

Nigel

Yeah that's that's right Tim and in fact you know in a previous life that was one of the things that I did was helped connect people to other people. Consultants people in the industry who could write and who could interpret a story in the right way. And so there are lots of opportunities and indeed this is one of the things I used to do in a past life was actually help curate that content for people so come to me with a story I turn it into something that's readable or manageable and will disseminate that for you. So there's lots of ways that businesses can do it even if they don't have the in-house expertise.

Nigel

Why did you choose then podcasting you've gone through all these different marketing communications channels and about a year or so ago you land on podcasting how that come about?

Nigel

We did. Well the short version is that I had a relationship with a guy called Giles Parkinson who's a very very experienced journalist through the blogging and we often share our blogs with other bloggers and other channels and Giles has got a great channel specific to our industry and Giles was thinking and experimenting with podcasting as just another means to get out there to get the messages out and when you do blogging you know a good blog is a fair bit of work there. So there's a fair bit of time involved in it and in chatting with Giles we sort of realize wow if we could condense what would be many hours of work of writing four or five different blogs into a bite sized 20 minute 25 minute podcast once every couple of weeks be like a summary of everything for everyone that speaks to what every one of us struggles with these days and that is where do we get the time to get this information right we've got information coming at us in so many different ways. So I put the idea to Giles and said Giles there's an opportunity here to talk specifically about some of these issues in the industry that we're facing. I'd like to sponsor that as solar analytics so that we've got a

conduit out into the market. Let's keep it open. Let's not talk about solar analytics let's talk about industry issues and we can weave in some of the good stuff about our business.

Tim

Genius that is genius and Giles is gone. Hell yeah.

Nigel

Luckily Giles and I have got a great relationship and he was looking for more stories he was looking for more ways to get messages and communication out through the channels and diversity is key right. Some people love a story that they can sit down and read for five to 15 or 20 minutes. Others are on the bus or the train or the car and just want a nice 15 20 minute story. And in fact it's the most common one of the most common stories we hear from listeners and we've got thousands of listeners now is I got one literally just yesterday where someone said geez I just had a four hour drive and I've just gone through 15 or 20 episodes of your podcast. What a wonderful way to kill the time.

Tim

Buddy I love getting those emails and I look for language like you know I love your podcast it's addictive or you know I can't stop listening and it's wonderful when you get that kind of stuff because sometimes you get the mic and you wondering if there is anyone out there.

Nigel

Every time.

Tim

Like right now. Were you a podcast fan Nigel before starting your own?

Nigel

A little bit. Podcasting and listening to podcasts is as you know Tim is a relatively new thing.

Tim

Not really. You're on a 10 year old show champion.

Nigel

When I say that I mean if you go back three or four years and you asked 10 people at a barbecue what podcast to listen to. You know probably a proportion of them would go what's a podcast like.

Tim

A majority.

Nigel

But it's really taken off in the last couple of years. Even in from sitting on the outside not being anywhere near as experienced as you. So yeah I listened to a bunch. I don't get a heap

of time for it but I do what I really love about it especially if you're on the right thing you can get a mix of entertainment and get a mix of education you can get a mix of business info. There's so many different topics and it's just a wonderful medium and it works really well these days. It's easy it's simple it's fast.

Tim

One and I know the answer to this but I have to ask questions that I think my listeners are thinking. You operate in the solar power industry you're creating a show for it sounds like it's both b to b and b to c end user as well as industry now end user. That's a very broad that's anyone who could potentially put solar panels into their home or business. But as industry and you and I are doing a roadshow at the moment around solar panel for the solar panel industry. A lot of those blokes in the audience I wouldn't have thought prior to your show coming out a podcasting listeners.

Nigel

I think you're right.

Tim

So how did you overcome that? It would have been very easy for you to go you know for our point of view it's a great way to kind of pull all this content that we're getting every week into a quick 25 minute soundbite. But jeez all these blokes installing solar panels in homes and businesses does not listen to podcasts. How did you break through that kind of limiting belief?

Nigel

Yeah that's a really good question and I guess what we did was we leveraged all every channel that we had available to us our newsletter to our customers our Facebook page to our customers. We've got a group page for our installers that's very very targeted. And then also going through Gile's platform and his website he can reach his subscribers and consumers through his channels as well. So we used every and just every week it's just another little very simple very very economic put a link on your Facebook page that says hey latest podcast is up. Here's the topics we covered this week. And as we've done that we've started to build the brand of the podcast and we've also started to get people to just give it a go give it a try and find a way you know you could literally be listening to our podcast with your headphones in while you're mounting systems to the roof before you install the solar or driving to a job

Tim

Listening to the headphones on when you're especially in a solar panel on a roof on the third story?

Nigel

Safety is critical but there's a lot of tedium, especially in the bigger jobs or the large projects where guys are just handling literally tens of thousands of panels there just lots of little

opportunities where they're just chunking through their day and we can just fill those gaps for them

Tim

Now Nigel I want to start to geek out on the whole podcasting. I want to dissect exactly how you put a show together all aspects of it but I want to cut to the end and I want you to share with our listeners what podcasting has done for your business. Because if we understand that then dissecting the podcast is going to be a whole lot more interesting to the business owner who's thinking of doing it. So let's go through it more customers?

Nigel

Well answering your question about what it's done for us the really interesting thing is that what we needed to do in this business is I came in a couple of years ago and one of the things that we really needed to do was build credibility. We needed to prove predominantly to our industry to our dealers or to our potential dealers. We needed to prove that we had credibility as a business and we also needed to demonstrate the credibility and the opportunities for us to for them to use our product. And so what podcasting has allowed us to do is by keeping the topics broad by talking about the industry in general and batting being advocates for solar energy in general. We've positioned ourselves as advocates for them. And that was part of what we'd been doing before but this gave us a literally a mic and a mouthpiece to do that and so we used it to build trust with them and to build credibility. And then as I said before we weaved in the stories about how our business how our product helps deliver that credibility for them for their end users.

Tim

Okay tick opinion leader industry advocate. You've developed trust amongst your prospects and your customers. I want you to tell me everything. I've written a book called the boomerang effect and the boomerang effect is very simple. The premise is the more helpful you are in your marketing the more it's going to return multiples. Okay so your marketing podcasting is incredibly helpful and I want to understand what those multiples are. So reputation I'm guessing and I've seen you at the conference that we were at last week people know who you are. So your personal brand is on the rise within your niche?

Nigel

Correct.

Tim

Come on you're being humble here I don't want you to just you know I want you to you go Timbo I'm glad you asked me what podcasting did to my business it bloody grown at unbelievably. You are now speaking.

Nigel

Yeah I'm a regular on the speaker circuit. And coming right down to it Timbo you know 26 years and solar for me and I love this business. I love the people in the business and we've watched the industry go through ups and downs we have challenges we have shanks we

have good people we have bad people we have good policy we have bad policy. And so commentating on that and being a voice for the industry is something I absolutely love. I've been lucky enough to get a couple of awards for advocacy and all those kinds of things. So I have built a bit of a personal brand and a bit of a passion or around a passion for trying to keep the industry on track delivering high quality solutions delivering clever marketing all those types of things and so yeah I'm definitely leveraging the brand that I build up doing that kind of work in the past and delivering that through the podcast.

Tim

Your website traffic your Google rankings increasing thanks to podcasting?

Nigel

They are. Look I think it's early days for us we're only a year in and we're still finding our feet in exactly what the best content is and how to produce and how frequently and how long they should be. So I think we've still got some good learnings to come. But there is no doubt at all that we are driving more traffic to the places that we want it to and we use it as a lever if you like to try and bring a topic to the fore or alert people's attention to something new that's coming or or find an example of how our product can be used that others don't. And so our growth where we are 10x growth in the last 12 months 18 months or so. So our growth is astronomical. And certainly the podcast is playing a really key role in that. And you know may I say incredibly good value way to do that compared to spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on print media or Yellow Pages or any the old fashioned ways of doing.

Tim

Incredible isn't it like the cost versus return on podcasting. I mean is there better? You know again we're gonna dissect it so we'll go through what it does cost and the time and resources it takes and yes it's surprisingly small. Just to finish off Nigel I'm guessing you're getting media coverage. You were even quoted in. What's that show on the ABC that.

Nigel

Media watch

Tim

That's amazing. So for overseas listeners that's a show that kind of keeps the media accountable. You want to be mentioned on Media Watch in a positive light not a negative light.

Nigel

That's right. You don't want to get a bad rap. No we got a good rap. They ran a story recently about some of the claims that were being made in the media about solar energy and about the energy industry and there was a lot of debate about that and in classic media what style they sort of tore a lot of those claims apart and and used us as evidence. So the conversation that we were having or had in a previous podcast they stumbled across it and they said here's an example of some industry advocates some industry people challenging

these claims and here's what they said and we got a little audio snip and a use of our logo which for us we didn't know that was going to happen we just happened to see it and went Oh my gosh that's exactly what you want. That's that just happened organically so clearly whoever our audience is reaching it's cutting through for us and that's the beautiful thing about podcasting compared to trying to do a mailbox drop or run a multi-million dollar TV campaign podcasting and getting lots of detailed content out into the worldwide web. Just has this kind of winking effect and it can find its way through to all sorts of places that you would never anticipate like Media Watch for us.

Tim

Totally agree. Just the last bit on what podcasting is done. You've got sponsors I mean solar analytics is a sponsor of the solar insiders podcast. You have other third party businesses that are paying to be on your show?

Nigel

We do. So we've been lucky that we've had one main sponsor that just jumped straight on very very early and said I want to sponsor this every two weeks. It works for me to have a little bit of coverage every couple of weeks and I don't have to contribute I can just get involved around the edges and feed you a little bit more info so he sees us as a conduit as well. And the way that he gets access to that is by sponsoring and we also from time to time have other sponsors who jump on board and my sponsor our particular episode or whatnot. But the way that we've been able to pay for the production of it is by having an external sponsor. And if you like an internal sponsor in me because we contribute a small amount to each episode to keep the wheels turning and pay for the production.

Tim

So here you are you are building a personal brand you are building the solar analytics brand and you are actually I'm going to guess you cash flow positive because now you've got third party sponsors paying for the marketing of your brand. I love it.

Nigel

It's not great.

Tim

So now let's get all podcast nerdy Nigel. So from day one how did you decide what to podcast about because your show is on your iTunes description it says it's about the ins and outs of the solar industry and what it means for consumers. In my experience listening to some podcasts that I just see come along and start for the first time to listen to talking to business owners who want a podcast they're like What would we podcast about. And people get stuck on that. How did you decide what your show was gonna be on?

Nigel

Yeah that's a really good question. I think again going back to that point I made before right. There's so much information out there and particularly if you're in a B2B environment like like we are where we're talking to dealers every day hundreds and

hundreds and hundreds of people out there in the industry were at events where there are thousands of people and we're hearing stories we're hearing anecdotes we're hearing things that are going on in the industry we're hearing good stories we're hearing bad stories and so we were trying to communicate that previously through blogs by picking up on an issue and then writing a thousand words about it and trying to really dig in to that issue. But what we did with the podcast was essentially I spend in between each episode I spent two weeks just keeping my ear to the ground and I have a little very simple app on my phone and every time I see or hear or read something that I think would be something that the listeners would like to know about I just make a little note of it and that is literally how I build up a very very simple little agenda of the types of things that we can talk about each week. So that's the first thing is I'm a kind of an intelligence gatherer throughout the couple of weeks leading up to each podcast. In terms of how we construct the podcast personally I think we could still do a lot more with it but we've settled on a very very simple format and that is that we have five.

Tim

Yeah hold that thought before we go into format I do want to talk about format the app you talked about is that like a notes app? Just a simple notes app?

Nigel

It is. Workflowy. In my case is really simple. Just somewhere to dump a note and go don't forget to mentioned that there was a new world record set in technology this week or whatever it is.

Tim

I can tell you for a fact. And the most successful radio people ever in Australia. Hamish and Andy. Right now I did some work with those guys. They too did exactly that right. They carried their smartphones. They open up the notes app and every time something funny happened in their day to day lives they would either take a photo of it they'd record a voice memo they'd type some little notes. So this is like that brilliant just always capture what's happening in and around your business life.

Nigel

Yeah that's right. And again come back to the thing about stories right. It's those little tiny things. When you go oh someone told me this story and it was just gold right. And there's if you capture them at the moment then you're not going to forget them right. You can just then relay that. And so yeah I'm glad to hear I'm not the only one doing it that way I thought I was being lazy but if superstars are doing it too I feel a whole lot better.

Tim

Correct. Okay. You're gonna tell us about the format.

Nigel

So the format that we've settled on is that we have about five primary areas that we want to cover off consistently every week. Okay so for example we have a good news section

what some good news that's happened in the solar industry in the last fortnight. Let's share the good news. Let's give some examples of that every single week two or three very simple little stories about something great that we've heard that's out there our most popular segment believe it or not is crap solar. That's the one that follows good solar where we talk about some of the bad things that are going on in the industry and what the industry is doing about that or tips for consumers to avoid getting ripped off or things for installers to be aware of around technological or regulatory issues. So we have this little format. And so my job every two weeks is to plug the gaps in each of those five little areas that we want to cover each week. So that gives us consistency.

Tim

Can you just tell us what that's news crap solar. What are the other three segments?

Nigel

Like I said so we have a sort of policy an industry overview wrap. So the macro level issues we always start with that. So what's the big picture story that's usually sort of what politics and whatever else.

Tim

Richard Stubbs did say to me actually lead with your best content. I'm not sure you're leading with your best content when it comes to policy. But you know your industry better than me. Okay.

Nigel

I'll take that on board. That's good feedback. Then we jump in to solar technology news because a lot of our listeners are really really interested in the tech. So what are two or three things that we've learned about technology and our industry moves at a lightning pace. So there's always a new product a new solution a new tech a new record that's been reached. So that's the solar tech section. Then we move into good solar that's stories that we've heard that are good then we move into crap solar that stories or problems that we've heard that are bad and then because I'm an electric vehicle nerd Tim we wrap it up with a little 2 minute segment on some cool stuff about electric motorcycles in particular every week which is a funny thing to put in a solar podcast. What we know about our listeners Tim is they love anything techie. A lot of them rev heads and electric motorcycles are such a quirky little area that people just love that because it's unusual. So it's a little hook to keep him right there till the end of the show.

Tim

Big learning there is again because I want so many people who will listen to this to go off and create their own podcast and break through some of these limiting beliefs. You have got a simple format five areas five primary areas that you cover each week so you know what you're working with. You've got this blank template you go in with and then you look for news to put into it. I love it. Ok format tick. Now you've gone down the path of a co-host. You mentioned Giles. I imagine Giles as some kind of English Irish aristocrat with a name like that who dresses like Sherlock Holmes and has a pipe in his mouth.

Nigel

Quite the opposite really. But I liked the reference.

Tim

So you've gone down the co-host route. I love the co-host route because I had a co-host Luke for the first 80 episodes of this show. Luke is every and we're still great mates. Luke is everything I'm not he was the mechanic he loved getting into the detail of things and I was sort of up here at the macro view and often we'd clash and it kind of made for interesting listening. What about you and Giles? You sounds like your good mates so you can have a good yarn.

Nigel

That's the key mate. That is absolutely the key. And when we dived into this we thought jeez how's this going to work and we mucked around with a bit of format but very quickly we realized that and in fact it was Giles partner who is also our producer. And we kept sort of saying how are we going okay. Is this working right. And she looked at us and said Do you know what it's like listening to you guys sitting at the pub having a yarn and just spilling your guts having a bit of a debate challenging each other. But you've got a shtick right. You've got a relationship with each other that gives people a little chuckle. You're not trying to make yourselves out to be something that you're not. You just simple honest having a conversation. Anybody could be sitting around that bar listening into that conversation or joining in that conversation so people feel comfortable they feel like they know us that in fact that's a common bit of feedback is that we get is Wow I feel like I'm having a chat with you every two weeks because I'm listening to the podcast and it is conversational. It's unstructured. It's ad libbed. We do it in one take. But that relationship between us and the ability to read each other a little bit and remind each other of little bits and pieces that one of us might have forgotten because we're ad libbing so we fill in the gaps for each other. We drive each other in different directions but then we also pull each other back to make sure that we're sticking to our format.

Tim

It's great. And you've nailed it in terms of having that co-host strategy. There are other strategies of course that could just be you. Like this show is just me and a guest you can get on. I love the soapbox podcasting strategy where you just get up on your soapbox and share an opinion once a week or once a day or once a fortnight is obviously answering listener questions. There's interview formats there's all sorts but certainly the co-hosts one is working for you when you're getting that feedback I get that too is like you know Hey Timbo do you mind if I call you Timbo Hey Tim I feel like I know you. That's what podcasting can do. It develops this personal relationship with your customers you can't get that from running ads letterbox drops.

Nigel

You nailed it mate. You nailed it. And that's where it works so well for us is because we've created that sense that no matter where you are or who you are or whether you've actually

met us or not you know a bit about us and you know exactly what we're coming from and you might not necessarily agree with us or you might not necessarily agree with one of us but you're going to hear a reasonable debate you're going to hear a balanced debate and you're going to hear from two guys that aren't there shouting out like tall poppies we're just straight up guys having a chat about stuff that you can relate to. And I think that and the fact that we constantly take the mickey out of each other love art works really well in our audience.

Tim

Nigel do you do it face to face or over Skype or how do you actually put a show together?

Nigel

No actually of the 40 odd episodes that we've done we've only ever done one face to face so we're always remote. Giles actually lives up on the north coast of New South Wales and is on the road a lot as a journalist I'm based here in Sydney. And so every Tuesday we have a booking in our calendar I walk into the boardroom where I am now. I set up my rig and I log on to a website. Giles logs on from the other end we do our audio checks and in three or four minutes flat we're up and running and recording.

Tim

Can you see each other?

Nigel

No we can't.

Tim

It's interesting. Interesting. Well that shows that's a very strong relationship to be able to kind of bounce off each other without eyeballing each other even you know over Skype. What are you using a software called?

Nigel

Cast.

Tim

Cast.

Nigel

Yeah it's a nice little piece of software that's wasn't my choice. That was the expertise that we've got by having a great producer and she's ex radio and TV. That's Giles partner. And so she found this little app for us that works really really well. There are a couple of other ones that we've tried and sometimes we do have guests on occasionally and we've used a number of other ones where we can record over a phone or use other applications but cast is really really lovely because it doesn't matter where anyone is what timezone is they're in where they are in the world they can just click this link open it up and then we can manage it through there. So it's a really lovely simple way of managing.

Tim

So just explain that just a little bit more so we can break through that kind of technical freak out that may some listeners might be having you go to cast you say Okay I'm ready to cast you hit what do you do open up a session?

Nigel Yeah that's right you both log on to a session there's a sort of a texting box in there a little communications box in there where I then paste in the notes that I've collected over the last couple of weeks I paste that in so we can both see it on the screen you can do a little audio check and make sure the levels are good and then when we're ready to go we hit the record button and we just run through our session at the end of the session you hit end recording and upload and it uploads it up and then it's linked back into our SoundCloud account where we store the file.

Tim

Is it a service or free?

Nigel

I think in our case we're actually using a free version but there is a paid version as well.

Tim

Right. So talk it to me about other hardware that you're using. You're doing it on your phone? What kind of mic setup? Are you using headphones?

Nigel

Yeah so that was a bit of an evolutionary thing as well we started off using the regular kind of headsets that anyone would have laying around for their computer and they were okay but after a few episodes we had a few people saying you could do a bit with the auto audio quality and you could really lift the listening experience as one of the lessons I learned actually Tim by listening to podcasts is it might seem like a small thing but if you've got a listener sitting there somewhere listening in if you're having a grapple to listen because of poor audio quality or poor levels or whatever it is they're just going to tune out that's what happened so you need to invest a little bit. And so we started digging around and I found a really simple little rig it's made by a company called Focus right. It's a little amp that you plug into your computer just through a USB port. I've got two input so I can have a mic or two mics or a Mic and some other device plugged in. It's got a really nice set of headphones and it comes with a really nice Mic which hopefully is working for listeners today. That set up was under 400 bucks.

Tim

Wow.

Nigel

And just a brilliant simple little piece of kit. I grabbed one and gave it a try. And then in the end I just bought another one and put it in a box and sent it to Giles and said Giles you got to get onto this gear. So he's got one .

Tim

Oh yeah. Again I'll link to that in the show notes for this episode and remind people where they can find all that. So what we're learning here. Is not that hard is it?

Nigel

Oh no it's the opposite.

Tim

I just want to see more small business owners embrace podcasting and it doesn't have to be prolific. I mean you're putting out a show every fortnight I'm putting out a show every week there's others putting out a show every day. But again that could be a deterrent for some like I've never going to find the time. Hopefully this seem that doesn't take as long as they think it does. But the other thing is just thinking about doing a six part series do seasons that each season has six episodes or five episodes whatever it is you just set the expectation with your audience so that they know what to expect. You know what to expect and work on it from then because it doesn't have to be this incredible you don't have to be a slave to a podcast that you create.

Nigel

No. And look if anyone on the net and I've heard you talking about this in your in the show that we're doing at the moment but you've got to have content in any business on any website. Now it's all about content right. Whether it's blogs or whether it's fresh content on your Web sites are getting good rankings. You got to have fresh content going up all the time. And there's work in that. There's no doubt about that. But it's just the new way that we do advertising and PR these days. So get on with it. But one of the things that podcasting has done for me is that instead of having a try and come up with three or four blogs and getting it past our internal people and getting the brand story right and getting the word crafting right and all those kinds of things which is can be an investment instead of doing that which can be hours and hours of work and a lot of focus time on the computer all I'm doing Tim is flicking a few notes into my phone over a couple of weeks and then I sit down at four o'clock and by 4:30 the podcast is done and I walk away. It is the most time efficient way to get a lot of stories and a lot of content out that I've ever used. It's amazing in that sense.

Tim

So you then hand that onto Giles wife who I'm hoping also has a very aristocratic English name. You pass it on to her. She edits it and you walk away you go my job is done I've created the content leave all the mechanical technical stuff to someone else. Awesome.

Nigel

Exactly right. And we're very lucky that we've got Giles partner sitting in the background there with a lot of expertise around this. But having said that the way our show works it's not the case for everyone but because we don't want it to be really complex really long heavily structured podcast because it is really just about this conversation. It means that we I think in almost every single case maybe bar one we have done it in a single 25 minute take ad libbed the whole way through and no editing except for an intro and outro. And so the production time the key to the success of our show and keeping our show simple and low cost has been just make it work and just go with it. And use a bit of stagecraft if you make a blunder don't stop and collapse just keep rolling. You know and we just do that and it keeps it real for people which again cuts through to our audience.

Tim

Now this cut to how you market each episode and were by where the episodes live which I think it looks a little bit confusing from my point of view for years your episodes live on RenewEconomy.com.au Which I'm guessing is Nigel's media blog site for the industry.

Nigel

Giles. Yes.

Tim

That's right. So RenewEconomy.com.au Then forward slash podcast then forward slash solar insiders.

Nigel

Yeah.

Tim

Yeah. The episodes so quite elongated but I'm guessing what you're doing is then you're putting that link all over the place through all the other marketing touch points that you have the newsletters the ads you know all that type of stuff. That's how you're getting it out there.

Nigel

Yeah you're exactly right. And renew economy has a huge following. He has millions and millions of hits every month. And so he's got a newsletter that goes out on a daily basis and so when we record the podcast he'll have a little link as one of his newsletter stories that here's the latest podcast from solar insiders or energy insiders his other one. And so we get an automatic bit of PR through that and he tends to want to drive them back into his website. So he wants the traffic in his web site so he stores that soundcloud link up on there. But of course when we promote it we can get a link from itunes we can get a link from SoundCloud we get a link from Renew Economy we get a link from all sorts of places. So depending on what we think is going to work for most listeners. We can post a link up in any number of ways directing them to a number of sites. A lot of it depends on the key I think is a lot of people have their favourite podcasting app that they'll use. And so the key is once you get us installed on your favorite podcasting app then it's automatically

updating every day. And so you can have a notification. So whether we reach them with advertising or not they're going to get a notification that says hey there's a new edition of solar insiders here ready for you to listen to right now.

Tim

Well that's right. A lot of those podcasting apps and I like pocketcast which is an Australian app but they're all pulling from itunes anyway. So there is only about six places that you'd need to put your podcasts and again I'll put a link to that in the show notes. You know things like iTunes Google Play Spotify Stitcher there's four because a lot of a lot of those third party apps as I said just pulling for itunes. Where do you get the most traffic for your show Nigel?

Nigel

That's a really good question Timbo and I'll be honest and say I don't know.

Tim

I stumped him. I've stumped the podcaster.

Nigel

I don't know we can see the stats and this is really more the domain of Giles and his team at the other end because he is the owner of the podcast I'm only the co-host. So they're doing more detailed and rigorous analysis than I am. But we can certainly see SoundCloud gives really good statistics on views or listens I should say. So we can see some stats through there. I can't see the iTunes stuff because it's their account so they can see them. And we also can measure the traffic through his website and we can measure the clicks on links that we provide through our social media feeds. So we've got a little menagerie of what we've got. But I think you're absolutely on the money Tim. The next step for us to go to the next level is really to spend a bit more time. Now that we've got the format down we've got our listener base up we've got a content that's working we've got lots of feedback that's helped us fine tune there. The next step now for us which we're about to undertake is really let's stop for a minute. Let's dive back in. Let's really analyze all the data that we've got about where our listeners are coming from how they're finding us and then we can leverage that.

Tim

Yeah love it. One of the things I love about the marketing of the solar insiders podcast is you've got some merch.

Nigel

Who doesn't want merch right. I think I forced a T-shirt on you when I saw you last week.

Tim

You did that. That's amazing, I love it. You say you've got t shirts what else you got?

Nigel

We just stuck to t shirts at the moment.

Tim

Are you getting them done just getting them done at a local place?

Nigel

Look I don't even know Tim. We had an idea last year for a big industry show that we did and we actually did a live podcast as something unique. We thought let's do one at the show we can talk about what's going on the industry but we can also have live listeners asking questions. So we gave that a ran which actually worked out really really well and we thought well how are we going to spread the word a little bit more and the marketing guys who are helping us with the show said that's easy We're gonna get a T-shirt made and we know exactly what we're going to put on it because the thing about radio or the thing about podcasting the thing about the audio is that you know who are the people who we're dealing with you can't see them you can't visualize them. So she said we're going to put an image of you and Giles on the on the t shirt to build the recognition of who you guys are. So it was all about putting a face to the voice if you like. Yeah and just real simple we printed 100 of them out and we started giving them away and now they're a little bit sought after which is great we're actually about to do a new run of them because we had so many people we had a big show last week and we had a constant stream of people coming up to the solar analytics booth where we had the T-shirts saying hey we know one of your guys Nigel's involved in the podcast we're a regular listener. They told us we might be able to get a hold of a T-shirt. Where do we get one of those. And and before we knew it we'd blown our whole inventory of T-shirts and we've now got people walking around promoting the show for us.

Tim

You're selling them?

Nigel

No we're giving them away.

Tim

Given them away.

Nigel

We're giving them away. We thought about selling and it was just too hard. Timbo it was a very low cost marketing exercise for us the solar analytics brand is on it of course. So we can justify that as a marketing expense. We give T-shirts away promoting our business and all the time at these types of events we want people out there proudly spruiking our brand and our name and by making it more about the podcast but still with the connection to the brand. We took it away from being an advertisement about a product to being a story about this podcast that's revealing the secrets of the solar industry that just happens to be by this great company who does monitor.

Tim

Yeah love it. Naj I think you're onto something. Buddy well done. It's lovely to speak to another small business that's actually creating a podcast. Hopefully this show will inspire others to do the same. If it does both Nigel and I would love to hear what you choose to do in that regard. So if people want to find Nigel your show they go to reneweconomy.com.au. If they want to go and buy some fancy solar analytics pedaling business for their home go to solaranalytics.com.au And Buddy I wish you all the best for your podcasting career. Well done.

Nigel

Thanks so much. Timbo it's been it's been great to chat to you and I've learned a bit too so thanks for your feedback. We'll take that on board. Good idea.