

Craig Lucie: From News Anchor to Chief Story Teller – Episode #1

Craig Lucie on Capital Club Radio

00:04 Broadcasting live from the Pro Business Channel Studios in Atlanta, Georgia. It's time for Capital Club Radio brought to you by Flock Specialty Finance. Please welcome your host, Chairman and CEO, Michael Flock.

00:23 Michael Flock: We're really excited today to introduce Craig Lucie, the founder of Lucie Content, and a star in the world of broadcast media. He started his company to highlight positive things that are happening in the world today through compelling and captivating storytelling. His title at his company is not CEO but rather Chief Storyteller. He's going to talk to us about why in a few minutes. Before we get started though, his credentials are incredible. They're creative, stunningly impressive for a young man of only 40-years old. With two decades of news experience, Craig has earned an Emmy for Best Anchor and several AP Awards. The Georgia Association of Broadcasters has recognized him as the best on-air personality in the state. He's appeared on ABC's World News Tonight, CNN, MSNBC and FOX News. In addition, he was one of the few journalists invited to have dinner with President Trump at the White House while covering the State of the Union Address. He's also Chairman of the Top Dog Canine Foundations which trains service dogs. He's reported the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia and the Capital for the presidential inauguration. He's graduated from Southern Methodist University, SMU, where he majored in broadcast journalism.

01:55 Craig Lucie: That's right.

01:56 MF: Yes.

01:57 CL: That's a long bio. First off, I love the introduction music there.

02:01 MF: Okay.

02:01 CL: Just got me ready for this whole discussion.

02:04 MF: Good.

02:05 CL: Thirty-eight, you aged me. I'm not 40 yet.

02:06 MF: Oh, I'm sorry.

02:06 CL: But I'm close.

02:07 MF: Okay. I apologize.

02:08 CL: That's alright. No, no worries.

02:09 MF: You're so mature. You've come so far in a short period of time, Craig. I guess I thought you're more mature in your years.

02:15 CL: If you see my hair, you're like, "That guy is definitely 40" with the amount of gray that I

Craig Lucie: From News Anchor to Chief Story Teller – Episode #1

have in there.

02:20 MF: Okay. Okay.

02:21 CL: But thanks for having me on. It's a pleasure to be a part of the Flock Stars Group on this podcast of yours.

02:26 MF: Flock Stars, I love that name.

02:28 CL: It's fantastic.

02:28 MF: I may change the name actually for my company.

02:30 CL: Let's go for it.

02:31 MF: Flock Stars, yes. We got a great team. But first, Craig, let's talk about your biggest passion which drives Lucie Content, and that is storytelling. How did this become your passion and your purpose? I mean most people would call themselves CEO, they're very proud of that, that title, but you are Chief Storyteller.

02:52 CL: Yes.

02:52 MF: So how did you get into this?

02:54 CL: You know, when I look back, I really started documenting our family holidays with my dad's camcorder. I might've been like five or six. And so, I just enjoyed turning on the camera and documenting my brother, my parents opening presents, and then that just translated throughout my lifetime. And when I went to SMU, my brother, he's three and a half years older than me, he went to UNC Chapel Hill. He'd graduated a business major. I was on track, on the business track, and he was an analyst for Bank of America and he's working 100 plus hours and he was calling me while I was at SMU saying, "This, the real world is not fun at all. All I'm doing is crunching numbers." And I'm thinking calculus didn't really speak to me, statistics didn't really speak to me. I had shadowed a well-known sportscaster in Jacksonville named Sam Kouvaris, and I really loved what he did. He actually spoke to us when I was in elementary school and it just left an impact on me. And I thought, "Wow. Here he is, doing his passion out there covering sports events."

03:58 CL: And so, I switched my major from business, although I kind of wish I had a business degree now, but to broadcast journalism. And I noticed that once they gave me a camera and I once again had that camera in my hands, and I'd go out all around Dallas and start telling stories, and just the classes resonated with me, and my GPA skyrocketed. And so I changed my major to broadcast journalism. And at the time, B-Low had donated two million dollars for a brand new studio at SMU, so we had a state of the art studio there, much nicer than some of the smaller TV markets had, and I was like, "What better way to get off the ground and learn this field."

04:36 MF: So, you kind of fell into your passion with a camcorder.

04:38 CL: Pretty much. Pretty much, yes. And now, it's known as a multimedia journalist, but... I

Craig Lucie: From News Anchor to Chief Story Teller – Episode #1

guess when I first started, I was a one-man band. And things are actually translating back to one-man banding now in today's media world because it's so saturated. I was fortunate that when I started in Corpus Christi at KZTV, I had to do some one-man banding, but we still had a photographer and editor if we needed it. And then as you moved up in different media markets, then you had a photographer. At one point, we had LTOs, live truck operators. So literally, I would go out with a photographer, do a report. I'd tell my LTO, "I'd like to be live at the state capital because it'd be a nice backdrop." and the live truck operator would go set up the live truck. I'd literally pull up with my photographer, get out, cameras already set up and do my live shot. But now, because media is so saturated, and you can get it anywhere and everywhere. We're turning back toward the multimedia journalist one-man band, and you see that here in Atlanta.

05:39 MF: So, you define yourself today as a one-man band?

05:42 CL: I do, but I'm fortunate now with my company that I have 1099, so there are... The crews that I work with are so talented, there's no way I could get to their level of production work. And so, when we go and I meet with clients, I kind of educate them, tell them like my editors, our production crew, these are multi-Emmy award winning crews.

06:00 CL: DuPont Award-winning journalist here, cinematographers with a deep background in the business. So, even if I, every single day, worked on my shooting and editing, even though I've done it a lot in my career, these guys are so good that I'd rather just focus on putting the story together, and then just helping them edit it all into one piece.

06:00 MF: So, you're surrounding yourself with the best and brightest that you can find in terms of current media that you need to take Lucie Content forward.

06:40 CL: Exactly, yes. And it's great now with... You can literally get on Vimeo and I had a client who needed an interview in Tyler, Texas, and I was able to sort through and kind of... Just with my background, know who has the skills when it really comes to shooting and editing and who doesn't. And so, I was easily able to tap a crew based out of Houston and go grab that interview from Tyler, Texas. They made the drive over there and then just Dropbox all the content to us and then we put it together back here in Atlanta. So, we literally... If someone needed something shot in Japan, I could probably find a crew in Japan, Dropbox it to us, and we'll put it together here in Atlanta.

07:18 MF: Okay, so having a big network with these kinds of people who have the skills is critical to your success.

07:23 CL: Absolutely. Even... We could go out right now out to... I'm looking out on a parking lot and let's say a news event happened, I could go out and shoot it with my iPhone and then give it to one of my editors and he could spice it up to a way that you thought that that was a RED camera, one of the nicest cameras out there, 1080i, HD video production.

07:43 CL: And in my... Toward the end of my career at Channel 2, I was actually going out and shooting stories on my iPhone. If there was not a photographer available, I'd be like, "Okay, that's alright.", and I'd go and shoot it on my iPhone and I would just hold the iPhone a little bit closer to the person I was interviewing, and then I would give it to my editor and we put it together. No one in the building knew that we shot...

Craig Lucie: From News Anchor to Chief Story Teller – Episode #1

08:05 MF: You did it with an iPhone.

08:06 CL: Yes, yes. In fact, I recently talked to a photographer, he goes, "Oh man, I went Craig Lucie out on this story. I didn't even pull out my camera, I used my iPhone and no one even knew."

08:16 MF: It was that high quality.

08:18 CL: The iPhones are incredible. If our clients just want to get down and dirty and shoot content on their own and then pass it on to us, to let us spice it up a bit, they can. But this business is all about teaching my clients to become their own content creators. We have a senior assisted-living facility down in Florida, they have properties in Tennessee, a few properties all over Florida, and we're running their social media. We're running all their content, they're a great client because they forced me to quickly learn all facets of marketing. We're just now pushing out our first direct mailer. Never did I think I'd be in the direct mailing business, but it's awesome.

08:57 CL: Now we're doing direct mailers, but I go to those properties and I train the staff and I say, "Look, you have people in here who are part of the greatest generation. You've got World War II veterans in here; you've got Vietnam veterans. We have Veteran's Day..." ", this was a little while ago, "We have Veteran's Day coming up and I want you to look for those neat moments inside the walls that you can just capture with your iPhone. Put them in a Dropbox and let us go to work."

09:22 CL: And so, I actually have a newspaper journalist who's writing all original articles for me on that particular client. I said, "I want you to focus not necessarily on the client, because my client is going to become their own news outlet. Every piece of content is going to come from their website or their social media channels. I want you to tell the stories within the walls of my client."

09:42 CL: So, with the Veterans Day coming up, we profiled a veteran. And the next day, my client said, "Did you call ABC News?" I said "No, but they saw that article that we pushed out on social media on your website and how it was getting traction, they wanted a little piece of the action." And so, they came and interviewed the client. I mean they interviewed the resident, but my client got some earned media, some free PR, if you will.

10:05 MF: Right.

10:06 CL: And that's kind of the strategy. The strategy here is in this day and age, you don't have to rely on traditional media to get your story out there. If it's told in a compelling way, it will get shared. When it's shared, it drives conversations. When conversations are sparked about your brand, that is the key to marketing. And when I interviewed a guy named Ted Wright, who started Fizz Marketing, he said that to me and I was like, "Wow, that's exactly what I've thought all along, but I didn't know that it was necessarily called marketing."

10:40 MF: Right.

10:40 CL: To me, it's storytelling.

10:41 MF: Okay.

Craig Lucie: From News Anchor to Chief Story Teller – Episode #1

10:42 CL: But storytelling is marketing for your business, your non-profit, for you as an individual. Just tell your story and when you tell your story, you are creating a connection between your business and your customer. Or if you need to turn on the internal communication side and hype up your employees, tell the story about your CEO. Maybe your CEO was... Mike, I detailed cars for three years. Tell the story about how... What he learned while detailing cars and how he worked his way up to run a Fortune 500 company. That way, when you tell those stories, the employees think to themselves, "Oh wow, I used to detail cars." or "I used to sell clothes."

11:20 MF: Right.

11:21 CL: That's really interesting to learn his story and how he worked his way up and that proves to them the sky is the limit. You can work as hard as you want and get to where you want to be.

11:31 MF: Right, right. Yes, well, more and more, companies are using stories to promote themselves or promote their brand. We've learned from you just in the last few minutes how you got into journalism and the media industry, but let's take this one step further. How did you get into storytelling because you were studying journalism well before storytelling became kind of a... It's more than a fad today, but how could you then, you'd gone on to, ultimately, Channel 2, how did you get into storytelling per se?

12:06 CL: We're trained storytellers. It was my major at SMU as a broadcast journalism major, and journalism is all about telling the stories and getting both sides to every story.

12:17 MF: Okay.

12:17 CL: And also delivering neutral news, which is... You see it on the local side, but it's tough to see it now on the national side, which is another reason why I jumped ship. I didn't like to see what was going on on the national level when it comes to news, and you turn on the news and you see how CNN covers a story. Then you flip and you see how Fox covers it, and then you flip on MSNBC. So, storytelling is... It's just something that I learned early on when I was a kid with that camcorder. I like to go out and just meet people, learn what makes them tick. I'm kind of weird in that I almost like to... When I have a conversation with the people, I'm like, "How did you start your day?"

12:35 MF: Right.

12:35 CL: What did you do this morning?

12:35 MF: You don't want to know.

[chuckle]

12:35 CL: So, I like to know how people spend their hours, especially...

13:11 MF: Personally.

Craig Lucie: From News Anchor to Chief Story Teller – Episode #1

13:12 CL: Personally, on the entrepreneurial level. And so, when I'm on the road, I listen to *How I Built This* podcast because I love to see how people built their companies, what makes them tick, how they spend their time on their particular companies. All of that interests me. And it's not just entrepreneurs, just anybody...

13:34 MF: It's personal?

13:35 CL: It's all personal.

13:36 MF: You want to know their personal stories.

13:38 CL: Sitting behind a cubicle for me was not going to work. When I realized that I could go out with a camera or photographer, and go meet people. And I've met some lifelong friends in the process of just telling their story. I was like, what better way to spend a career. And so, we've seen a lot of change in the media business. It's changing at a rapid pace. Who knows what's going to happen here 5, 10 years from now. But literally, everybody has a phone, so they can become a citizen journalist. And to me, I think we live in the most exciting times ever.

14:12 MF: Right, right. So you had an incredibly successful career at the age of 38. You were a leading broadcaster in Atlanta, right at the peak. So why did you change so quickly, when you're somewhat of a celebrity here?

14:30 CL: I appreciate that. Well, it was... Look, I love what I did over at Channel 2, an amazing... It's the best news station I've ever worked for, Cox is a wonderful company. For me, I was looking more down the line 10 or 15 years from now. So, if you were to poll my friends, not many of them would say that I tune in at 4, 5, 6 and 11 o'clock. We just don't consume the news like our parents do. And so, when you look at the ratings and the revenues, it's just not the same. I got a taste of the golden era of TV. But now, I was just concerned with where things were heading and as I talked about earlier about at the national level and how it's tough to get neutral news.

15:14 CL: So, for me, I just noticed that all of these companies and non-profits were not really telling their stories. I would get emails from PR companies and marketing companies, pitching us to come and cover certain events. And unfortunately, in the news cycle, a lot of it is negative and so there's no way that they were going to cover it. I'm thinking why are these companies and non-profits not just covering it themselves because if they do it in a compelling way, I always tell my clients, if it's good enough, they will come. They being the journalists. So, what we're doing now, noticing the shrinking news rooms, they don't have the staff that they once did. You go cover the story, if it's told in a compelling way, a newspaper journalist might see that and embed it and then write an article about it.

16:00 CL: It was just like the example I gave down in Florida that if you give them a nice story about a veteran, they'll come and pick it up. So it's almost, for lack of a better term, we almost kind of spoon feed some of our content and it's a lay up for some of the journalists to go out and say, "Oh you know what, that's a great story. Let's go do that." And we would look at even over at Channel 2 a lot of us because we would come in with stories every day in that 9 AM meeting. We'd look at the smaller blogs out there, we would see what was going on on social media, like the Buck-head Patch. I would look at the Buck-head Patch and they'd have little snippets and I'd say, "That's interesting,

Craig Lucie: From News Anchor to Chief Story Teller – Episode #1

let's go dive into that a little bit more. There's more to that story." So, we do that with our clients, we find out whatever their particular message they want to get out there we go "tell it" like we help out American Medical Response, AMR world's largest Ambulance company.

16:56 MF: I saw that one.

16:57 CL: And they came to me because they were having an issue with being portrayed in the media for slow response times. And you think, well, these paramedics are not saying, "Gee, how slow can I get to this heart attack call?" It just wasn't that fair. So, I said to them, "Let's do a day in the life piece on what your paramedics go through on a day-to-day basis. So, I literally had a photographer camp out on one of the overpasses over at 285 and I said, "Just wait, because legally we're not going to stage an ambulance to turn on their lights. We had to sit there and camp out to show our paramedics stuck in 285 traffic, people failing to yield all the time. When you drive next time and you see the sirens coming up behind you, people do not pull over it's mind-boggling.

17:47 CL: So that delays them. The other part is that when people call 911, they don't realize what happens. When you call 911, you might get transferred and especially in DeKalb County, you have all these other cities popping up, when those cities pop up, they have to have their own 911 call centers. Well, those 911 call centers are operated by a third party. So, you kind of have to tell the entire story about what happens when you call 911. What are these paramedics facing and it changes the dialogue, and then guess what, the journalists will, once they see it, they will cover it.

18:18 CL: So, there's... You change the perception. It's all about companies and non-profits controlling their message, putting out their own content because in many cases a lot of these bigger companies, they have massive social media following and followers, like across Instagram, Facebook, Twitter. You might have 100,000 followers on Facebook. Why aren't you giving them great content? They're engaged in your brand. So, don't really... You don't have to rely on traditional media to get your message out, start covering it yourself.

18:53 MF: Right. So, you're using the client's story then to help them differentiate their products...

18:57 CL: Exactly.

18:58 MF: Their company and their team.

19:00 CL: Exactly. I think we're helping a law firm out as well. In their case, they're large law firm, many of their attorneys do not know each other, they've got a remote attorney program where they've got attorneys in Chicago, and... It's very important for that law firm for their Atlanta-based attorneys to know that, "Hey, I've got a partner in Chicago that has the same background as me that can help me with my particular case" instead of outsourcing it to someone else keeping it all under one roof. So, we go in and we profile all of the attorneys, but we also, as I'm interviewing them, given my news background, I'm listening for earned media opportunities. So, let's say one particular attorney, his background is in cannabis.

19:41 CL: His focus is on cannabis. So, any time cannabis is mentioned here in Georgia, we are sitting on stockpiled content that we will release should a law change here in Georgia about cannabis. And then we will brand him as an expert on the legal side and go ahead and inject him

Craig Lucie: From News Anchor to Chief Story Teller – Episode #1

into the news cycle and release the news that... The piece of content that we have created as well as which will get picked up and embedded on different articles, different law blogs and whatnot. And then the law client and that particular attorney is getting great PR.

20:17 MF: So, you're coaching your clients then as well on how they can maximize the power of social media to promote their brand, and their company, is that right?

20:25 CL: 100%. We have a social media team, so I'm running this business just like a newsroom. Here's what we do. We have an assignment desk, more or less. So that's... The assignment desk is the brain of a newsroom. As stories come in, they take those stories, and then we leverage them.

20:42 CL: So, in a client's case, I'd go in, I find out if I'm speaking with the CEO or the founder of the company. After a five-minute conversation, I can kind of... I know the story that they need to tell. I go tell the story with the production crew, we create it, then I pass it on to the social media team. The social media team then, leverage it, leverages the content, whether it's Facebook Boosting, Google AdWords, whatever we need to do. In most cases for businesses, we're targeting LinkedIn. We go big on LinkedIn and we're... They might need a recruiting piece. So, we push it out on LinkedIn, and we're providing our clients a good return on their investment.

21:18 CL: Why are we leveraging the content? Well, just like in a newsroom, as we get a good story, we pass it off to our Web Desk social team, they're sending out all these push alerts, these different tweets to drive traffic to our news casts at 4, 5, and 6. Same thing, we're pushing out these tweets, Instagram posts, Facebook posts to drive traffic to our content, which is living on our client's website. So, we're driving traffic to their sites.

21:43 MF: And do you track the traffic or is that something the client does?

21:47 CL: We do, yes. At the end of the month, we're giving them analytical reports to say this particular piece that we put on Facebook, it reached 65,000, it was shared by these Twitter accounts and for them, it's reaching a much larger audience. I'll go back to the law firm because their attorneys are doing a lot of pro bono work. So, there's a bit of a strategy here. If your attorneys are out there doing pro bono work, go and tell the story about your attorney, but also tell the non-profit that they're helping at the same time. When you do that, the content is coming from the law firm but everybody over at the non-profit is getting a free story. Everybody at the non-profit then shares that story.

22:28 CL: So suddenly you might have gone from your law firm, which might have 5,000 Facebook followers tapping into the non-profit which might have 10,000 Facebook followers and then everybody who's impacted by that non-profit, then they're all sharing it. So suddenly we've gone from five to 10,000 to maybe 50,000 people that are now coming across the content which is going to be larger than what you get on a daily basis on local news.

22:50 MF: Right, and these small middle market companies don't have the expertise to do that themselves right?

22:56 CL: So smaller news stations or?

Craig Lucie: From News Anchor to Chief Story Teller – Episode #1

22:58 MF: Your clients.

23:00 CL: Yes. There's a craft to storytelling. There's certainly a craft. A lot of people don't know how to tell their own story. So that's where we come in. And also maybe they do know how to tell their story, but what we have found in six plus months of doing this company is that maybe a VP or CEO is running their own social media, and we're like, you don't need to be doing that.

23:22 MF: No, no.

23:22 CL: Okay, outsource it to us. If you get on LinkedIn and you put in content... If you're at home, do this.

23:28 MF: Right.

23:29 CL: Put in content, do a search, your initial search will probably return 450,000 results. Alright now, then click jobs right up there at the top. So, you have content in the search bar, then hit jobs. In this particular area, it fluctuates, but normally it's above 100,000 results. Those results you'll see, content manager, content creator, content writer, digital strategist.

23:53 CL: So, what we do to those companies and say, "Look, you can go and hire that content creator for your company, but you're going to have to do a lot of recruiting, salary, benefits, and the person might not be the best outcome for what you want. Why not outsource it to us? We have a background in telling stories. We've been creating content for... I've been doing it for 20 years plus, professionally, and we also can come in with a team and work. So, you have a bunch of creative minds helping you develop that content instead of just one person." So just outsource it.

24:29 MF: It sounds like it's both an art and a science.

Thank you for joining Michael Flock and his guest on the Capital Club Radio Show. For more information on future interviews, please visit us at FlockFinance.com. This program is brought to you by Flock Specialty Finance, where clients are provided knowledge and insights to help them grow their business in complex and risky markets. Flock is more than a transaction.