

Welcome to the next episode of the interview with Craig Lucie, former Channel 2 news anchor, and Founder and Chief Story Teller of Lucie Content. Craig will continue to expand upon his business strategy for Lucie Content, his business model and how it's like a real estate brokerage. And then also make some comments about his personal stories and his personal successes and his personal challenges.

24:34 Michael Flock: Craig, your career has just been great, but things never go in a straight line. And I think our listeners want to hear more about Craig Lucie's story and the challenges or adverse experiences that you had along the way. Were there times when you weren't sure that you were going to succeed that your dream may not become a reality?

25:00 Craig Lucie: Sure.

25:00 MF: Could you tell our listeners a little bit about that?

25:02 CL: Yes, of course. So, I have a four-year-old little girl and a one-year-old little boy, and I made this leap when he was eight months, she had just turned four. I'm fortunate that my wife has a great job and so I was able to do this. But there are... Yes, I stay up at night thinking you know this early on, is everything going to go as planned?

25:27 CL: But I would say, anybody who's thinking about making this leap of faith, which I did, is test the waters a little bit, which I did. As I had started quietly building this, I was telling folks, okay, I'm not going to renew my contract, if you need any storytelling help, August 16th will be my last day.

25:40 CL: And I will start working for you August 17th, and so I had two people that actually said, "Absolutely, let's go." And they're still with me, and it's worked out well. And so, my advice is, yes, I stay up... Early on, I really stayed up late thinking I hope I have made the right decision, but in the back of my mind, I knew I had and I really had no other choice because I looked at what was going on in the media and the way it's going to be five, 10 years from now. Just, you see what happened to newspapers and so you have to... You kind of look into the future to see what's right for you.

25:40 CL: You also, as I was thinking about having this conversation with you, Michael, is I'm learning that there are... To me, there's almost like two sets of people: There are people who want to go out there and start a business and run a business; and then there are people who just need to be put on the path to help that particular business succeed. So, you have to, if you're thinking about making a leap like this, you have to think, "Am I a person who wants to go work for a large company and work my way up in a company or am I the type of person who wants to start my own company? And I know my strengths and I know my weaknesses. Can I do this?"

27:04 CL: For me, I even thought... When I was down in Orlando working for the NBC station, and it was during the recession, literally, I just saw car dealerships shutting down. Car dealerships, attorneys, they all are big-time advertisers on local stations. So even then, I was thinking about maybe I need to go back to school to get my MBA. And for me, I wish I did have an MBA, at the same time, I was... I'm not going to learn too much in a classroom. I have to do it to learn it. And I can't tell you how much I've learned in six plus months. Literally, it's been a great ride. I have had to lean on other folks as... I know that one of the questions you might ask is about mentorship. I don't have one particular mentor, I've got friends who started businesses, I lean on them. My brother

started a business, both my grandfathers were entrepreneurs. So, I think that I always kind of...

28:01 MF: Runs in the family.

28:02 CL: I think I had this seed in me that was just growing, and it was a matter of time. Timing worked out for me because I did need to establish myself and really learn my craft as a broadcaster and a storyteller. And so, now back to that LinkedIn when I see so many companies hiring for content creators, the key word for me was content. And so, fortunately things are going well. The sky's the limit, is what I say, the sky is the limit.

28:30 MF: So, in terms of obstacles then, I guess right now you haven't really had anything...

28:35 CL: Sure.

28:35 MF: Sort of get in your way.

28:36 CL: No, there's things in my...

28:38 MF: Does Craig Lucie ever have a bad day?

28:40 CL: Oh, yes.

28:40 MF: I mean you're always...

28:41 CL: Absolutely.

28:42 MF: Smiling and charismatic and...

28:45 CL: Yes, absolutely. It's different working for clients. My email inbox got worn out yesterday. And I was on the road, I was up in Knoxville, Tennessee doing a story for AMR actually and my inbox was blowing up. And so, I had to... You have to learn to delegate. So, I was sending those emails to people who help me and say, "Hey, I need you to do this for me." And also, I think it helps those who are on my team, because they're learning as well as we all go like this is a true startup. And the other... You asked me a personal hardship too, not just in this business, but when I was younger, I was run over by a boat, and it was like I was in fifth grade. And so, we had a 13 foot Boston Whaler and a Boston Whaler has a flat hull, it doesn't have a V-shape hull, so if it's coming at you, you're not going to bounce off that V you're going right under it. And my adrenaline was pumping so much that when I saw the boat coming toward me, I took a deep dive had a life jacket on fortunately, I got deep down enough to where I just felt the bump on my foot. It's like, "Oh man, should I look at my foot?" Looked at my foot and it was just mangled, it was awful, and I was big, a big soccer player and so that was my first... My first thought, am I ever going to be able to play soccer again? I was screaming bloody murder. I was on that show Rescue 911, back in the day.

30:08 MF: Oh, really?

30:09 CL: And which is kind of funny that now AMR is one of my clients, because I just loved the work that paramedics do because I mean they literally saved my foot. And my dad's an orthopedic surgeon down in Jacksonville. He didn't do the surgery, but his partner did and then I remember

three days after I had the surgery I jerked in my sleep, and I pulled apart all of the stitching and everything to put my foot back together, like "Alright Craig, [laughter] we're going to put the 100 pound test line on you, we got the tarpon line on you, you're not breaking this. So, I had to learn how to walk again, had a cast up to my hip... From my foot up to my hip for half a year.

30:45 CL: And did physical therapy twice a day and worked as hard as I could to get back on the soccer field and ended up doing really well. And was like All State in high school and had talked to some colleges. So that was a big learning experience for me, that look, if you fight hard enough and you work hard enough, you will achieve what you want to achieve.

31:08 MF: Okay, so that's how that experience was part of the Craig Lucie story, if you will, in terms of how you're building this business.

31:18 CL: Yes, there's been road blocks, but to me, it's just another learning... It's another learning curve. Anything that I don't know... What's beautiful is YouTube. I swear, you can go on YouTube and you can ask YouTube one question and the answer is there for anything. Like helping clients with their website. If I don't know the answer, I just go to YouTube, I can find the answer like that and fix their website, no problem.

31:42 MF: So, will Lucie Content use YouTube or maybe you're doing it already, as another outlet for your media?

31:49 CL: That is the plan. That's the plan right now. We're trying to do kind of a land grab, if you will, of clients, help them tell their stories and then once we get to where we need to be, then we invest and we hopefully have a studio, one day. And we... I've always... I would like to be back on TV and telling people stories and sitting down and profiling business leaders, profiling the leaders of non-profits and showing the impact that they're having. Really focusing on the good stories. I covered negative stories for a long time. And so, that's what's really rewarding right now is being able to help these nonprofits and telling their stories, but there is a strategy with our non-profits that we're helping. We don't really want them to pay for it, we want to create stories that show the impact that they're having. So, those non-profits can then go to their donors or their corporate sponsors and say, "Hey look, this is what we're doing in our community. We would love to tell more of these stories. Can you help us and maybe earmark some of those donation dollars for story telling i.e., marketing?"

32:32 MF: So, as I listen to all this Craig, it seems like there's this tension developing in the roles that you're playing. On the one hand, your passion, your joy, what you've learned on television is to tell stories, whether it's reporting or interviewing. On the other hand, you're building a business. You're managing a business. So is there... I think I sense a tension between the artist and the businessman and I sense that your passion is really more with being the artist and connecting individually with people, promoting people's story through all these different media channels and helping them promote themselves.

33:26 CL: Yes.

33:26 MF: So how are you going to balance the artist with the businessman?

33:30 CL: One day at a time, really. One day at a time. I have someone that I tap now to help me

with my accounting just because doing all the invoicing and keeping up is tough and yes, I'm going to be better for my clients if I am focusing on the storytelling, but now it just goes back to managing my time. I'll tell you one thing about working at Channel 2 and all these newsrooms is they train you how to be as efficient as possible. We had multiple deadlines a day, we work extremely fast and people that I talked with who had been in my position and then jumped out of the business, they said, "One thing you're going to get that's going to shock you is like the pace outside of news, it's a bit slower."

34:16 CL: But I think as a journalist, we have to quickly learn how to do certain things and learn them as fast as possible because there are looming deadlines. I give myself deadlines with my clients, I like to have our content to them, depending on the scope of work, within two weeks. If it's after two weeks, that well-told story, I start getting antsy. And there's a lot of post-production that's why there's that space there. But it's just delegating and to the accounting, I've got an accountant now for social media. I've got a social media team. So, for now I can handle it.

34:53 CL: Do I need long-term business help? And everybody who's listening out there, yes. Yes, please come. [chuckle] Come help me. I do not have an MBA. I have been telling stories forever. I'm a journalist. I'm a former news anchor reporter. I have not run a company. Have I made some... Have I had some side hustles along the way? Yes. I have had some side hustles which I think that goes back to just having that entrepreneurial seed that was inside of me.

35:18 MF: Well, let's follow that and shift our discussion to the company and Craig Lucie, CEO. We know that he's a great storyteller, but as CEO, have you decided then how to define success as a business? I guess you've kind of said, "Well, my strategy is to get my clients to tell their story and it's our job to promote their story and find the optimal network media to kind of expand the coverage of their story." So that's the strategy but how do you define success of Lucie Content? Is there anything quantitative? Is there a market share you're striving for? Is it profitability?

35:56 CL: You know, there are certain margins that I like to... That the business should take home when we're working with our clients. It is as far a... Like I said, we run it like a newsroom, so I know I've... I grew up in newsrooms. I know how they're run. That's not to say I ran a newsroom to all the news directors who are listening. But I would say to grow this business, I am just going to be bringing people on board that know particular areas that I don't. I mean, I've read enough entrepreneurial books and listened to enough entrepreneurial podcasts to know that those most successful out there surrounded themselves by extremely intelligent people and people who know their craft well. And I'm not going to pretend that I don't know certain areas of creating a business, like, there's so much that I need to learn and my wife, who's been extremely supportive from day one, she knows that. She's like, "God, I just wish you went to business school and got your MBA." or, "You've got to get a bookkeeper." And I'm like, "I know, I know." But I'm not quite there because then that's...

37:09 MF: Accounting is not your passion.

37:10 CL: Accounting, I mean, it goes back to those days in calculus and statistics. I'm like, "I am never going to use this. This is just not for me." But in hindsight, yes.

37:20 MF: So, who are your competitors, Craig? And how is Craig Lucie going to differentiate his company from the competition?

37:28 CL: Right. Well, so we are just taking a different approach than other PR and marketing companies and focusing on that content creation and we work with PR marketing companies. In fact, one of the largest PR companies is tapping us to do content for their clients. I would say down the line, I tell people that I really want to run this business like a real estate broker and I want to have my real estate agents be content agents.

37:58 CL: So, I have an independent contractor agreement. So, I want to have 1099s all over the place, if you will. I want storytellers. There are journalists out there who have been contacting me, a lot of them. I'll tell you, when I left, my LinkedIn blew up. My phone blew up. What are you doing? What's going on? And a lot of them are wanting to join me. And so... And I'm not recruiting them, for the record, they just... They see what I'm doing on Instagram and what not so I want content agents. I want people to go out, identify certain companies that need our services, look at their website and say, "Oh gee, this company doesn't even have a website landing video to tell their story. They have zero social media presence. They're not resonating with their customers." And then they would be my account executive, knowing that they had the confidence to go out and pitch these companies and I will go in and help them pitch the CEO or founder of the company. But I want them to be the account lead knowing that we can back them up if they need website, social media, PR communications. I've got someone also helping with traditional marketing.

39:03 CL: So I would say what makes us a little bit different and hopefully down the line I'm going to Austin, Texas tomorrow, I'm going to speak with a former anchor reporter there who wants to talk with me and I would like to have a presence in Austin. I would like to have a presence in LA, who are journalists, who know how to tell stories, who can go in and help these companies and non-profits reach a larger audience. And it also helps that they're... They have credibility in the markets. And then they are independent contractors but they're under our umbrella and then... And so, we just... Basically, in this process, build a big storytelling network.

39:48 MF: Okay. Like a real estate brokerage network, is that what you're saying?

39:51 CL: Exactly.

39:52 MF: Okay.

39:52 CL: And it's no different than a real estate agent going out there and finding homes to go sell. I want all my content agents if you will, going out there and finding companies where they can help those companies tell their stories.

40:04 MF: So, the content agents, are they going to use your brand, Lucie Content or...

40:09 CL: So, my...

40:09 MF: Another brand, or are they exclusive to you or...

[chuckle]

40:14 CL: There's a lot in the agreement. So, my business is actually Lucie, we are DBA, doing business as Lucie Content.

40:23 MF: Okay.

40:24 CL: I'll tell you about that real quick. So, Lucie, yes, it's my last name, but as I was looking at what to name this company, I did focus groups and looked at domains, domain names are ridiculously expensive by the way. And so, I talked to a few people who would jump outside of the TV business and I said, "Just use your name." And so, I started looking at my name and I'm like, "Well, you know what, my last name Lucie does mean light, illumination, graceful light." Our mission is to shine a light on your story. So why not?

40:53 MF: That's wonderful.

40:53 CL: Yes. So that's what... That's our focus, we want to shine a light on your story, your business story, your non-profit story, your individual story, and then it's branched out into different things. So, I've lost my train of thought. Where we were going there but anyway, I'm trying to build up the Lucie brokerage if you will, and then our content agents can go out and just use the infrastructure that we've been building for the past six plus months knowing that we can do all of the backend stuff. They just need to focus on telling the stories.

41:25 MF: Right. So, we're talking about differentiation and you're comparing it to a real estate brokerage, I was just saying... So, are they exclusively using your brand? Do they do other stuff? And if they are exclusively using your brand, then I guess it's kind of I think creative and very intelligent to... They're promoting Lucie Content just being out there.

41:44 CL: 100%. Yes.

41:45 MF: With your brand.

41:47 CL: In fact, I've had journalists say, "Are you okay that I'm like shopping your website and everything else?" I said, "Yes." I know them like I know these journalists, they're incredible storytellers. And so, yes, that's fine because I will go in with you when we need to meet with them and find out their exact needs that... The business' needs, but I can't do it all on my own. I'm not going to build a big business just by myself. Down the line, I would like to have an entire... Instead of 1099s, I would like to have a social media team in-house.

42:18 MF: Okay.

42:20 CL: And then maybe a website team in-house. I work with a team out of Austin right now. I'm going to go see them too, tomorrow. And so, have all of the main infrastructure in-house, and then we could literally have a storyteller in North Dakota who's telling those stories up there. And here's the thing too with media being as saturated as it is, and with these big media conglomerates, you are doing stories that they want you to do. With these journalists, I can say, "Go do the story that you want. We now have a studio. You want your own show, come down and do your show." We are helping out a non-profit on the west side of Atlanta.

43:02 CL: And the amount of revitalization going on over there, I literally have told my client that I said, "I want to not necessarily create content promoting your non-profit because you are going to be the news outlet, it's coming from you anyway." Let's just go tell these incredible stories on the

west side about families moving back after what was a really crime, drug-ridden area that is now been revitalized. There are a million stories over there, and there are companies like Chick-fil-A, Home Depot, Arthur Blank Family Foundation, Coke, they're investing so much money over there and it's not getting the coverage as it should, so we'll cover it. We'll create the content.

43:46 MF: So, let's shift back to you personally and the next steps for Craig Lucie. How do you see the future for your company, and how do you see the future for you personally?

43:57 CL: Future for my company is we would like to just keep growing. I would say yesterday, being in Knoxville, Tennessee, I... It was such an interesting moment for me because here I am. I was covering a story where I put a photographer in a chopper, an ambulance, chopper, and we were doing a day in the life of the paramedics. We're embedded with them, and it was really no different than what I was doing while I was in the news. I literally was covering a news story. I sat down and interviewed Kane, the former wrestler who's Glenn Jacobs, who's now the mayor in Knox County. So for me, it's continuing to do what we do, but grow in the process, have these content agents if you will, or content creators, and continue to organically grow while at the same time, making sure that we are taking care of our clients to the best of our ability, and showing them that we are different than what you're going to find out there. We are journalists who are creating the content and leveraging it, so that they get a good return on their investment.

44:58 CL: And like I said earlier, there is... There's no cap here. The sky is the limit. We literally can tap into crews all over the world for production and put it back together here. I would like to get back and create my own type shows, my own... Whether it's an entrepreneurial show and profile people here in the Atlanta market or Georgia, all over, and there are... So, OTT is over the top, it's your Roku, your Apple TV, your Amazon devices that go over the top of your cable box. All of these big brands will have their own OTT channels. So creating that OTT content for them, it's very smart for these big brands to do that because they do have massive social media following... Followers, and so that they can create this content and hit their audience directly instead of going through a third party.

45:41 CL: So, let's say if we had some sort of big event going on in Atlanta, we would bring them in to our studio, maybe the day before and talk about a big event. So, these are things that are not necessarily being covered, that we could potentially cover. And so, we will hopefully, have a studio down the line and be able to do whatever we want, but it's... Right now, we are working out of our client's offices, and bouncing around, and we're not doing your typical corporate video, we don't really like typical corporate video. If the client wants it, we will do it, but...

45:41 MF: You don't like it because it's hard to...

45:41 CL: It's too corporate.

45:41 MF: Yes.

45:41 CL: It's like...

45:41 MF: Not personal.

45:41 CL: Compelling content, it's key. I mean you have to... Even if it is a story about a law firm,

it needs to resonate with a lot of people.

45:41 MF: Right.

46:40 CL: We just did a video podcast with a law firm, and it was the three founders sitting down. And even if you are not in the law field, it was fascinating to listen to them talk about how they got this law firm off the ground, how they came up with the idea. And I also, by the way, love their business model, and that's... My client is Taylor English. They are growing exponentially and organically because they are taking attorneys who are... They're not rookie attorneys, they're experienced attorneys who maybe went out on their own and then realized, "Wow, the payroll is too much to deal with. I can't manage a paralegal." So, they bring them under one roof and there's an agreement with percentages, and they give them what they need to get their jobs done, while they can focus on their passion. And that's exactly what I want to do. I want to be able to give these storytellers what they need so that they can focus on their passion, which is going out there and telling stories.

47:40 MF: So really, it's in parallel. Lucie Content can mirror what you're seeing at Taylor English, is that right?

47:45 CL: 100%. Yes. I've told Mark Taylor that, I've told Shelley English.

47:48 MF: Stealing their strategy.

47:52 CL: No, because I... We are creating all this content for them and they like, fortunately, what they're seeing, and I like what they're doing over there. I think it's just a business model that can work for any business. And I was talking to my attorney yesterday about these independent contractor agreements, and he said, "You know what, I've seen so many companies doing what you're doing right." Because I've got a friend, a millennial friend, he's literally bounced around five or six companies. I think that the days, unfortunately, of working for one company for 40 years, unless they are being incentivized to stay, they're just bouncing around. So, if you can get people to realize... Believe in what you're doing. And even people who want to join me, I'm like, "What are you... What would you title? What do you want your title to be?"

48:44 CL: You know, just reward them and show them, "Hey, if you go out and close this deal, here is the budget, this is... What would you like to make?" We're an open book. We're very transparent. So, I just think that the younger generation wants something like that. I think that by giving people that entrepreneurial spirit but giving them the resources that they need to get the job done, they love it. And you're not telling them. "Hey, I need you to be in the office at 9:00 AM I think that those days are few and far between now."

49:14 MF: Right. So, let's end our discussion this afternoon, Craig, with one last story from the chief storyteller himself at Lucie Content.

49:24 CL: Okay, let's go.

49:24 MF: Ten years from now, how do you envision the story of this wonderful new company that you've started? How do you see it in 10 years?

49:34 CL: Tough question. I see it, I see it as hopefully we have a nice office, but not too nice, because we don't want to invest a lot in an office.

49:43 MF: Real estate, yes.

49:44 CL: Yes. We want to have that studio, we want to be able to have a presence all over, and we want clients to be happy with our work and realize that they're getting something different with us. And I want to maybe help those journalists that are out there, who are covering stories that they don't really want to cover, or they don't really believe in, realize that what we are doing now is telling stories that are helping businesses and building them up, not necessarily looking for the negative. And we're helping non-profits, because these non-profits have incredible, impactful stories that are just not getting told. They're too feature-y, they're too positive, if you will, for traditional media. Those stories occasionally get told. But now I think that what we want to create is a large media company that has the background to go in and also create a ton of media, a ton of content for all of our clients. That is the vision, if you will.

50:49 MF: So, that will be a great story, Craig, 10 years from now, we can't wait to interview in 10 years. So, Craig, thank you very much. The chief storyteller for telling us stories about your past, your future, and how going forward, you're going to shine a light on the positive things that are happening today in our very polarized and turbulent times. So, Craig, we wish you the best as you set out on this new path in recreating media, through creative and compelling Lucie Content.

51:15 CL: I appreciate you, Mr. Flock for making me a Flock Star.

51:17 MF: You're a Flock Star.

51:18 CL: I love it.

51:20 MF: Congratulations, yes.

51:20 CL: I love it. And thank you to all of your listeners who tuned in, and... It's a pleasure. I love getting on this podcast of yours, I love what you're doing, and showcasing what these business leaders here in our city are up to, and hearing what makes them tick. As I mentioned earlier, it is awesome to do these types of profiles, and really get the story, the inner story of what makes someone do what they do, day in and day out? That's fantastic. So, keep it up, Mr. Flock.

51:50 MF: I will, Mr. Lucie. Thank you very much.

51:54 S1: 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.