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Question & Answer Teleseminar

Michael Hyatt with Joy Groblebe

January 29, 2013

Thanks to [Ginger Schell](#) who transcribed this call.

Joy Groblebe: Welcome, everyone, to the January 2013 Platform University Q&A Teleseminar with Michael Hyatt. This is our first one. We're glad you're here. My name is Joy Groblebe, and I'll be your moderator. I also happen to be Michael's manager, along with my business partner, Brian Scheer, who should be listening right now.

Since you're on this call, you likely know who Michael is. Just in case you don't, here is a little background. Michael is a *New York Times* bestselling author of *Platform: Get Noticed in a Noisy World*. He is also a top blogger, speaker, and a publishing industry veteran as the former Chairman and CEO of Thomas Nelson Publishers.

In the last several years, Michael has built a massive platform with more than 350,000 unique visitors a month to his blog, approximately 136,000 monthly downloads of his podcast, and more than 165,000 followers on Twitter. So Michael, thank you for making yourself available tonight. Welcome to the call.

Michael Hyatt: Thanks, Joy. Man, I am so pumped about this call. This is, as you said, our first Platform University Q&A call, and I can't wait to dive into what we have planned.

Joy Groblebe: I am excited. Okay, so before we dive in, I want to give everyone listening a little taste of what to expect during this call. This is, like we said, the first of what will become our monthly Platform University Q&A calls. So from this point forward, it will be a members-only call. In other words, you have to be a member of Platform University to be a part of the call.

So for this first one, Michael thought it would be great to open it up and make it available to everyone so you can get a little taste of what you might experience or what you will experience when you become a member of Platform University. So for the next 60 minutes or so we're going to be asking Michael questions about building a platform.

We have a number of questions, several hundred actually, that were submitted by those of you who registered. So we can't get to all of them, but what we did was we grouped them together so Michael can answer the most frequently asked questions. Then toward the end we'll take some live questions once we get through what was previously submitted.

Also, toward the end of this call, I'm going to share with you our special Early Bird special for Platform University. It ends tonight at midnight, so you won't want to miss that. So make sure you stay on for the entire call, and we'll give you that special then.

Plus, during the call, if you have some interesting quotes or ideas you'd like to share via Twitter or Facebook, that would be awesome. On Twitter, please include the hashtag #PlatformU. If you want to refer to Michael, his username is @MichaelHyatt. My username is @JoyJoyG.

Okay, so Michael, you wrote a blog post the other day that was the invite for this call, and you mentioned that we get some questions over and over all the time. So I thought we'd cover those first just to make sure we address the most common issues people have in building a platform. You ready to go?

Michael Hyatt: I'm ready. Let's do it.

Joy Groblebe: All right, cool. Okay, so first question: What do you do if you feel overwhelmed by all the social media options? Where do you start?

Michael Hyatt: That's a great question, and that's probably the most frequently asked question I get.



So I go back to the social media framework I outline in chapter 17 of the book *Platform: Get Noticed in a Noisy World*. So let me just quickly explain this framework, Joy, and then I'll come back to the question. The social media framework I outlined in the book consists of three elements.

1. **Home base.** This is a place in cyberspace you own and control. It could be a blog. It could be a podcast. Maybe both. Even a video channel.

2. **Embassies.** These are places in cyberspace you don't own or control, but where you have a presence and credentials to go in and out. So examples would include Facebook, Twitter, or Pinterest. Pick your favorite social media network. Those are embassies.

3. **Outposts.** These are places in cyberspace where you don't have a consistent presence or need credentials. They're simply places you monitor using tools like HootSuite or Google Alerts.

So, back to the question. Where do you start? You start with a home base. You have to build this first. Getting involved in the embassies and getting overwhelmed by the embassies or the outposts before you have a home base, a blog or a podcast or a video channel, may be entertaining (and believe me, you can waste hours on this; I've done it), but that activity doesn't serve a strategic purpose unless and until you have a home base.

Joy Groblebe: Okay, so starting with your home base, then, is the first key. So when you do that, what would you say are your favorite platform-building tools? What are the tools you use day in, day out, all the time?

Michael Hyatt: Yeah, it's hard for me to narrow this down because I'm using so many tools, and I go through tools a lot. Let me tell you what I've been using kind of day in and day out. These are the ones that are my go-to tools that have been with me for a while.

1. **WordPress.** My blog runs on this at MichaelHyatt.com. Platform University runs on it



don't think you can do better than starting with WordPress. If you don't have a WordPress blog, by the way, I can show you how to set up one in about 20 minutes. I have a simple screencast at MichaelHyatt.com/wordpresssetup. I just walk you through the whole process. It's way easy.

2. **Evernote.** If you've been around me at all or you've listened to me, you have heard me talk about this. My blog posts all start in Evernote as an idea. Basically the way I do this is I create one note per idea, and I tag it with the clever tag "post ideas" so I can get back to them. I kind of have that as a saved search, and I can get back to it easily.

I actually use a template in Evernote for each of these ideas, and I've posted this online so those of you who are on the call can get access to it, just so you can see it for some ideas. You may not want to use it exactly, but you might. It's at MichaelHyatt.com/blogtemplate. That will give you my Evernote template I use for blog posts.

3. **ByWord.** I use kind of a minimalist word processor to write my posts. I do that for a couple of reasons. One, unlike Microsoft Word, it doesn't gunk up the text with a bunch of extraneous HTML and other stuff. So when I paste it into WordPress, it doesn't make a mess. Also, it doesn't have all the formatting tools and all the other stuff that can so easily get you distracted. It's just a minimalist word processor. There are a lot of them out on the market. I just happen to like this one.

4. **HootSuite.** This is really how I manage all my social media. It's my social media dashboard. I use it primarily to monitor Twitter, but I also use it to monitor LinkedIn and Facebook.

5. **Clicky.com.** I use that to monitor my traffic. I'm kind of a numbers junkie, and I check my numbers way more often than I really recommend and is probably healthy. I just love looking at the stats. It summarizes your Google Analytics, and it makes it a little simpler to understand, a little more accessible. I think it's free, but I'm not sure. I haven't checked in a while. I've been using it for a couple of years, but you have to have a Google Analytics account set up and running on your blog. Clicky.com. So those are just a few of my platform tools I use on a regular basis.

Joy Groblebe: Top five favorites, anyway.



Michael Hyatt: Exactly.

Joy Groblebe: Okay, so most people on this call have a full-time job, a family, other responsibilities. What is your advice about how they can find time to build a platform with all that going on?

Michael Hyatt: Yeah, that's a common question, too, Joy. Let me acknowledge from the get-go that it's not easy. I had to build my platform while I was running a very large company, first as the COO of Thomas Nelson and then the CEO. Plus, I have a very large family. I have five daughters, all of whom were all still living at home when I started. So it wasn't easy. I had a difficult time like most people finding time, but here is what I would suggest.

1. **Make a commitment.** That's where it starts. Is this something you really want to do or not? If it's just going to be a hobby, fine. Just dabble at it, but don't expect great results. If you really want to turbocharge or jumpstart your platform and take it to a meaningful level, you have to start with a commitment.

2. **Write down why it's important for you and what is at stake.** A lot of people skip this. Literally write it down. There are going to be times when you're tempted to get off track. You get very busy with your life. You want to throw in the towel. Maybe the results are discouraging, but you have to come back to your rationale. Why is it important?

3. **Determine a strategy for getting it done.** For example, I decided when I was working full-time as the CEO that I would work on my platform for an hour every night before I went to bed and then for about four hours on Saturday morning. I honestly gave up golf. I do a long run typically on Saturday, but I would spend about four hours on Saturday morning doing that.

The time will be different for every person. If you have really young kids, you're going to have to be flexible. You're going to have to figure something else out, but it's possible if you have the commitment, if you know what's at stake, and if you come up with a strategy.

4. **Get buy-in from your family.** Make sure they understand why it's important not just



to you, but for them. How is building a platform going to be helpful to your family, to your spouse, to your significant other, whomever it is? I think it's really important to get buy-in from them so they don't inadvertently sabotage your efforts or feel jealous or frustrated because you seem to be spending so much time on your platform.

5. Schedule the time. This is so important. To me, what gets on the calendar is what gets done. So make it like an appointment, like a commitment, and then keep that commitment. If somebody else asks you for that time, you can legitimately say, "Gosh. I'm sorry, but I already have a commitment." It is a commitment, and it is a very important commitment if you're serious about building your platform.

Joy Groblebe: I think scheduling the time is huge. That's a big one right there.

Michael Hyatt: Me too.

Joy Groblebe: Okay, so we get this next question all the time through e-mails. It's come up in the forum on Platform University, which is one of the member benefits. It's come up several times already. Should people build their platform around a personal brand, a corporate brand, or both?

Michael Hyatt: Yeah, I don't have a definitive answer. Let me just say that. It depends on your circumstances. In general, I think a personal brand is more powerful. Personal brands are the future. In fact, I'm thinking about writing a book about this. People today have an inherent distrust of institutions, so anything you can do to humanize your brand, the better.

I've also found that my personal brand benefited my company. So people connected with me as an individual. It put a face and a personality on the company. It's also one of the reasons why I encouraged our employees at Thomas Nelson to blog and get involved in social media because I felt like it humanized the company and gave people an access point they wouldn't have had otherwise if they were just dealing with some nameless, faceless corporation.

In some cases, you're going to want to build both. By the way, one huge advantage of a personal brand is it goes with you no matter where you are. So if you get downsized, outsized, laid off, or you just want to quit, you take your brand with you.



Joy Groblebe: Very good point.

Michael Hyatt: So that's something you'll always have if you build it.

Joy Groblebe: So there are so many pieces to building a platform. If you had to pick, what is the one thing people *must* do to succeed in building a platform?

Michael Hyatt: Okay, this may be obvious, but the one thing people have to do to succeed in building a platform is start. You'd be amazed at how much clarity you get after you take that first step. I know a lot of people out there want to keep reading. They want to keep studying. They want to keep learning. They're going to start as soon as they know everything.

The problem is you'll never know everything. You know enough probably right now to get started. If you don't start, you'll never know enough to feel comfortable. Why? Because you're stepping outside your comfort zone, and by definition it's uncomfortable.

So go ahead and leap. The net will appear. There is really no other mistake you can make. I've made most of them. There is no other mistake you could make that you can't recover from, but there is nothing that's going to save you if you don't start. You have to get started. That's the most obvious thing.

Joy Groblebe: That makes perfect sense. Okay, great. So those are the answers to the five most common questions you get, right?

Michael Hyatt: Right. I get some variation on these almost every time I speak on the topic of platform building, but those are the main ones.

Joy Groblebe: So right now we're going to turn the corner. I want to tackle some of the questions people asked when they registered. There were so many, and we're going to get to as many as we can. Just so you know, everyone listening, Michael and I agreed ahead of time that he would keep his answers short so we can cover as much ground as possible. For most of these there is a lot to be said, but we're going to try to get through them so we can help as many people as we can.

So question #1 comes from Ellen Debenport in Texas. She asks, "Michael, everything



you do is so classy with such high production values that I'm guessing you invest a lot of money in it. How can I build a platform that lends credibility when I don't (yet) have much cash to invest in it?"

Michael Hyatt: Well Joy, you know this because you're privy to how much I spend on everything, but I think people would be shocked at how little I spend. Now I certainly spend more today than I spent when I was beginning, but the most important thing is to begin by creating content that adds value to your audience. That doesn't cost you anything, other than your time to do the research and make it wow.

I personally never invest more than I'm prepared to lose. In the early days, my only costs were less than \$50 a month for hosting. I bought a blog theme, some software to manage my platform, and that was about it. Then...this is key...as I started monetizing my platform, initially via advertising, I started investing more in design, other bells and whistles on the site. Again, I never let my investment get too far ahead of the return.

For example, if you take a look at my early videos... I was stunned at the work Dean Rainey and Stu McClaren did on the most recent ones for Platform University. They were just fabulous, but in the early days I didn't have the money to pay for that. I simply used a webcam over Skype. I invested something like \$80 in an HD webcam.

I made sure they added value to my audience. That was more important than the production values, actually the quality of the content. So don't get too hung up on that. Obviously you have to start where you are, but as you gain traction, you'll have more money to invest in the production values and you can take it to the next level.

Joy Groblebe: It's always good to make sure you don't get too far ahead of yourself cash-wise before some money starts coming in, too. So I know we're careful with that even now with your projects.

Michael Hyatt: Yeah, absolutely.

Joy Groblebe: All right, question #2 comes from Steve Crutchfield in Pennsylvania. He asks, "I've been consistently inconsistent in building a platform. What have you learned to be the top three hurdles to overcoming the inconsistency, and how do you jump over or through them?"



Michael Hyatt: Great question, Steve. You ask for three, but I'm going to give you actually four hurdles. These are the four hurdles I've found in my own life and in the lives of the people I coach and consult with.

1. Not writing down a goal (your *what*). I know it sounds simple. We've heard about goal-setting forever. Very, very few people actually write down their goals. So I'm talking about writing it down on paper. Put it in an Evernote. Put it in your journal. It doesn't really matter, but write it down. There is something powerful about just doing that and getting clear on what you want.

2. Not getting clear on why it is important (your *why*). I think, as we said earlier to one of the earlier questions, this is critical, too, to understand what is at stake.

3. Not developing a clear time management strategy (your *how*). It's very easy when you're online and when you're trying to build a business or you're trying to build a platform to get distracted by trivial or secondary things and not stay focused on what is really important. So you have to have a very clear time management strategy.

4. Not scheduling this as a commitment on your calendar (your *when*). So literally enter it in as a commitment. It's an appointment. It's your commitment to yourself.

Joy Groblebe: I'm hearing a theme in the scheduling commitment theme so far in this call.

Michael Hyatt: I know.

Joy Groblebe: Next question from Mark Williams in California who asked, "As a beginning blogger, how should I go about getting sign-ups for my blog?"

Michael Hyatt: This is an important question. It's one of those things I wished I had had clarity on at the beginning because I'm sure I lost thousands of people who visited my blog and never came back because they couldn't find their way back. There was no reason for them to come back because I didn't make it easy for them to sign up.

So here is the deal. You have to create a mechanism for signing people up. Your visitors should be able to sign up via what's called *RSS* (Real Simple Syndication). If you don't



understand what that is, don't worry about it, but you have to have it. It enables people to have the content. When you update your blog, it gets pushed to them so they don't have to find the breadcrumbs and find their way back to your blog.

So make it easy for them to sign up via RSS, or my favorite, e-mail. Honestly, of the two, Joy, e-mail is more important. It's easier for the majority of your readers to understand. It's more personal. I use MailChimp even to this day, but AWeber is also good. It doesn't matter. There are a lot of services out there, but MailChimp is the one I currently use.

Make it easy for people to sign up. There should be displayed in a prominent location on your blog or on your website, usually on the right hand side of your blog (you can look at MichaelHyatt.com for an example of this), a sign-up form and the RSS feed button where people can click on if they want to get it that way.

If you really want to turbocharge your sign-ups, add an incentive. In my case, I give away a free e-book, *Creating Your Personal Life Plan*. We're probably going to need to change that out this year because it's been up there for almost two years. Still working great. I get several hundred sign-ups a week, but still, that will take it to the next level if you offer an incentive.

Just note that the incentive has to really be high quality. It just can't be a couple of blog posts you have that you throw together and don't really think through. It has to add value. Otherwise, people are not going to click, and they're not going to sign up.

Joy Groblebe: Always focusing on giving your audience value.

Michael Hyatt: Yes.

Joy Groblebe: Not wasting their time.

Michael Hyatt: Can I say something else there, Joy, that's important? I didn't think about it until right now. I know a lot of people think, "Well I'm going to hold back my best content," or, "This is the best I have. Should I offer that now?" Yes, you should. You should always lead with your best. Don't hold anything back.

Trust that as you give it away, it will be replenished. This is an important spiritual principle honestly, and I think it's an important business principle. If you hold it back, you



may never get a chance to give it away. If you do give it away, people will give you permission to give even more stuff. You have to just trust the process that you're going to get more stuff as a result of being generous.

Joy Groblebe: I don't think you can be too generous ever really.

Michael Hyatt: I agree.

Joy Groblebe: Okay, next question. There are a lot of Texans in this call. The next question is Jay Willis from Texas. He says, "How do you get started building an audience? How do you find your voice or the 'one thing' to focus on?"

Michael Hyatt: I think the most important thing in building an audience is that dreaded word we've used already: *consistency*. Now it's not as scary as people think. I've actually changed my opinion on this over the years and frankly even since I wrote the book *Platform*. Decide how often you're going to blog, and then stick to it. I don't care if it's once a week, three times a week, or five times a week.

I've done it every day. That was great for building my traffic, but I throttled that back, as you know, Joy, last fall. Initially my traffic dropped a bit, but then it picked right back up and got on the same growth pattern it was. So the truth was I was wasting a lot of time creating too many blog posts, frankly overwhelming my readers. The important thing is consistency. Determine what that is going to be. Start small. Make sure, no matter what, you follow that schedule.

The other thing I would say is the way to find your voice and to find your focus is just to experiment. Start with what you're passionate about. Mine evolved over the years. First, I blogged about productivity. I think my blog at that time was called *Working Smart*. Then I blogged about publishing, and I changed the name of it to *From Where I Sit*. Then I blogged about leadership, which is still the theme of my blog. Now I blog about all of these and whatever else interests me.

This is a key point. Once you establish a following, people will read you just to get your perspective and your voice. Seth Godin is one of the guys I read every day. Honestly, I don't really care what he writes on because I like the way he thinks. I like the way his mind works. I like the way he approaches various topics. So honestly, I would read him



on camping. I don't care. I don't care what the topic is because I'm following Seth.

Joy Groblebe: Right.

Michael Hyatt: I would say again consistency, and be experimental until you figure it out.

Joy Groblebe: Okay, this next question... Now I am Joy Groblebe. I'm going to butcher this name, but I understand. It happens to me all the time. Jay Goluguri from Texas asked, "You mention in the 'Start with the Wow' master class video..." If you haven't seen that yet, it's part of Platform University. "...that its important that our platform (and services we offer) are at the intersection of passion, competence, and market demand. What are some techniques to test and verify the market demand for what we have to offer before we go all out into putting efforts to building a platform?"

Michael Hyatt: I have to laugh at this a little bit because I'm thinking about something my friend Dan Miller once said, and that is if you have a passion you can't monetize or there is not a market demand, what you have is a hobby, not a career.

Joy Groblebe: Mm-hmm.

Michael Hyatt: So there has to be a market demand. Here is a simple way to start. I would start with the Google Keyword Tool. So just Google that phrase to find it: Google Keyword Tool. This will tell you how many people in any given month are searching for a phrase or a term. It's über-helpful. So let's say I have a passion. I'm just making this up, but let's just say I have a passion for Irish flute. The truth is, this is something I want to learn how to play. It's on my goal list for this year. Seriously.

Joy Groblebe: Spare time.

Michael Hyatt: Maybe I just get crazy, and I decide I want to build a platform around Irish flutes. So I use the Keyword Tool, and I discover (I did this this afternoon) that only 18,100 people a month are searching for that term. That is not too impressive.

But because when you use the Google Keyword Tool it will give similar terms people are using, I discovered that 201,000 people a month are searching for Irish music. So maybe instead of making it so focused on something like Irish flute, maybe I build my



platform around Irish music because 10 times as many people are searching for that phrase as they are for the Irish flute.

I would also see if there are other website where people are talking about this topic. If they are, great. The more, the merrier. I would not worry about the fact that it's not unique or there is other competition. This is so important to understand, Joy. What makes your topic unique is *you*. Now this is a little bit of a heartbreaker, but there are no new topics. There is nothing new under the sun. The only thing that makes it new is the fact that this content is being filtered through your unique personality. That's what gives it its uniqueness.

When I was the CEO at Thomas Nelson, we published 700 new books a year. That's a lot. People sometimes, especially first-time authors, would obsess that they were writing on a topic that wasn't that unique. I just would say to them, "Newsflash: You're not going to come up with one that is unique. You may come up with a unique angle, but your stories and your personality are what gives it its uniqueness."

So again, start with the Google Keyword Tool. That's where I would start. Then look for validation that there are other sites that are out there and seem to be monetizing it around your particular topic or interest area

Joy Groblebe: I encourage you when you listeners do sign up for Platform University, the whole idea of this passion/competence/market demand is a part of the Master Class. It's really, really good stuff.

Okay, next we're going to West Coast from Ken Brayton. He lives in Oregon. He says, "Is it possible to build a platform on a part-time basis? I already have a 50-hour-a-week 'regular job.' Can one be successful building a platform slowly over time?"

Michael Hyatt: Well, I think I answered that at the beginning of this session, but absolutely. That's how everyone I know started. I don't know of anybody who gets funded to build a platform and they can do it full time.

Joy Groblebe: Right.

Michael Hyatt: In fact, I don't know of a single person who started that way. Everybody



I know who is successful started part time, and I certainly did long before I was making enough money to do it full time. Yes, I would say you can build it slowly over time. It's what I call *the power of incremental change over time*.

Here is the key. If you're going to be successful doing that slowly, you have to be intentional and you have to be consistent. There has to be a strategy and a goal you're working toward. Otherwise, all you have really again is a hobby.

Joy Groblebe: There are no accidents or big breaks really in this kind of thing. It's just slow and steady wins the race usually.

Michael Hyatt: So true.

Joy Groblebe: Okay, Dana Reynolds from Texas. She wants to know, "What is your #1 suggestion for promoting a new book?"

Michael Hyatt: Yeah, that's a great question. Obviously I've spent my entire career in the book publishing industry, so I think about this a lot. I've thought about it a lot. I'm not going to give you some clever marketing strategy or some game-changing online strategy. What I can tell you is the #1 suggestion is to write a goal down with a date. I know this sounds simple. I talked about it before. I may sound like a one-string guitar. Write the goal down. The reason why, Joy, is it forces everything else that needs to happen.

Back on December 16, 2011, I wrote down the goal that I wanted to see *Platform*, my last book, get on *The New York Times* list by May 30, 2012. Well it actually got on the list on May 22. It also got on *The Wall Street Journal* list and the *USA Today* list. It wasn't just the act of writing it down because honestly, I write down lots of goals that don't come to pass.

By writing it down and looking at it every day, I had to ask myself the question, "What would it take to make that dream or that goal become a reality?" So every day I would ask myself the question, "What do I need to do today to move the ball down the field and get it across the goal line by this date?" So writing the goal down, getting clear on the outcome you want.



Maybe for you it's not having a bestselling book; you just want to have a successful book launch. Well define what success is. Is it selling 2,000 books in the first month? It is selling 10,000 books in the first week? Whatever it is, what I would do is I would come up with that goal, and then I would dial it up just a little bit so it pulls me outside of the comfort zone because that's where all the good stuff happens.

That's where the growth happens. That's where the answers to your prayer are. That's where the really fun, juicy, interesting things in life happen: outside your comfort zone. But don't set a goal that makes it safe. You're just not going to grow, and you're probably going to not be compelled enough to make it happen if it's too easy to do.

Joy Groblebe: With the launch of *Platform*, really making the *New York Times* list was a big goal. It was not an easy goal for sure, even with the platform you have.

Michael Hyatt: Yeah, no question. Honestly, when I wrote that goal down, it felt tremendously audacious. It felt like I was risking everything. In fact, when I wrote it down, I kind of looked from side to side to see if anyone was looking at me. Were they going to laugh out loud when I wrote that down like, "What are you thinking?"

I don't know what that is about all of us, Joy, but we feel like we have to play it safe. I'm not saying get psychotic about it, but I am saying it has to be outside of your comfort zone. That was definitely outside of my comfort zone because there were no guarantees. I could just as easily have not accomplished that and for the book to sink without a ripple.

In fact, the last real book I had written was in 2001, a book called *Invasion of Privacy*. That book did sink without a ripple. It was published a couple of weeks before 9/11, and nobody wanted to talk about privacy. It totally was forgotten. So all that effort was expended, and nothing happened. So yeah, for me it was an audacious goal.

Joy Groblebe: But making the list was a very fun day. It was a very, very good day.

Michael Hyatt: It was a blast.

Joy Groblebe: For our team, that's for sure. Okay, I cannot wait to hear your answer to this next question. I'm very excited about this one. Jody Mayberry from Washington



says, “Holding back, waiting to create wow can keep me from getting started. How do you balance the desire to begin with wow and the need to launch?”

Michael Hyatt: Well, I honestly struggle with this every single week. Joy, you and Brian, your business partner, know this. The best way I know to manage this is with a deadline. Now I have to be honest because you’re on the call and I’m not going to fool you, but I almost never hit my deadlines. You don’t either, so don’t get so smug. Neither does Brian.

But a deadline still is valuable, so we do our best. We get right up to the deadline. Then unless *it’s* just awful, we ship it. I always, always, *always* feel I could have done better. I kind of get that sinking feeling. Honestly, every time I hit the publish button on a blog post, I kind of have that sinking feeling like, “Oh, if I’d only had another hour, if I’d only had another half a day...” I could have made it so much better.

But hey, to quote you, like you often tell me, “Don’t worry; be crappy.” Not everything has to be a wow. Sometimes things just need to get done. In fact, if you try to make everything a wow, you’ll just wear yourself out. You wear your team out. You have to be strategically selective and decide what has to be a wow, realizing all the while that if you don’t ship it, it doesn’t matter. So something shipped that’s not quite as wow as you think it ought to be is better than always keeping it under wraps and never getting it out the door.

Joy Groblebe: Well it’s great in this digital age, and we’re a digital platform. You can always fix it. You can always improve it. It doesn’t have to stay exactly that way forever. Don’t worry; be crappy.

Michael Hyatt: A good example of that was just this week because we launched Platform University, which we were all exceedingly excited about. We weren’t too excited after we got it launched about the forum software we had selected. I won’t say what it is because I want to protect the guilty. We weren’t excited about the forum software.

So two days into it, Stu decides to find another solution. He installs another solution we’re very happy with. Right now I think it’s much better forum software, but we would have never known that. We could have had endless conference calls. We could have



debated it ad nauseam. We would not have come to the right answer until we stepped out and launched it, got feedback from our members, and figured it out for ourselves. So sometimes you don't get that clarity until after you launch.

Joy Groblebe: Yeah, there is no way to know that ahead of time. Okay, let's keep going here. Kevin Rains from Ohio says, "Sequencing. What comes first, second, and third in terms of building a platform? Should I collect e-mail addresses, develop a product? There are so many things that seem so important. I'm not sure which ones to pursue and in what order."

Michael Hyatt: That's where I would point Kevin and everyone else back to the social media framework. Creating a great home base is job #1. Until you do that, you're really kind of wasting your time out there in social media land because you have nothing to refer people to. One of the things that is a key attribute of a home base is it's a space you own and control where you control the messaging and you control the branding. You're not going to do that on Facebook. You're not going to do that on LinkedIn. You have to do that on your home base and point people back to the home base.

Personally, when it comes to products or platform... By the way, you do have to have both. Content is king. Platform is queen. It takes both to be successful. I would personally build the platform first. You'll be able to build the products out of all the content you generate in building your platform.

One of the saddest things I witness, and I see this all the time with authors, is they've poured their lives into a manuscript or into a book. They've given no time to building a platform. Then it comes time to get the book published, and now they're scrambling. They have no audience that is tuned into them that wants to hear what they have to say. The book just dies because they have not spent any time building a platform.

I know what it means to be an introvert. I'd love to stay in my office all day and just write and not have to muddy my hands with the marketing and building the platform, but the truth is if you really care about your products and you really want to get an audience for them, you have to build a platform. I would say do that first and develop your content as you go.

Joy Groblebe: This next question is a little long, but stay with me because I think it's



what a lot of people want to hear here. Joshua Hood in Texas asked, “Can you talk about the balance between what we think people want to hear versus what we want to say? I sometimes find myself blogging what I think people want to read because what I want to write doesn’t feel flashy, marketable, or impressive. For example, the series of posts on leadership we thought would be pic barely gets any attention, but a silly post about things that bother us takes off and becomes our biggest hit. How much should our perception of what people want affect content creation?”

Michael Hyatt: Joy, this is actually pretty common. Even today there is not always or even usually a correlation between what I think will be popular and what actually is popular. However, it’s really important to ask why something worked or didn’t work. The goal is to find that sweet spot that exists at the intersection of our passion, our skills, and market demand, but we can’t give up too early. Sometimes it just takes time to build a following.

For example, you could probably build a great celebrity gossip site and get more visitors than you’re getting right now regardless of what your platform is. But is that really what you want to do? You have to go back to your definition of success. It has to be more than your monthly visitor count. It has to be influence in a way that is significant for you. Nobody can define that for you except you, but I would say be patient. Don’t be surprised when you publish something that is just kind of a throwaway, but it goes crazy.

Don’t also be surprised when you work so hard on something that just kind of sinks without a ripple, nothing but crickets. I’ve had that experience. In fact, I have it at least twice a month. That’s just normal, but learn from it and let it inform the way you develop your platform. Don’t give up on your vision, but you just have to get smarter about getting it out there.

Joy Groblebe: Okay, Wayne Stiles from Texas asked this question: “Other than keeping track of unique visitors, what information should we use Google Analytics to measure and why?”

Michael Hyatt: Well first of all, for those people who don’t know, Google Analytics is basically a software service Google offers for free so you can track all the meaningful statistics related to your blog. It’s incredible the amount of information it gives you.



1. **Unique visitors.** Yes, visitor count is important, the number of unique individuals who come to your website on a monthly basis.

2. **Page views.** If you're going to monetize your blog, that is what you're going to be selling. That is what advertisers are interested in buying is a certain number of page views. You also want to pay attention to the ratio between this and your visitor account. You should be able to generate two or three more page views per visit. So if you have people who are coming who are only looking at one page (in other words, your page views equals your unique visitor account), they're not hanging around. You probably need to add more internal links to other content on your site that keep them on your site while they're there. So page views is another metric.

3. **Site speed.** Speed kills, or to say it another way, really slow speed kills. Google now measures this in assessing how to rank you. So you want your site to be as fast as you can get it so people don't give up and bounce off the site because it takes too long for your page to load. So pay particular attention to the size of your images, to the number of plug-ins you have installed. All that stuff, if you're not careful, will slow down your speed and decrease your ranking with Google.

4. **Mobile visitors.** This is kind of the last one. There is a ton of stuff if you're into statistics. Again you can just geek out. It can be a great distraction and keep you from writing. If you're getting a lot of mobile traffic, people accessing your site on Android device or iOS devices, you want to make sure your site is mobile-friendly. We didn't realize this. This kind of snuck up on us this last year because I was getting maybe...

Joy Groblebe: Right.

Michael Hyatt: ...seven percent of my audience on a mobile device trying to access the site. Suddenly, about the middle of last year we realized (I guess it was maybe in June or July) that about 30 percent of my visitors were accessing our site on a mobile device. We kind of panicked, and we realized we had to completely redesign the theme.

Andrew Buckman, who is my developer and a WordPress genius and the guy who is working on the *Get Noticed! Theme* (that's really been his brainchild), has been the key person working with me. We delayed the release of that into beta so we could get it right on mobile devices. It was that important. So look at yours. Yours may be different, but



those are just some stats I would take a look at.

Joy Groblebe: We are so thankful for Andrew. Very thankful.

Michael Hyatt: Yes.

Joy Groblebe: Okay, we're going to take one other question here. Tom Maibe in Maryland asked, "If you're not as gifted in writing as speaking, what alternative do you suggest to writing a blog?"

Michael Hyatt: Well, I love this question because there *are* alternatives. If you're a better talker than a writer (and many people are), consider doing a podcast. Think of a podcast as an on-demand radio show. You don't have to wait for permission. Nobody has to invite you onto their radio show. Nobody has to give you your own radio show. You can launch your very own podcast, have it distributed through iTunes, and reach an audience that way.

If you're interested in doing that or that sounds like something that might interest you, I highly recommend you visit my friend Cliff Ravenscraft's website. This will be the easy part to remember. It's podcastanswerman.com. He is not kidding with that domain name. He is the podcast answer man. He knows everything. He taught me everything I know about my podcast. Whenever I have a question, I go to his site. He has free tutorials that will get you up and running. He also has paid programs, but the free tutorials are where I started.

The other thing you can do, too, Joy, is have your podcasts transcribed and turn them into blog posts. So you can go the other way. My podcasts often start as a blog post and then I decide to podcast that, but you can do the exact opposite way, as well. So if you have content, don't get hung up on how you're sharing it. There is a way to get it out there.

Joy Groblebe: Cliff is great, and a little plug here. Cliff happens to be one of the speakers at our upcoming Platform Conference in February in Nashville. We have less than 10 tickets left for that conference. So if you want information on that, it's PlatformConference.tv. You can meet Cliff and hear him in person.



Michael Hyatt: Awesome.

Joy Groblebe: Okay, so I want to make sure we have time to take more questions live from people, but before that I want to let people know we have a special Early Bird offer on Platform University for those of you who took the time to listen in. If you're not familiar with it, Platform University is our new online membership site, and it's designed to help you jumpstart your platform and take it to the next level. So it's the *Platform* book on steroids. We're going to take that, where we started there, and go deeper.

So whether you're just starting out, you've been doing this for a few years, might be kind of stuck, or if you're making six-figure-plus income from your platform, you can still take it to the next level. That's really what Platform University is designed for. We've built it around four major content components every month, and you can get all this information at PlatformUniversity.com.

1. **Master class.** This we're going to do every month where Michael or another expert takes you through some key aspects of platform building. We have some great classes coming up. This month in the first one Michael did, he talks about the importance of starting with wow.

2. **Q&A Teleseminar.** So that's where Michael and I will host a one-hour live call just like we're doing tonight. The difference going forward is it will only be for members.

3. **Member critiques.** I'm excited about this. We're going to let members volunteer to have Michael evaluate your platform. So it's not just a website review. Michael will look at your entire platform. Each month he'll pick one and share the good, the bad, and the ugly and also give you some great critique and evaluation. We're also going to record this so all the members can learn from it and improve their own sites.

4. **Backstage pass.** This is going to be fun. The only place you can get this is with Platform University, but Michael will take you behind the scenes and show you exactly how he does something. So this first month, for example, he is going to give you a tour of his offices and his workspace (his computer setup, his standing desk, podcast equipment) and really explain his rationale for how he engineers everything to optimize his productivity. You will love this. He is truly one of the most productive people I know.



So every month you're going to get these four things, plus the members-only discussion forum has been huge so far in just the first week. I think this really justifies the membership fee, just the forum. We've had hundreds of people post on dozens and dozens of topics in this first week. It's been incredible to learn from people. Michael has participated as he can, so the forums have been fantastic.

So here is the deal. From now until midnight tonight, that's midnight PST, you can save \$60 a year off the regular membership price. So for right now until tonight it's \$20 a month. After midnight tonight, it will go up to \$25 a month. If you do take advantage of the \$20 a month special before midnight tonight, you will guarantee to keep that price as long as you remain a member. You also can quit anytime you want with no penalty. We make it very easy. Hopefully you'll want to stay.

So if you're listening to this recording after the Early Bird discount (because this will be available later on), I would encourage you to join anyway. We can't give you the discount, but even at \$25 a month it will be a great deal. We do plan to raise the price again in a few months, so now is the best time to join. So PlatformUniversity.com/join is where you need to go to get that deal for the Early Bird special. It's \$20 a month until midnight tonight PST.

Michael Hyatt: Awesome.

Joy Groblebe: Okay, so Michael has a few minutes left, but I wanted to open the lines and take two or three live questions. So if you'd like to ask Michael a question, you just need to press *2 on your phone now to virtually raise your hand, and we will recognize you to ask your question. So let's see here. Daniel, do you want to help me pick some callers for this?

Daniel: Sure. If the last four digits of the phone you're dialing in on are 5750, you are unmuted and may ask your question now.

Male: My question is how many people are currently signed up for Platform University? Are you going to eventually shut it off? Do you have a max?

Michael Hyatt: Yeah, that's a great question. I think we have about 1,100 signed up right now, which by the way, you know that whole goal thing? Occasionally I don't



practice this in my own life. I kind of had this really safe goal that if we could get 300 in the first week and maybe 1,000 in the first 90 days, that would be awesome because I thought that was a nice, safe goal.

Joy and Stu had a crazy goal. They thought if we could get 1,000 in the first week, that was more like it. So I didn't want to tell them. I didn't want to discourage them, but I thought that was pretty aggressive. Right now about 1,100. We haven't really thought about a top end. I think at the point at which the service deteriorates, then I think we'd have to cut it off. That would really be around the discussion forum, but I think we're a long ways from that.

Male: Thank you.

Daniel: All right, for our next question, if you raised your hand and your last four digits are 0451, you are unmuted and good to go.

Joy Groblebe: Introduce yourself so we can meet you.

Stephanie McCray: Yes, my name is Stephanie McCray from Chicago. If you are at a point as I am where you have not built that home base and that's where you need to start, how does getting involved with Platform University integrate with that? It seems like it would be a bit much.

Michael Hyatt: Honestly, I think it will make it so much easier for you because you don't have to make all the mistakes all the rest of us have made. I made so many mistakes. You can certainly make those, but it's very expensive. It delays you getting up and running. The discussion forum all by itself is going to be a place where you're going to be able to answer the questions you're going to have because you're going to have a lot of them, Stephanie, particularly at the beginning.

There are no stupid questions at Platform University. There are no questions that are too simple. You can ask whatever you want. We'll do our best, either the people who are members or me or somebody on my staff, to answer those questions. So yeah, I think it will save you a lot of grief frankly.

Joy Groblebe: The forums have been so helpful, and there have been a lot of people



who might be ahead of you who are really ready to help and anxious to help. They're answering all kinds of questions, so I think it will be a great benefit.

Stephanie McCray: Thanks.

Daniel: All right, our next caller will be the last four digits 6227. Go ahead.

Doc Kennedy: Hey, this is Doc Kennedy from Tacoma, Washington. My question is do you have a set amount you tell people they can look to invest right off the get-go when starting their platform?

Michael Hyatt: I really think it depends on how ambitious you want to be and what you have to invest. It can be very simple. Let me just give you some of the costs you're going to face initially. First of all, if you don't have any money to invest, fine. Go to WordPress.com (not WordPress.org), which is free, and sign up for a blog. Start writing. Get yourself a Twitter account. Get yourself a Facebook account. Use those as your embassies initially. Start developing a blog and start developing some content and a following.

If you want to do what's called a self-hosted WordPress blog where you're going to be able to customize it more, you're going to be able to add plug-ins and get the functionality you really want, that's going to cost you maybe as little as... There is a special offer on my site if you go to that WordPress setup page on my site where you can get it for \$3.95 a month.

You'll probably need to buy a theme. First of all, you can get a lot of them for free. If you want to buy a premium theme, you can spend anywhere from \$50 to about \$150. You're not going to have to spend that again anytime soon, but that's an investment that will carry you for a while. Mail list management with MailChimp is going to be free, I think, for at least the first couple thousand. Then once you get beyond that, you start having to pay a usage fee.

It's not that expensive initially. Again, I would do what you can, but don't let that hold you up. It really doesn't cost that much to get started. That's the thing that is beautiful about this. It doesn't require a big capital investment like the old world media used to require. That's the beautiful thing about new media.



Daniel: All right, our next question comes from the last four 1110.

Male: Hi Michael, I'm calling from Indiana. I follow Seth Godin's philosophy that if you do seven ideas, most of them are going to fail, but out of that usually you get one good one. Can you kind of share, early on, some of your thoughts, "Hey, this is a home run idea," and it just kind of bombed on you.

Michael Hyatt: Yeah, I have so many of those that have bombed. First of all, blog posts. There were blog posts I wrote that I thought would be epic as Josh Hood was talking about, and then they just completely failed. There were also products... I don't think we ever told this story. Actually I think we tell it inside the membership as a bonus. Am I right about this, Joy? This month.

Joy Groblebe: I think so, if it's the story I think it is.

Michael Hyatt: Yeah, it's the debriefing of the *Get Published* program. We did this very successful product launch in September for my *Get Published* course. This is basically everything I've learned about publishing in 30 years. We launched it, and it was very successful.

What a lot of people don't know and what I talk about on the debrief we did for the membership was that I initially launched this about seven or eight years ago as a product called *Everything You Need to Know to Become a Bestselling Author*, except I was the CEO of Thomas Nelson. I think I was actually the COO at the time. I didn't want to reveal my identity, so we masked that so I could be honest and tell people what I really thought. The only problem was now all of a sudden nobody knows me.

It sank without a ripple. We couldn't give away copies of it. We spent a lot of money creating the inventory. That was before we were really smart enough to know we could deliver it digitally. So we created or manufactured the physical product, and it was a total disaster. It didn't work. So I have a lot of examples like that, but I think Seth is about right on the ratio.

Joy Groblebe: So you didn't tell them what your name was since you masked your name on that project. What was it?



Daniel: I was waiting for that.

Michael Hyatt: Yeah, because it is so embarrassing. Yeah, we basically called me *Dr. X*.

Joy Groblebe: Dr. X. I love that. That kills me.

Michael Hyatt: I know. It's embarrassing.

Joy Groblebe: Okay, we have time for one more question, Daniel.

Daniel: All right, the next one will come from the last four of 4159. Go ahead.

Kasey Cronquist: Hi, this is Kasey Cronquist from Santa Barbara, California. I was just wondering, Michael, once you said the best time to start was seven years ago. I'm just curious, and all of us who are so interested in doing what you've been so successful at, can there ever be too many of us trying to do this same thing? Thanks.

Michael Hyatt: Kasey, that's a great question. By the way, I see your tweet update here where you're asking about the *Get Noticed! Theme*. I'll come back to that in a second. No, I don't think so because again, what makes your voice unique is you. As long as you're authentic with who you are and what you're passionate about and transparent with your wins as well as your losses, no, I don't think so. The world needs you. God created you for a reason. It's because he thought and I think and the people who will become your tribe think you have something to offer. So no, I don't think there could be too many.

By the way, just to answer your question about the *Get Noticed! Theme*, we're in beta. We're about to open it up for the second round of beta testers. It's slower than we thought it would be, but it's going to be worth the wait. I am so excited about this theme. I wished it were just happening faster, but it's not. We've never been through software design, and this just takes more time than we thought.

Joy Groblebe: It's another animal for sure. Okay, so that's about all the time we have left for tonight, but Michael, do you have any final thoughts to leave us with?

Michael Hyatt: Yeah, Joy, what I would say is first of all, thanks for moderating this.



You've done a great job. The thing I would say is it isn't too late to begin. Get started. The options a platform gives you, the options to get your message heard, to get your product noticed, to get your brand recognized, are beyond really what your wildest imagination could be. I feel like I'm living a dream right now. To be able to talk about the things I feel are important to me and to be able to have an audience that cares about those topics is awesome. It gives you and will give you options.

If you want to step out of your job, you don't have to. Some people actually like their jobs, but if you want to take on a different career, a platform will make that possible. If you want to write a book and get it noticed, a platform makes that possible. If you just want to have influence, a platform makes that possible. None of that will happen until you start, so that is what I would leave you with. Wherever you're at, it's not too late. You're not too far behind. You can get started. You can take it to the next level. Do it.

Joy Groblebe: I think that is great, great advice. Thank you, everyone, for joining us tonight. Hopefully we'll post a recording of this teleseminar as soon as we can. It will

most likely be in a day or two. Michael will post a link to his blog, and we'll also notify Platform University members by e-mail. So again, the link to join Platform University is PlatformUniversity.com/join. That special of \$20 a month, which lasts you forever, goes until midnight PST tonight. So thanks for joining us.

Until next month, go make it happen. Your tribe is counting on you! Thanks, everyone.

