

**Ep #229: Shaun Buck - Standing Out from Market
Commoditization Part 2**



Full Episode Transcript

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David Phelps: This week, part two of my interview with Mr. Shaun Buck, The Newsletter Pro. Today, this week, we'll be talking about how to utilize stories, how to get the stories you need to create real personality in your marketing. If you missed last week's interview with Shaun, go back and catch that one as well. Enjoy.

So my question would be, that's so good, that's such a great example, Shaun. Now, I'm a busy doctor and our team's all focused on all the stuff we've got to do every day. How do we grab those stories and get them into the context where we can use them in the way you're talking about? How do we do that?

Shaun Buck: Yeah. Look, so look, there's only two ways, right? Or three ways, I guess. You could outsource it somewhere. Right? You could try to find someone to get those stories for you. You could find someone in house to do it. Right? But that is also our job, so if you're using our service, that's what we do. We give you a storyteller, whose job is to work with you and patients. You've got to tell us which patients. Right?

David Phelps: Yeah.

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Shaun Buck: But which patients, and to work with your team to tell that story. So our average doctor spends about 20 minutes a month, 15, 20 minutes a month with our team, and then their offices spends about another 40 minutes to an hour a month with us, where they're proofing stuff, not in like looking for editing mistakes, like proofing as in, "Do I like this?" Right? "Is this what I was trying to convey?" Right? And then we tell those stories for you, but it's not just about the patient.

We tell your story. We take unsolicited... Now I've got hundreds and hundreds, no joke, of unsolicited stories and testimonials from our clients. I've got one that... We read a couple of them out loud at our Monday meetings with the whole company. Okay? And so I read one, I don't know, a couple of weeks ago, and we wrote this article, and it was basically a tribute to the gentleman's mother, and it was one of these things where, it went out like at the end of April, because it was trying to hit for Mother's Day. Right?

And I get this message back that the mom got it. She's on the list. She got it in the mail, and I guess she has a PO box or something, because she was driving back with the mail, but she had started reading it, and she basically got in her car, started reading it, and couldn't go anywhere because she started bawling about what her son wrote about her, and he goes, "She calls me up, she thanked me. She said it was one of the most beautiful things," how much she appreciated it. He goes, "I just didn't have the heart to tell her I didn't write it." Well, yeah, he didn't physically sit down and pen it, but we took all of his content, right, we took that 20 minute conversation and

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we converted it into a story that his own mom didn't know he didn't write about her. Right?

And so that's our job, that's what we do. Right? And that's the reason a newsletter company can make the Ink 500 list. We had 3,000% growth the first time, 2,975% growth over three years. The reason a print newsletter coming can make that with digital age is because of that storytelling, because of the results that we can get in building those relationships so they feel connected with you, and that is the key, guys. You don't want to be a commodity? You need to put in relationship and experience. That's how you're going to not be a commodity where, the next coupon that comes in, it just goes straight to the trash, because there's no way they could change, no way.

David Phelps: Yeah. You're not going to break that kind of connection. Where I got that kind of connection too is, when someone provides me that kind of service, yeah, I'm not going anywhere. I'm not going to change from Chevron. Chevron, I love the people there, because I go there, they know who I am, we got some connection there. Look, I just want to be in a place where, well, where people just care and they know who I am, and we have to talk about real life, and that's what I want to be. That's what you're creating here.

Here's my next question that may help some of our listeners today, Shaun, is, you are providing a unique and customized newsletter, or storytelling, which is the key thing. You can go out and you can buy anything that's basically, well, it's getting commoditized, right, just to send something out, and I guess something's better than

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nothing. But if you're going to do this, how does one get the best return on investment? You and I talk a lot, marketers talk about segmenting their list. Right?

Shaun Buck: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Phelps: They sit you down. You figure out which group of prospects or current customers you want to communicate, in certain ways, because you can't just spend the same dollar across the board. You run out of money. So how do you help your clients figure out where to get started? Because the people will say, "Well, there's a cost here." Well, it's not really a cost. It's an investment if you do it the right way. So speak to that.

Shaun Buck: Yeah, okay. So the economics for dentists are the best when it comes to newsletters. Here's why. We're only going to send one per household. So, for example, I was just talking. As I mentioned, I had done a semi office here, and I was just chatting with them before this call. So they averaged 2.7 patients per household. Okay, your number will vary a little bit off of that, but that's what they average. So you're sending one newsletter to cover 2.7 patients. That's the first step. Okay? The second step is, we've got to determine who is a patient. Well, frankly, if they haven't been in, in 18 months, they're not a patient. I don't care if they come in once every 24 months, you can't bank on that. Okay?

David Phelps: Right.

Shaun Buck: If they haven't been in, in 18 months, they need to go into reactivation, not under let's nurture them with newsletters. Okay? So you can cut that list way down. But, for example, if I get a dentist who says, "I've got 5,000

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people, 5,000 active patients," first of all, that's not usually the case, because usually when I cut it off at 18 months, that number drops pretty drastically, but let's even assume that that's the case. That number, just by the fact that we're not going to send to every patient, we're going to send one per household, that number cuts by 60% almost, at least, almost a 100% of the time. Right?

So basically, most of the time, you can take whatever your active patient number is, and you can decrease that by 60%, and that's how many you're actually going to send to. So, your bang for your buck is a lot higher in dentistry than if... Our second biggest niche is law. I mean, that's one client, one newsletter. Right? It's absorbing all into that one client, as opposed to, you get to spread it out across many clients.

Now, to your point of marketing, one really interesting thing we can do is, the best way to market in a newsletter is what we call an FSI, or a free standing insert. Okay? They're very inexpensive to add in, and you can segment your list. So, for example, we can say, "Hey, these 350 people get an insert about Invisalign," and nobody else gets an insert. Okay, if that's the list. Or they get a different insert, or this 350 gets this insert, this 350 gets this insert, and then the rest of them don't get anything.

We do that all the time. I do that for my own list. So you have to segment it like that, and I tell you about that. I've got a book on The Ultimate Guide to Newsletters. We tell you about it in that. I just shared how to do it here. You can totally do that, and that's how you decrease the list, so your volume isn't so high that you're breaking the

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bank, and then that's how you sell the different segments of the list.

David Phelps: Yeah, perfect, perfect. So it sounds to me, again... I'm thinking from the perspective of the busy dentist and orthodontist, and they're linking this, they're loving this, but I know how they think.

Shaun Buck: Do you?

David Phelps: So they think, "Yeah, it sounds great, but man, it's just a lot of work. The last time I tried something, it fell apart." Well, the point I want to make is, you're providing, what I would call, turnkey customized service. Turnkey means, your team, who are already set up to do this service, will communicate with you, the doctor, obviously, but they're also going to put a lot, work with the staff, and you're going to give them frameworks. So they are collecting the data, or let's talk about the stories, the people, and then, I assume, then you guys, once you collect that, here's Mary Jones had a great story, she was in the other day, then you guys reach out to Mary Jones, or some other community person, and pull the details or-

Shaun Buck: Yes. So if we're going to go with a patient, and you, the doctor, don't do any of this, we will work your office manager. Right? I mean, we work. So to give you an example, I mean, I've got, I believe, 68 employees right now, and so, I mean, we've got teams that, this is all they do. So this isn't like your concern of, "Well, maybe it didn't work." I mean, we're not reinventing the wheel. Just follow the plan. We've done this with hundreds of practices. Right? And hundreds of other businesses as well, and so we don't need to reinvent the wheel over here. Okay?

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And so what will happen is, is yes, we'll have your, basically, office manager, let's say they've got someone good, we'll just have them do an email introduction, because you have a project manager who works on your account. You'll have a storyteller, and you have a graphic artist. All those people work on your account and they all work on a team. They sit right next to each other, so they're all working on the exact same clients on our end. Right? Okay?

So they're going to email your project manager, and they'll just do an email introduction. "Hey, Mary, you had such a great story. Thank you so much for sharing. You're such an amazing patient. We would love to feature you in the newsletter. Would that be something you're interested in? If it is, I've actually connected you with our writer who handles the copywriting for our newsletter. Would you just respond back and let him know when you're available, in the next couple of days, that he could interview you?" And then we just set an appointment.

We'll respond then, "Hey, Mary, great. We'd love to chat with you. Let me make it really easy. Here's a calendar link. Just pick any time to schedule on my calendar, and we'll jump on a call, and it'll take about 15 minutes." Right? And then they go through and jump on the call. Now, I always tell people, I'm like, "You're better off giving me two or three people because not everyone's going to say yes to that." You'll have some patients who don't want to be in the spotlight, and you'll have some that will say yes every time. Right?

And you know your patients better than we do, but that's how it works. It's very, very simple, and then we just get

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on the call with Mary, and we're obviously just asking her to tell us her story. We sit there and take notes, and our phone system records the call in case we need to go back and check in on it, right, and listen to something again, and then the writer writes up the story, and then we send it to your office, so it's going to go over into your office manager, and they approve the story. That's it, and so all that, to approve it, they've got to just read it and be like, "Yeah, that looks good." And on those stories, those are the easiest ones to get approved. We almost never have changes on those stories, because it's the patient's story. Right?

David Phelps: Right.

Shaun Buck: And we're going to tell the story to make sure you look really good in it. I mean, we're not going to lie, but if, for some reason, the patient goes off on you, we'll be like, "Hey, maybe this isn't the best one to put in the newsletter." Right? We'll tell you, and so yeah. You know what? You said something and we brushed over it, and I want to see, if you're okay, we back up. It's why not email only?

David Phelps: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shaun Buck: Okay? And I need people to understand this, because I think that they're missing this. Right? So email, as you said, there's a lot of noise out there in email. Average American, it's a 147 emails a day, tons of noise, but here's what I want you to think about with email. Okay? You are doing really, really good, really good, if you get a 20% open rate. So, first, let's assume. Let's assume you're sending out a 1,000 emails for easy math. Okay? All 1,000 are not getting delivered.

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Every staff out there on email marketing tells you that, and actually, what they say is, only about 70%. It's a little less than that, but about 70% actually hit the inbox. The rest hit the spam box or something else. Right? Then of the 70%, the average open rate in America right now is 11%. Okay?

So let's say you're doing really good and getting 20% open rate. Okay? Fine. So now we've got, so we had a 1,000 people, but only 700 saw it, and of the 700, you're doing really good, and a 140 patients opened it. The average time spent on an opened email is eight seconds. That's your average time. So you are getting eight seconds with that patient. Now, compare that to direct mail. The average time, according to the United States Postal Service, this is not my staff, this is their staff, okay, that a newsletter lingers around a home or office before someone throws it away is four months. Okay?

So that's how long it's hanging out, going from the kitchen to the bedroom to the bathroom before they drop it. I have, no joke, autographed multiple finders of every newsletter I've ever sent someone before, and we've been sending newsletters for eight years now. Right? And so, there's a lot of people, if you put good enough content in there, they actually keep the things, no joke, in a binder. It's crazy, but-

David Phelps: Well, call me crazy, because there's certain newsletters, I keep them all.

Shaun Buck: I do too.

David Phelps: I mean, I do, I do, because they're relevant, and as you said, I may not have time that day that it came in the

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mailbox to actually open it and read it all. They follow me around. I've got my stacks and I will get to it. It's top of mind. It's just like, I've got to get there.

Shaun Buck: I'm on a plane multiple times a month. I save them up and read them on the plane. That's, personally, my habit. Most people aren't on a plane multiple times a month, so they do it completely differently, but literally, they go in my backpack, and I read them in my hotel rooms when I'm bored, and I read them on the plane, because I'm like look. I like these newsletters, I want to read them, but instead of sitting around the hotel room and watching the latest episode of Keeping Up with the Kardashians, which listen, I know is everyone's favorite show, I mean, personally, I just really, really want to keep with what's going on over there. But instead of doing that, I decide I'll be productive with my time, and I'll read the newsletters that I like, and that's how I do it. Everyone does it a little differently.

But I did this test one time, where I, I was in a very friendly audience. Okay? There was 300 people there. I'd been coming to this thing for four years. We had a ton of customers. Right? Most of those people were on my list already. Right? So I knew all this coming in, and I knew that it was going to be friendly, and so I said, "How many people get my newsletter right now, like on a monthly basis?" And maybe half, a little over half the people raise their hand. You've got 300 people in the room. Right? And I said, "Listen, I want you to keep your hand up if you have read my newsletter in any of the following locations." Right? "In your bed, at your kitchen table, right, in your favorite chair." Okay?

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I had one other one, I can't remember what that was, and so about half of the hands stayed up at that point. Right? Okay, so I'm like, "Okay, we're doing pretty good." Then I said, "Okay, now one more question. I want you to leave your hand up, and be honest, leave your hand up if you have read my newsletter while using the restroom." And over 40% of the hands stayed up. Right? So 60% went down, 40% stayed up. When you send these things out and you get readership, which that is the number one goal, it's not sell them something, it's not conversion, in the first few months, it's all readership. Nothing else matters. Okay? Because if we can't get them to read it, I can't sell them anything later. Okay?

So if 40% of these people are spending time with me in some very intimate places, like their bed, and while they're doing their business, right, so that is a relationship, that is a connection that we have that you can make, and then I'll say one other point to this. We've been sending the newsletter for a long time, and we kind of have a running joke, and I've actually never mentioned this before.

So we kind of have a running joke around here, which is that everybody is friends with Shaun. Unfortunately, Shaun is not friends with everybody. Right? Because you would not believe the number of phone calls we get in from prospects, or whatnot, who are insistent to being transferred into me, personally, "No, no, no, I'm friends with Shaun."

Maybe we've met once, maybe we haven't, but the difference is they feel like they're friends with me, because they've reading about me for a year, two years,

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three years. They feel like we are BFFs, and I'll get them to come up. It's very weird. I'll go to shows, especially ones where I... You mentioned Dan Kenny. If I got to a G cast C show, I can barely go to the bathroom by myself. Right?

David Phelps: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shaun Buck: I'll go in, and I have people start talking to me about my kids, and I've got to mentally go in and say, "Hey, these people know a lot about me, because I share it in the newsletter." Right?

David Phelps: That's right.

Shaun Buck: And I've got to prepare for that mentally, because I was caught off guard a couple of times where I'm like, "Hold on, dude, have you been stalking me? Do we need to fight here?"

David Phelps: It's like, "No, dude, you're out there everywhere." So that's fine, that was the whole point.

Shaun Buck: Yeah, I was like, "Oh, good, my marketing's working. Okay, whew." But that's the point with the good storytelling, is that they're all friends of the doctor. They're all friends of Shaun. Right?

David Phelps: Yes.

Shaun Buck: And so, we had to put extra filtering in, so that David gets through, which he just calls my cell phone, but other people maybe don't, because otherwise, I would just sit on the phone. I'd take five incoming phone calls, at least, every day, and I'm not joking. I'm not over exaggerating about that. We get many friends of Shaun calling in for

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whatever reason, sell me something, whatever it is. So that's the power, guys. And you don't want to be commodity? You better do something everybody else isn't doing.

David Phelps: That's right. And very few do. So you're right, Shaun. It's the perfect place to stand out in a very noisy cluttered... Independent of what you used to do in the old days, or dependent upon your great service, that has to be there, as you said at the very front end of this segment.

So, Shaun, this has been really outstanding. I would also recommend people go to your website, which is NewsletterPro.com, because you've got a lot of great articles, you've got a lot of great blog posts, and as I said, Shaun is really a marketing genius. He lives in the world of marketing. So, yes, his newsletter is what he focuses on, but the guy's got, I'm just saying in front of you, but you've got a mind that thinks about marketing.

And if you're a small business owner or professional practice owner, and you're not directly, I don't mean directly doing it, but involved in orchestrating what it is you do through great vendors, great providers, like Shaun and Newsletter Pro, you're missing the boat here. You can't just be great at what you do if you're not getting the message out. If you're not disrupting the noise and standing above all others, then you're on a slippery slope down, and you can't afford to do that today.

It's a different world we live in. There's challenges in it, but gosh, you can stand out, relatively easily, just doing a few smart things, and this is one of those that I am a big fan of. I've been doing my newsletter about the same amount of time, 2011, and I wouldn't stop it for a second.

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Our team has fun with it, and your offices will too. They actually have fun with it, because it's something they're all involved in, and patients will come in and talk about it, and it's the hub. They're always talking about you, your office, personality, all the things you write about. Shaun, outstanding. Thanks for doing this for us today.

Shaun Buck: Any time.

David Phelps: I know that a lot of people need to really bear down on this, because they're wondering, "What do I do," and it's a perfect adjunct to put into place with anything else they're doing in terms of their marketing.

Shaun Buck: Well, thank you. Yeah, if you don't mind, we would be actually happy to send them a complimentary copy of one of my books, if you want, for all of your members.

David Phelps: That's up to you. This is going out to a pretty wide audience.

Shaun Buck: Okay.

David Phelps: So you decide how you want to do it. It's totally up to you.

Shaun Buck: Well, here's what we'll do. We'll make it easy, because people are probably listening to this on their phone.

David Phelps: Yep.

Shaun Buck: Right? I mean, in all reality.

David Phelps: Yep.

Shaun Buck: So what I'm going to do is, I want to give you guys a text opt in, and I'm going to tell you, I think you should do this,

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but then I'm going to tell you, even if you're not sure about newsletters, why it's still a good idea. So let me give you the opt-in first, because it's very simple. It's Phelps, is the codeword. Okay? Right? And you're going to text Phelps to 208-269-9111, 208-269-9111.

Now, here's what I want you to notice, okay? Even if you're like, "Ah, I don't know if this newsletter thing's right for me," that's totally cool. Okay? We're going to send it to you at no charge. We're not going to charge you shipping and handling, no bait and switch here. Okay? But there's two things I want you to pay attention to when you get it. The first is, watch how that text opt-in technology works, because what we're doing on it is, it feels very, very much like you are texting with someone at my office. It is automated. Okay? And it gathers all the data. Right? Where do send it to? We ask you for the address. So it's really, really cool, and it goes right into our customer database, right, so we can manage all of that. We use Infusionsoft and it goes right into that.

Now, the second thing I want you to notice is, what we're going to send you is what's called a Shock and Awe package. I won't spoil it for you, but you're going to get more than just the book. You're going to get a very cool package in the mail. Okay? That's going to have a lot of cool resources, and they'll be dental specific, many of them. Right? So you can see what's working for other dentists, right? But you're going to get it.

Now, what I want you to pay attention to on this is that this Shock and Awe is a technique that you may even have taught from time to time, David, but it is a technique that has generated... This particular package you'll see

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has generated millions of dollars in revenue for my company. Okay? And it works just as well in B2B marketing, which is what I'm in, as it does in B2C dental marketing. Right? You use it a little bit differently, but it's not that much different, and it can help you land some of these really, really big cases.

So even if you're not interested, check it out for the marketing, because we have spent a considerable amount of time creating this and tweaking it to work, and it really wouldn't be too difficult for someone to do something very similar for themselves. I don't sell it. I can't sell you anything on it, but I think it would be worth checking out. If you just want to see marketing that's crushing it, that would be worth you checking it out.

David Phelps: I totally agree. It's brilliant, so I agree. My last name's Phelps too. What was the number again?

Shaun Buck: 208-269-9111.

David Phelps: All right. And we will put that in the show notes so people, if they missed it here, they can go back and grab it in the show notes. Shaun, so great to have you here.

Shaun Buck: Thank you, David.

David Phelps: I stand for what you're doing. Shaun has it together, his team has it together. They've grown and they are offering a superb service. I'm around Shaun, I go to events where he's speaking, and all I hear are all the accolades about how well Newsletter Pro delivers, so I can vouch for him. All right.

Shaun Buck: Thank you.

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David Phelps: Shaun, thank you, brother. Appreciate it.

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