CTRL+CLICK CAST #131
Content Strategy with Carrie Hane

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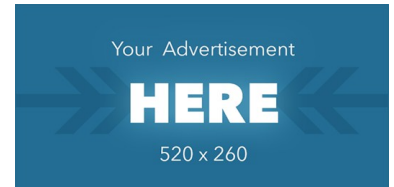
Preview: It's all those signs that there's content chaos or the content is completely out of control where they would get the most benefit from a content strategist so that they know that they won't just get a new website that's going to just deteriorate as soon as it's launched because everyone is going to be able to just putting stuff up, that it's going to stay nice after it's launched and not deteriorate and last longer because there's content management and process based on a strategic plan.

[Music]

Lea Alcantara: From Bright Umbrella, this is CTRL+CLICK CAST! We inspect the web for you! Today, Carrie Hane joins the show to break down content strategy. I'm your host, Lea Alcantara, and I'm joined by my fab co-host:

Emily Lewis: Emily Lewis!

Lea Alcantara: Before we get to today's episode, I wanted to remind our listeners about Patreon. For just five dollars a month, you can help us keep this podcast going. In return you get access to our private Slack where we chat with other listeners about episodes. And if that's not your speed, we have lots of other rewards. You can pick what's best for you. Visit patreon.com/ctrlclickcast.

[Music stops]

Emily Lewis: So today we're diving into content strategy, which is a topic that we've mentioned on the show, but we haven't had a completely dedicated episode to it, and it's about time. Joining us today is Carrie Hane. She helps organizations organize content to be more effective and engaging. For 20 years she's alternated between in-house web content lead and consulting, putting together teams and creating processes that stick while untangling information to make it usable and ready for the next frontier. She's also the co-author of *Designing Connected Content*. Welcome to the show, Carrie.

Carrie Hane: Hi, thanks for having me.

Lea Alcantara: Thank you. Can you tell our listeners a bit more about yourself?

Carrie Hane: Yeah. So in addition to being a content strategist, I'm a mom of two teenage boys.
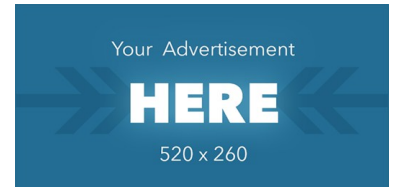
Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Carrie Hane: One is a few months away of being a teenager, but he's more of a teenager than the older one.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Carrie Hane: So that keeps me busy and keeps me from having any hobbies or any sort of thing that I might like to do. [Laughs]

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Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Carrie Hane: But now they're fun, we're enjoying this age so far, and yeah, we get out when we can. We like to travel and we're planning a European vacation this summer.

Emily Lewis: Fun.

Lea Alcantara: Oooh.

Carrie Hane: It's going to be fun.

Emily Lewis: So I mentioned in your bio, you've been doing this for about 20 years. How did you get started working on the web?
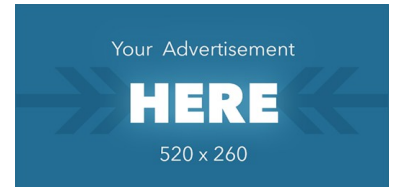
Carrie Hane: By accident. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Carrie Hane: Like so many other people who have been doing this for so long.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Carrie Hane: I was in my second job out of school, and I was the director of communications at a small association and it was 1998 or 1999 and this new website stuff was happening, and so I was responsible for putting up our first website, and it seemed like something that would take me far as we were entering the first dotcom boom.

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Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: And it turns out, it was. So I just learned what I could and kept going from there and entering the web editorial world, which at that point was really just a webmaster jack of all trades doing everything.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: And then slowly winnowing that down to content as everything matured and we all developed specialties.

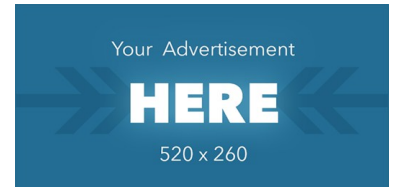**Emily Lewis**: And even vocabulary to describe that stuff.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Carrie Hane: Right. Right.

Lea Alcantara: So speaking of vocabulary, why don't you define for our listeners what is content strategy?

Carrie Hane: Yeah, so my definition of content strategy is getting the right information or making a plan for getting the right information to the right people at the right time, and I think that planning part is so often missed because content strategy really is the plan itself.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

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Carrie Hane: But we can also do content strategy, so I also differentiate between having a content strategy, which is that plan for the organization and then doing it, which is all the tactics that make up a content strategy practice, and those include all the things you're familiar with, like content audits and sitemaps and maybe user journey mapping and messaging architecture and voice and tone guides, but also things that are more content operations and engineering like structured content and metadata strategies and taxonomies and setting up the CMS to make sure you can manage your content easily so that you can keep the strategy going.

Emily Lewis: I mean, how you described it, it sounds like it's a very much a part of every aspect of a digital project, and yet I think most people might not view it that way.
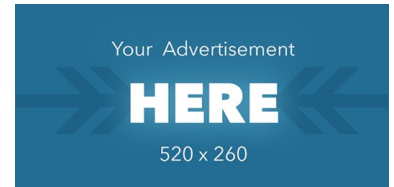
Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: At least in my experience, content is always by the client relegated to some like after thought and that strategic aspect is so, so, so critical for success. When you're working with clients, do they get this kind of concept you've described when you introduce it to them or is that something that it's a process?

Carrie Hane: So I'm lucky because pretty much all the clients I work with come to me and ask me to help them get their content in order.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Carrie Hane: So they might not understand what that entails, but they know they want to do it, so I don't have to convince them that they need to do it differently. They're ready for that in that respect. I don't have to. That's not typical. [Laughs]

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Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Carrie Hane: Because really, it's change. A lot of content strategy work these days is change management. You're going to feel like it's on par with changing your website to be organized differently or putting the right content on a website or in your app or in your social media channels. Eventually, you have to change your process on how you think about content as an organization, and that goes way beyond any technology or communications into the heart of the culture and structure of an organization to make sure you're approaching your content holistically. So that's ultimately my goal when I work with clients is to help them see things differently and shift their process.
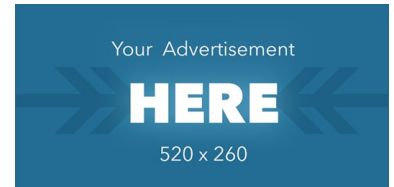
Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: So that no matter what, even after I am finished with my engagement with them, they're thinking about it differently, and they've worked with their stakeholders to think differently, so that if they're the web manager, they'll be approached earlier about adding content to the web or if there's a communications direction, people will ask them to help with this blog post that they're having a hard time with or whatever it is.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: I'm talking about it as a three-pronged approach of people, process and systems. The people are the hard part, but they're involved in the process.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: And then of course the systems do whatever you tell them to do, so they're easy.

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Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: So your clients are coming to you so they already know that they need help with this, but as you were describing, this is just, like you said, a lot of change management. You also talked about culture. Those things are also sensitive for organizations to handle. So when you get into that, do you face any kind of misconceptions from a client saying, "Well, no, we didn't think that was going to be part of this," or even from like a designer or a developer who may be in house or perhaps contracted to work with you that their views of content strategy are filled some type of misconception about what it is?

Carrie Hane: Yes, that does happen regularly, not so much with the client point of contact that I have, because they're the ones who want to do this.
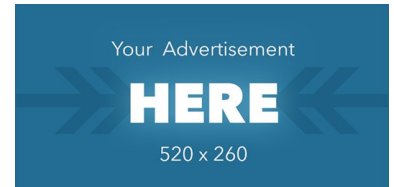
Emily Lewis: I want clients like this. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah. [Laughs]

Carrie Hane: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: These are magical clients. Where do they come from? [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah. [Laughs]

Carrie Hane: They are magical. But yes, once we get beyond that, there are a lot of questions, and there are a lot of misconceptions. So stakeholders, I address that early in the process to get them aligned really around the user, which is the shift, it's thinking from the user's perspective, not from the organization's perspective and just kind of hold their hands through that process and usually, that's

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not too difficult because I'm also asking what their goals are, and telling them we're going to help them achieve them.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: So that part is probably easier than the designers and developers because they have their own process and they're used to doing things a certain way and I'm disrupting that because I'm doing content first. And if I'm doing a whole redesign project, it's from a content-first approach, so usually the client will bring in a separate design and development partner so I've already done a lot of the content work and the content design and say, "Okay, here's what we need to make a website to showcase," and we try to make that clear before they're assigned on, but there is a lot of hesitation of like, "What am I supposed to do with this?" And so I have to, again, hold their hand, guide them through it, show them what has been, how it has worked before. Also, I need to kind of be open to changing some of the ways I work so that I fit in with them.
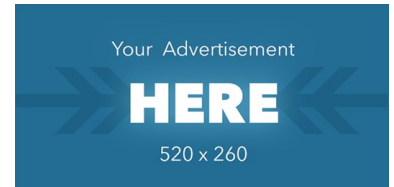
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Lea Alcantara: Right.

Carrie Hane: It is a collaboration. And I don't do handoffs, so I'm not just saying, "Oh, here's a bunch of documentations, see what you can do it." I'd say, "Okay, here's what I have so far. Now, it's time for us to work collaboratively and iteratively so we can make this content come to life."

Lea Alcantara: I'm a little bit surprised that in your experiences, that the development agency or the agency, in general, is surprised when you come with them with content information right away because in our experience, maybe because we are a smaller agency, our problem is there's no content.

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Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And so we're starting from pulling teeth over, "Okay, here are your goals. I understand your goals, but how are you going to try to achieve that with content? Are you going to write anything? Do you need us to find someone to write something?" We're usually starting from zero, and in my perspective, I'd be thrilled [laughs] if the first contact I have with the strategist is like, "There's a plan already. I can work with that." So I'm a little bit curious over specifically are the hesitations that these agencies have with that plan. Is it because they didn't make the plan themselves?

Carrie Hane: So to clarify, none of them are like, "Oh, my God, you have something already?"

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

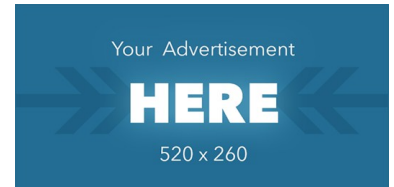**Carrie Hane**: They are happy to have something.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Carrie Hane: But they kind of just don't know what to do with it, right?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Okay.

Carrie Hane: Because they haven't had it before.

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Lea Alcantara: Right.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Carrie Hane: So that's where they're trying to match up our processes and way of thinking happens. So that's really what it is, it's introducing them to a new way of approaching it because they're so used to having nothing or doing the full project as part of an agency.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]
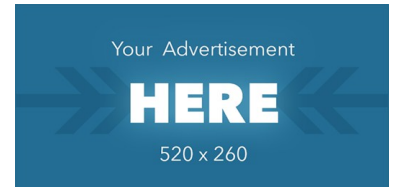
Lea Alcantara: Right.

Carrie Hane: If it's a full service agency, they usually start with the user journey mapping and the sitemap and things like that.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Carrie Hane: So that's really where it is. It's not so much, "Oh, I can't believe we're doing it like this." It's more like, "I've never done it like this. I need to understand how this is going to work with the way we're used to working, so that they can plan differently." And my hope is once they work with me and my team, that they won't want to go back to working without content.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: So we all understand the value of not just content, but a strategy as it relates to that content, and your clients are coming to you knowing they need something, but for those who don't understand this, for example, the three of us bid on a project this past year where we were introducing content strategy to them for the very first time, and so in those situations where someone

who does not understand the value of it, why should clients invest in this mindset, in this approach? What are the benefits to them?

Carrie Hane: Well, it is an investment. It may well give you a much better return on that investment, and so the way I look at it, the main benefit, if you're looking at it from a business perspective, is it saves you time and money. Adding content strategy doesn't necessarily add time or money to a project. It shifts it.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: Because it shift things earlier and you have a plan that you implement in the build rather than getting to build and then making the plan and then maybe it works.

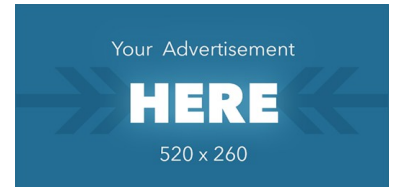**Emily Lewis**: And then maybe you have to go back three years later and redo things. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: Yeah, right.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: Yeah, then you get caught in that cycle. So you're in a two-, three-, four-, five-year cycle of spending a lot of money to redesign your site because it's not working, which really just means it's not giving your business a benefit.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

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Carrie Hane: It literally works, people can go to the website, it shows up on your browser, but it's not providing the organization with the revenue or cost savings or engagement, whatever it is their mission is that they're looking for. So ultimately, it is a cost savings. No, let me say not say that. It's not a cost savings. It's not short term.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: Long term, it saves you money. Short term, it's not going to save you money because you have to do it.
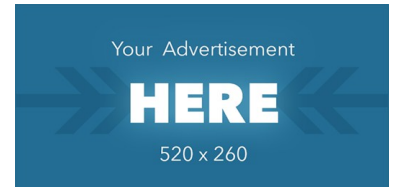
Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Carrie Hane: But it keeps you from that redesign cycle and makes your users more engaged because they can use the site. They're getting what they need from you, whether that's because your search engine optimization has kind of organically naturally happened because you have the right content for the right people so it shows up in search engines, you coded it properly so that search engines can actually crawl your site. But even once they get there, it's, "Oh, this is exactly what I needed."

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Carrie Hane: And so they're inspired to donate if you're a charity organization or to join if you're a member organization or to buy something if you're a retail organization.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

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Carrie Hane: Whatever it is, that content is a means to an end, and your website is the container for that content. It's the face of your organization so all of that can happen upfront. One client I'm working with now, they're a fundraising organization, and so we're thinking of the website as a fundraiser.
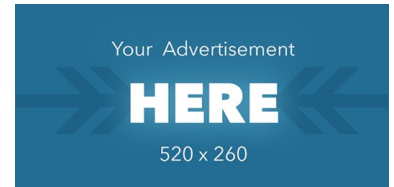
Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Carrie Hane: It's doing the same work as the people who are called fundraisers, and so we're thinking of it like that. I had another client who wanted their website to not take the place, but act as a fulltime employee because they could process orders and memberships and answer questions and all of those things. So it really creates an efficiency and should lower the number of calls to customer service if you're doing it right.

Emily Lewis: I love what you're describing as a way for an organization to not view their website simply as just a digital brochure, but as something much more meaningful to their business, describing it as a fundraiser or as an employee who can process orders. It seems to me to put a lot more value on what that website is if you take it from that perspective.

Carrie Hane: Yeah. And there's another content strategist, Hilary Marsh, who I'm friends with and I've collaborated with in the past, and what she says is the content is the way your business manifests itself. And if you think of it like that and not just a marketing or communications, that is a different way of thinking about that, and that comes with all the benefits that come with it. So it's also hard to quantify the benefits because it's not a one to one, like if you write your content this way, this will happen.

If you structure your content this way, this will happen. It's more organic and intangible, but overtime, you can see that, but you have to set the measures, and I think that's another thing that people don't
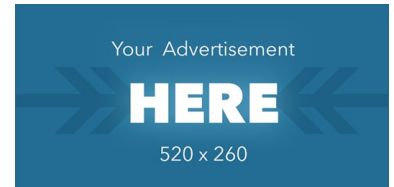
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do and why they don't get a return on their investment is they don't know what it's supposed to, but the content is a surrogate for something else. So if you put the measurements in place and say, "Okay, we want to increase online donations by 30% this year." Okay, now, that's something we can measure and we can set goals like, "Okay, this type of content should generate more donations." So you can start measuring that right away and make adjustments if it's not going towards that 30% increase.

So yeah, the main benefit is increasing revenue, and then saving money because the management of the content when you have a strategy and a plan and processes in place to manage it has become more efficient. So the people now who might spend a lot of time coordinating all the content can focus on developing new programs or whatever it is that only humans can do and that they do best instead of trying to figure out what's going on with something else.

Emily Lewis: I would also imagine it would add efficiencies or I'm not sure if that's the right word, but having a strategy that's clearly mapped out for the website or really any part of the business, but it gives the people who are spending time on the website a clear direction. Like you said, they can spend time offering, they can spend time planning, but it's guided, it's based on a goal, and it's measurable. We have so many clients who were like, "Oh, let's try this thing," and build it and they try it for a little while and it doesn't work out and it gets completely abandoned, and so avoiding or cutting on those situations also has its own kind of efficiency, I would guess.

Carrie Hane: Yeah, because you learn and so you don't do the things that don't work anymore, and instead of just saying, "Hey, let's try this," if you're experimenting, it's fine if you know what you're trying to achieve and you can measure the success. It's kind of that "fail fast" mentality, but you have to know what success and failure is, and then to be able to learn from both, either the success or the failure and apply that to other things that you do.

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Emily Lewis: It occurs to me we haven't asked a basic question that I do think comes up when Lea and I talk to clients. Content isn't just copy, right?

Carrie Hane: Right. The way I define it is it's substantive information that's delivered via a medium. So it is words but it's also images and graphics and video and podcasts and other audio files and PDFs and Word documents, all of that stuff, webinars, courses, other types of training that you might have or documents, all of those things are content.

Emily Lewis: And all of it needs to be thought of at least as part of how it might be integrated into the overall strategy.
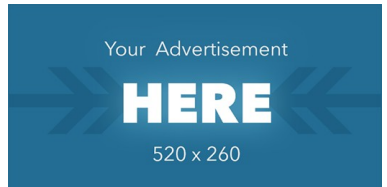
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Lea Alcantara: Well, what I've been hearing throughout this entire conversation as you discuss and explain what content strategy is and how it actually benefits the organization, whenever we talk with clients who are not familiar with content strategy, I think the disconnect is that they actually have not tied their website or their digital presence with their organizational goals of movement, and this is so top of mind for me because I just did like a discovery call with a client of ours and they're in the middle of just strategy sessions for their organization in general, and then I asked them a simple question, "How does the website fit with this new strategy?" And the answer was silence. [Laughs]

Carrie Hane: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Like literally, they did not at all think about their digital strategy, how their website fits with furthering their organizational goals and their current goals were mostly just based on communication goals or assumptions about what those communication goals are even about. So it's

interesting to me because as I was discussing all of this and we're discussing budget as well, I feel like the more you explain how the website can be a vehicle for greater organizational goals, like you mentioned, like increasing revenue or increasing donates or getting more whatever the engagement it is that they're lacking, then the organization or the company is a lot more willing to set aside the money to do that because now they understand that their digital presence is aligned with their umbrella organizational goals and that's all tied to digital content strategy.

Carrie Hane: Yeah, and I just saw something this morning on LinkedIn, someone was commenting on this, and I've said the same thing before is up until now, for the most part, digital has been a separate thing.
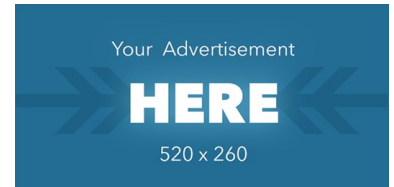
Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: It's a separate strategy. It's a transformation that you have to make, and a lot of times it's associated with information technology and computers when digital is really a way of thinking.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: And in 2019, it cannot be separate from your organization. It's not going anywhere. [Laughs] It's not just a fad or a trend; it is something that has fundamentally changed how the world operates, and it has to be incorporated into the business and we have to stop thinking about the website or our other digital communication channels as something separate to be managed. It has to be something that is incorporated into how are these things going to help us achieve our goals and understanding the customer and focusing around whatever that customer is, whether they're members or donors, whatever you want to call them, your audience. There are a hundred other websites they can go to probably if yours doesn't meet their needs.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

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Carrie Hane: And they're not going to care what you say or what you do if you're not meeting their needs. So that's it, I think, and some companies are doing that, but that's a huge sea change that needs to happen in the business, and I think there are the beginnings of it and there are certainly organizations and people who get that, but I don't think we're even close to most people making that.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: Some people are still thinking about a mobile strategy. [Laughs] And as we see things shift, when smartphones became something that most people had, people were catching up because they didn't think that, "Oh, no one is going to want to look at my website on that tiny little screen."
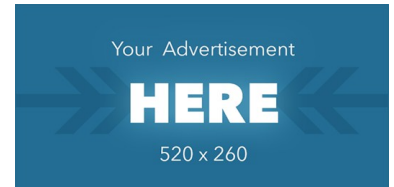
Lea Alcantara: Right.

Carrie Hane: Well, guess what? [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Carrie Hane: And so I hope that we learned from that as a society or as a business community to say, "You can't just ignore something because it seemed like a trend because now we're seeing that with voice and chatbots and artificial intelligence, machine learning." All these things that are on the horizon now, I think fewer people are ignoring them, and I think that's where I know for me in focusing on that back end of content strategy and the operations and the systems and the engineering, I'm helping people be ready for that next frontier.
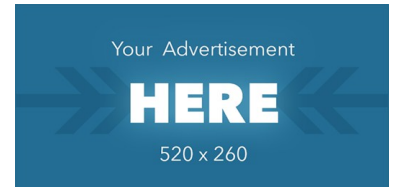
Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: And I think that's scaring people enough to pay attention to content and digital more than they did before because they're like, "Oh, my God, how am I going to have another channel? I can't hire a whole other team. We have to make this part of our ecosystem."

Emily Lewis: I feel like that almost answers the next question I had for you. It's, "What makes a good content strategist? What a client should look for?" I guess to me it sounds like someone who has that perspective – I almost want to say bigger picture because you can see down the road, but it's not really that. it's creating really good foundation so that whatever does come down the road, you're able to adjust more easily, more efficiently too.

Carrie Hane: Yeah, I think thinking of the good content strategist that I know, and there are a lot of them out there, I think what we're good at is asking good questions and the right questions. We don't have a lot of answers, [laughs] but we know what questions to ask. Because it's not us, it's the client that we're working with who has to answer those questions because the answer we are always going to give everyone is – and you probably do too is, "It depends."

So we ask the right questions, so people who know what questions to ask, and asking good questions that you can't just spout off or like not asking what your revenue is, but what are your organizational goals and how does a website meet those? [Laughs] I mean, any digital professional should ask that, but certainly a content strategist. I feel like we're also pretty nimble in that we can shift because as we go through discovery, what we think we're going to find, we often find something different, and it is a process so we constantly have to shift based on people and systems and events that happen. So someone who's not just married to a plan and it's going to go A, B, C, D, and if it doesn't, then it does not going to work. You have to be able to go A to B to D and back to C, so being nimble that way, and I think having, like you said, that a little of broader focus. So a lot of people, as you said, think of not just content as copywriting or the words, but content strategy as copywriting and the words, and it's so much more than that.

https://www.ctrlclickcast.com/episodes/content-strategy

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: So a good content strategist, and there are different types of people who focus on different aspects and they are best for different types of organizations or different types of problems that organizations have, but someone who has that broader view of all of those things, so they know what they can do best. They can do the things on the edges of their expertise, but also bring another people if they need to or recommend that you bring, that a client bring in someone else, and have those connections for the company or the organization itself and with the community to be able to find out what's going on and be able to keep up with the trends.

I think that's just another characteristic of a good content strategist, it's knowing what's going on now, why it is the way it is, and where things are headed. And again, that's kind of any profession, it's you want someone who keeps up with the industry itself so you don't have to because whoever is hiring you has a job and they keep up with their profession probably whatever that is, whether it's communications or marketing or fundraising, they have their own professional community and we do as well, and it's part of that broader user experience community.

Emily Lewis: So that led me to think if that's what makes a good content strategist, is there such a thing as like a standard good content strategy or does it fall in the "it depends" category? Are there like basic fundamentals that would be part of any good content strategy?

Carrie Hane: Yeah. There are certainly things. So it answers the who, what, why, where, when and how. How that looks has a lot of different things. Understanding you have to know who the audience is, and for your different channels across the organization wherever you're publishing content, so that's the who, why, those are your goals, and what, where, when, what type of content you need, so that gets really deep; web content types, messaging, voice and tone, all of that.
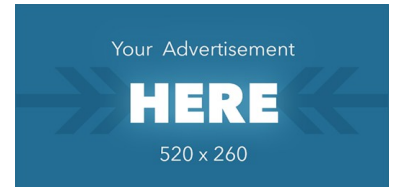
Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

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Carrie Hane: Where and when, where, is your website the best place? Is social media the best place or is email the best place? Whatever that is, and then when, do people want it at midnight, their time, on their phone, in the airport, in a coffee shop, at their desk, all of the above, you have to think about that. So having or documenting all of that is a good idea.

I, myself, and a lot of content strategists that I talk to regularly don't really deliver a content strategy anymore as a document, it's identifying and understanding all of that, but doing that pretty collaboratively with the organization and the stakeholders at the beginning of the process and documenting things. For me, that ends up kind of all coming out in a content strategy statement. That summarizes all of that. This website is going to provide this type of content for these people that will help our organization achieve these goals and make our audience feel this way. So it's kind of an ad lib that has been developed a long time ago and has been used by a lot of people.
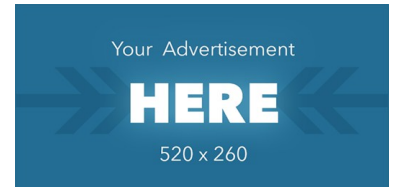
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And some people call that the compass or the north star, but if you keep that in mind, that's a summary of your strategy and then whatever supporting documentation you need, but I talk about things too as artifacts, so we've documented who your audience is. We've documented what your goals are rather than delivering a 50-page report that usually ends up sitting in a drawer somewhere.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Carrie Hane: So creating a lot of living documents that people can refer to at different points in the implementation.

Lea Alcantara: So I'm curious about those different points of the implementation. Just based on this discussion, it sounds like content strategy should start at the very beginning of a website project, in

the life cycle of a website project, but that's not always possibly when they contact you. Is there any other place where content strategy could fall in a life cycle to be productive?
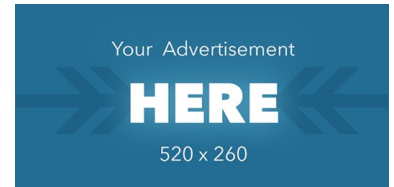
Carrie Hane: Yes. So ideally, you start at the beginning. That doesn't happen very often. So really, you can start at any point doing pretty much anything. So I've come in to help people add a section to their website.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: They're maybe converting something from print and they want to make it interactive or there's a new initiative and they need to put it into their website. So we just deal with that specific content and work it into what they have. Even if that might not be ideal, you can start with rewriting your content from a user perspective if you can't touch anything else but the words. You can think about those strategically and see what matches, so you could do an audit. You could do a messaging architecture. You do a voice and tone guide. I mean, you can just do plain old editorial guidance and governance.

You can shift how you set up your CMS so that you have more structure to your content and it's easier to manage. So there are so many other ways to get started, and I think that's the important thing is to just do it. Just get started wherever you can so if you're the director of communications at a large organization or a small one and you try, you fought to get a content strategy and you keep getting shot down. Or what can you control? Can you control all the new content? Can you control how you work with the authors of that content? You know, whatever it is, do it, and a lot of good content strategy work comes from small successes that expand.
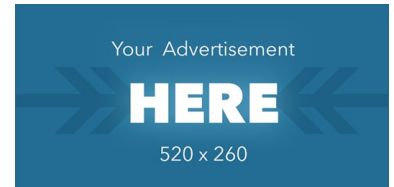
Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

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Carrie Hane: I know a lot of people too who have found, and I did when I was in house at running the web department at an organization, was finding allies and working with them and their content because they got it.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: They're like, "Yes, I would like to have more members. Let's work together to do that." And then we could take what we worked on together because no one else cared about that and say, "Look what happened, we increased our donations just by changing how we approach our content, or we increased registrations to an event because told people all the things that they needed to know about the event and made it really easy for them to register." So there's always a way to start and there's nearly always someone else who will get it and that you can work with to be an ally and a champion for it.

Emily Lewis: So in terms of kind of what you described with the allies, do you have to approach the content strategy differently if they're on the more creative end of things, perhaps like a marketing director versus maybe the director of IT who you might work with on the CMS, or is it a consistent approach?

Carrie Hane: Well, it's probably more consistent. I was going to say, "No, it is different," but it's probably more consistent than I think it is. The way I think about content is very structured and organizational just because that's how my mind works. So either way, I'm approaching it from there, but how I talk to people is going to different. So yeah, working with a marketing director is much different than working with an IT director. I haven't worked with IT directors for a long time, but I hear that CMSs are kind of going back into the world of IT so that they can integrate with the other systems better. I don't know if that's a good or bad thing. It probably depends. It's the approach and getting to understand what their goals are, what their limits are, what their understanding is, and how that fits in

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with the rest of the organization. So, there's never a time where I'm working with my point of contact where we don't talk about other parts of the organization and how that fits in.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: And for me to help them find the right allies if they don't already have them or helping them sell it to an executive to get beyond whatever their maybe small budget is.
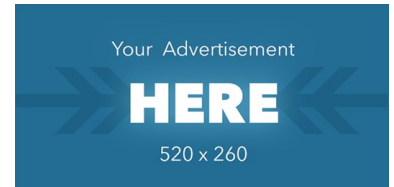
Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: So yeah, there are different ways of approaching it and different places to start, depending on the type of person you're working with.

Lea Alcantara: How about the type of team size, like does that flex if you're dealing with a smaller team versus, say, like a really large organizational team?

Carrie Hane: Yeah. So with large teams, I'm more likely to do training for them than actually do a project, because large teams have the people to do it, they just need to learn the skills and to shift their process whereas somewhat a small team of one or two people clearly doesn't have the internal resources to do things, but they also don't know what they can achieve and what they can do. Those are usually completely different projects and I scope them differently from the start, and also what I would really love to be able to do is have some of these questions to figure out all of this stuff before I start working with someone, but there's so much you don't know until you start working with people. Yeah, there are completely different approaches for not just the team size, but who the team is. Is it a design team? Is it a web team? Is it a marketing team? Is it an IT team? So those types of things are really going to change from organization to organization.

Emily Lewis: How about a little bit of like the flip of that when you are working with these teams, let's say, a designer/developer team? Let's just take Lea and myself, for example. If we are working with you, bringing you into a project, what are the things we can do to best collaborate with you? Or even, gosh, let me take a step even before that, how do we know when we need to bring a content strategist in and then how do we work with them?

Carrie Hane: To know when to bring a content strategist in, I think almost always.
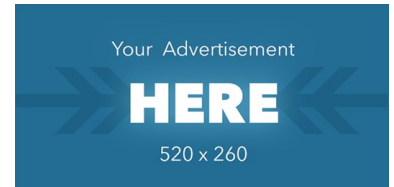
Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Carrie Hane: But even beyond that is if the organization, the client you're working with really just doesn't fundamentally understand that content is important or they're frustrated with the organization of their content and they're complaining that that's their main problem, people can't find things or maybe they're complaining about their internal process, "I have a hundred people who add content and so it's just out of control and I don't have control over that." That should never happen. It does happen all the time and that's something I know I had or I've had that, and I've talked to other people who have been able to gather that together to much success. So there are things like that. It's just those signs that nobody is managing the content and nobody is really thinking about it.

That maybe a little bit harder to bring a content strategist in just because they aren't already thinking about it so you kind of have to convince them, but understanding the benefits and say, "Oh, hey, I noticed you have a hundred content contributors. Why is that? Would you like to have less? We have a way to, you know. We can bring in some help with that." So it's all those signs that there's content chaos or the content is completely out of control where they would get the most benefit from a content strategist so that they know that they won't just get a new website that's going to just deteriorate as soon as it's launched because everyone is going to be able to just start putting stuff up, that it's going

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to stay nice after it's launched and not deteriorate and last longer because there's content management and process based on a strategic plan.

Emily Lewis: And when we know that that's a fit and we want to bring you in, is that something that you like to kind of establish what the processes are going to be with that team in advance, separate from the client? Is it all done together with the client? Like what is collaboration look like when you're brought in by like another agency who wants you to add the content strategy piece to the project?

Carrie Hane: So it looks different depending on if the client brought me in and then brings in a different partner, so that's what we talked about at the beginning of this conversation where there's like, "Oh, I'm not sure how this works." So ideally, it's a collaboration ahead of time where we've already talked about our process, we see how they map together and we can stitch them together similar to what you were saying when we pitched on a project last year. We talked about that all ahead of time so we weren't stepping on each other's toes. For me, like working with you as designers, I knew someone was going to be able to kind of catch the content I gave you and you knew that there is going to be content to catch. So ideally, it would be a partnership ahead of time. That rarely happens because client doesn't necessarily know that they need to have a content person along with the design and developer because everyone thinks that they can do content.
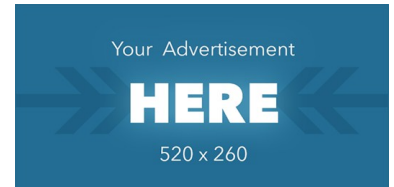
Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah. [Laughs]

Carrie Hane: Content looks easy; it's hard, but no one thinks that they can program…

Emily Lewis: Right. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Carrie Hane: I'm sure some people think they can make visual design good too, and they can't.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]
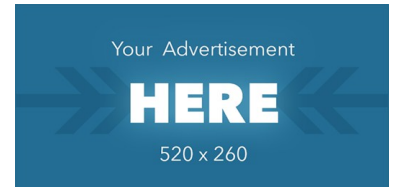
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Carrie Hane: Fewer people do that like kind of as a spectrum, but most people think that they can make the content and that that can wait until the end and someone else will deal with it, "Oh, you know what, I need to bring in a designer now, or I need to bring in a researcher. I need to bring in someone else," whether that's me as a content strategist, "I need to bring in someone else," or you as designers, you realize you need to bring in a content strategist or a user researcher or a different type of developer or programmer, and then for me, I rely on my network for that because I have a broad network of those other complementary professionals who understand the importance of content, but don't do the content and so we can create a collaboration pretty easily because we're already aligned in goals and what we want to accomplish and the focus on the user and things like that, so that is more like, "Okay, here's what I've done. How can you help me? How can you extend this?"

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: So for those agencies, those developers and designers who want to know more about content strategy, they already are invested in the value of it, but they want to understand more, what are your top resources for them?

Carrie Hane: My blog. My book. [Laughs]

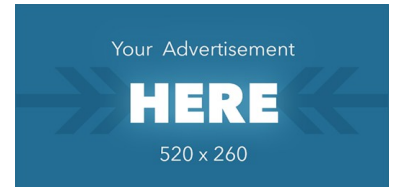**Emily Lewis**: [Laughs]

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Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Carrie Hane: Yeah, actually, my book, the *Designing Connected Content*, has been a really good gateway to designers, especially developers, actually CMS developers, because what they have said is it gives them a way to talk about things they knew was important, but didn't know how to talk about.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Carrie Hane: For designers, the book is focused more on the system, but when I talk about it as using content as design material, that makes more sense to designers. So I did a webinar on that for the User Experience Professionals Association last year, so that's online on YouTube. Obviously, my stuff, I write about these things, but there's a few other people who are writing about content strategy. There's the GatherContent Blog.

GatherContent is a pre-CMS content production tool, which I love. I don't get a chance to use it often enough because my clients are fairly small, but that they have all kinds of content strategy materials. They regularly do webinars and blog posts from people in the community who are designers, developers, work with all of those people so that's a real cross section. The other place where there's a good cross section is uxbooth.com. It's an online publication with again all the different things. Smashing Magazine also will talk about content strategy from time to time, but there's actually a really good article about showing how the content is important from the front-end developer's perspective and how, if you think about it ahead of time, you can structure your HTML and your CSS to be, first of all, accessible naturally, but also to make sense and be more configurable. So there are several. I think those are some of the big resources that I turn to over and over and share with people when they're trying to understand the connection and ways that I haven't done and come from a different perspective for people who get content strategy, but don't practice it and they just use that in their work.

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Emily Lewis: How about resources for maybe people like clients who you want to educate about content strategy? Is it a different type of resources that you share with them?
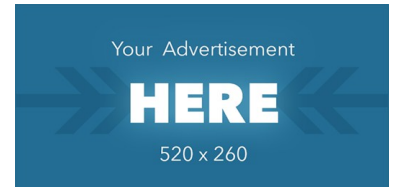
Carrie Hane: I have like a few select articles or blog posts that I've written that I'll share with them to explain something specific because they're having a hard time understanding it, but from the client's perspective, I haven't really tackled that because I think this is a gap in the resources that are out there is making the connection from people who need content strategy and general digital strategy to the people who do it and how it can benefit them. I'm trying to fill that gap, but I can't fill it all by myself. So that one is a little bit harder, and actually, I just recently did a content strategy for association's research study with two other strategists and that will be published soon. I think that will be a really good resource for folks not just in the association community, but for all industries because the problems we found, the challenges that exist in the association world exist everywhere. It's just that we were funded by [laughs] the association community, so that's going to be something, but that was one of the things that we found in doing that research is this gap and just like we said earlier, like the silo, like the people who get content strategy get it, but they're separate from the people who need to learn more about it.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah. So we'll follow up with you once that publication is out there as well as some of those posts that you've written that you do send to clients, but that is all the time we have for today, but before we finish up, we've got our rapid fire ten questions so our listeners can get to know you a bit better. Are you ready, Carrie?

Carrie Hane: I'm a little scared. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

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Lea Alcantara: These are fun questions. These are fun. Okay, first question, would you rather travel to the future or the past?

Carrie Hane: The past.

Emily Lewis: What's the scariest thing you've ever done?

Carrie Hane: Have a kid. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Oh.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Who was your childhood celebrity crush?

Carrie Hane: Oh, probably Tom Cruise.
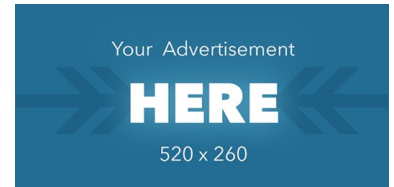
Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: What's one of your pet peeves?

Carrie Hane: Oh, I have so many. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

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Carrie Hane: People who leave doors and drawers open. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Ahh, yeah. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: What was your first website?

Carrie Hane: The first one I made? Well, it's afire.org when I first had to do that.

Emily Lewis: What's your favorite time of day?

Carrie Hane: Bedtime.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]
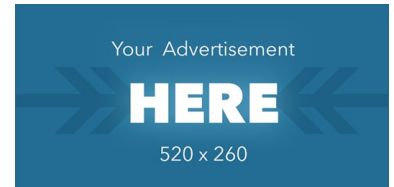
Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: What is your favorite place?

Carrie Hane: The beach.

Emily Lewis: What's your favorite emoji?

Carrie Hane: Hmm, I think it must probably be the winky eye.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

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Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: What's your favorite charity?

Carrie Hane: Where have I been donating? I've been donating to so many lately. Does NPR count as a charity?

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, that's a good one.

Carrie Hane: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: We donate to NPR, [Laughs] and so all right, last question, sweet or savory?
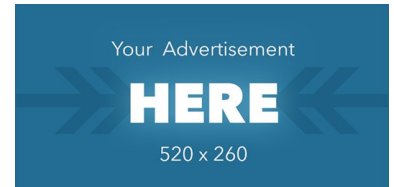
Carrie Hane: Savory.

Lea Alcantara: Very cool. So that's the end of our show. Thanks for joining us, Carrie.

Carrie Hane: Thanks for having me. This has been fun.

Emily Lewis: In case our listeners want to follow up with you, where can they find you online?

Carrie Hane: So my website is tanzenconsulting.com or you can reach me on Twitter @carriehd and/or on LinkedIn at Carrie Hane.

Emily Lewis: Yeah. And I just wanted to mention, you guys should follow her because she's really strong on social media.

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Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: Lots of good, good information that's food for thought for us as designers or developers, but also like good things to pass along to clients, and so yeah, follow Carrie on LinkedIn or Twitter or wherever. I think your social media game is really strong.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, I agree.

[Music starts]

Emily Lewis: So thanks again for joining us, Carrie. This was great information. I appreciate you being on.
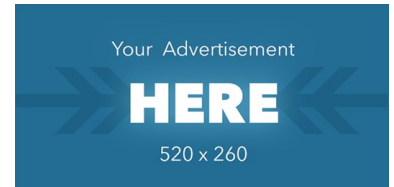
Carrie Hane: All right, thanks again for having me.

Lea Alcantara: CTRL+CLICK is produced by Bright Umbrella, a web services agency obsessed with happy clients! Today's episode would not be possible without the support of our hosting partner, Arcustech, as well as our listeners!

Emily Lewis: If you want to know more about CTRL+CLICK, make sure you follow us on Twitter and Instagram at "ctrlclickcast," or visit our website ctrlclickcast.com.

Lea Alcantara: And if you liked this episode, choose a tier on patreon.com/ctrlclickcast so we can create more content you love. We can also use your reviews on Stitcher or Apple Podcasts or both — links are in our show notes!

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Emily Lewis: Don't forget to tune in to our next episode when we dive into the technical execution of our ctrlclickcast.com mobile refresh in Part 2. You don't want to miss this. Be sure to check out ctrlclickcast.com/upcoming for more topics.

Lea Alcantara: This is Lea Alcantara …

Emily Lewis: And Emily Lewis …

Lea Alcantara: Signing off for CTRL+CLICK CAST. See you next time!

Emily Lewis: Cheers!

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