

Anne Marie: [00:04](#) I would say that expertise is not what you have or have accomplished, but rather what you do with what you know, and how you applied it. Knowing what you know, and knowing what you don't know, and being curious enough to know the difference between the two.

Wes Kennison: [00:18](#) Well, actually.

Lee Price: [00:21](#) From Managing Editor Magazine, this is Margins. If you're using content to solve business problems we made this podcast for you. We'll explore what it means to communicate in the digital age. We'll share stories about the messier side of content marketing, what works, what doesn't and the big questions we're all asking at work. In this no advice and no checklists zone you'll hear from marketers, creatives and leaders.

Lee Price: [00:50](#) You won't walk away from this podcast with all the answers instead, we hope we help you think about the questions you should be asking. I'm your host, Lee Price.

Lee Price: [01:04](#) Thought leaders, experts, where did they all come from all of a sudden? And, are you an expert? How do you know, and how do you convince other people? I spend a lot of time thinking about this with my partner in crime at Managing Editor, Mary Ellen Slayter. Hey, Mary Ellen?

Mary Ellen S: [01:22](#) Hey, Lee? How's it going?

Lee Price: [01:24](#) When we explain the basics of thought leadership to people, we really break it down in a way that sounds pretty simple, right? Step one is?

Mary Ellen S: [01:34](#) Have thoughts.

Lee Price: [01:37](#) Right, so that that sounds really simple, but we found that there's, that's often really the most important and honestly, the missing step for a lot of people.

Lee Price: [01:50](#) I wanted to tell you about this, Mary Ellen. I was on a call last week. Anyone who's listening and who works for an agency or who works with agencies will find this really familiar. They're were 15 people on a conference call. The call was about writing one article by a thought leader. I was the writer. I really just wanted to talk to the thought leader who was going to have the byline, but instead, we had 15 people from different layers of marketing and PR agencies. Everybody had a lot of ideas about how we could promote this article and how we could get it out

on social media, but as the person who was actually writing it, I realized I had no idea what it was going to be about. I really didn't know much about the thought leader. So finally, I just said to her, "What are your big ideas? What do you want to share here? Why do you care about this?"

- Lee Price: [02:42](#) There was a pause and there was silence on this call of 15 people, and she said, "Well, I don't know what do you think a thought leader would say about it?" I just felt the world crashing down around me like this is the end of time. This is the end of thought leadership.
- Mary Ellen S: [03:02](#) The end of thought leadership. Ladies and gentlemen, you have seen it.
- Lee Price: [03:06](#) Right, like, we have jumped the shark. I think that, that's what marketers have done to this whole world of expertise a little bit like it's our fault guys, is that we've created really smart, hardworking founders and company leaders who all of a sudden are like deer in headlights like, well, what was a thought leader say? I think sometimes, especially as marketers, we get wrapped up in this, like in the marketing part, when really what's important is the idea and the story and the message and if you're missing that, you got nothing, right?
- Mary Ellen S: [03:42](#) Right. Absolutely nothing. Sometimes I think it's fear. Okay, so sometimes I think it's fear. I think we have these genuinely smart people who understand this stuff and they're just so scared especially in corporate environments, of like saying the wrong thing. They're looking for the official messaging whereas I think the real model of this is about more toward letting people have their thoughts and like refining them and collaborating and coming together with a shared perspective.
- Mary Ellen S: [04:07](#) For me, thought leaders have perspective and it's based on their lived experiences and observations. I think there's, some people just really shy away from that, but in that case, like that person shied away from it so far, like, they just couldn't even see themselves in that role at all. That's a really sad story. It's a funny story, but it's also a really sad story.
- Lee Price: [04:31](#) Right, and it's so ironic too when you have a team of 15 people spread all over the country, who are ready to help you tell this story and no one's really thought about what the story is in the first place. Like there's too much marketing around things, but not enough thinking about the actual story, which really isn't a marketing problem at all.

- Mary Ellen S: [04:50](#) I don't even let them think of it as a story because I think they freeze up there too. I will just like, "Well, what do you think? What do you tell clients?" What's your perspective on this, or what do you advise people? Because people are great when they're talking to their clients, when they're talking to their colleagues, but there's something I believe we talked about this in another episode, where there's something about saying it's the brand and saying, it's the message that just makes so many people shut down and turn into jargon monsters, and it's not about that. It's about your ideas and insights like as a human being a smart human being. I think that 75% of the work I really do, I think the other part of it, getting it out in the world, that's easy. If you give me somebody with great ideas like we can, we're in good shape.
- Lee Price: [05:35](#) When you and I talked about this, like I said, step one, have thoughts, and step two is be really generous about the way that you share those thoughts and ideas with the world. Tell me how you see people doing that really generously. What does a generous solid or look like?
- Mary Ellen S: [05:51](#) Step two is really the leadership part of it, right? So there's thought leadership, so we're talking about the leadership and it's about being willing to step out and put those ideas of yours out there.
- Mary Ellen S: [06:00](#) There's a risk in that. There's a risk and putting out your ideas, and what's the worst thing that can happen? People could think your ideas are really bad. Like, that's a scary thing. You could put something out there, and no one cares.
- Mary Ellen S: [06:13](#) I think that the way that really smart people do this, is they realized that it's not really about them, so the more you can remove yourself from this, you're thinking about it. Like the focus, your goal is to be a facilitator of ideas. So you're having ideas, you're putting things together and you're sharing them with the world. That in a very immediate tactical sense, that often means don't hoard it like people will get so scared and we've encountered this more than people might realize, where they'll say, "Oh, well, if I publish, that, they'll know our way, you know, our competitors will see this and they'll copy us and they'll steal it." But, if your goal is to be a thought leader, having everyone steal your ideas is like the ultimate winning, right?
- Lee Price: [06:56](#) Right.
- Mary Ellen S: [06:56](#) I want people to steal my ideas, like steal them, implement them you know what settled quote it's like you're it's amazing

what you can get done if you don't insist on getting the credit. Well that's 100% true when it comes to thought leadership so whenever you see somebody out there I don't mean like literally copying and pasting your content but like if you see somebody out there taking your ideas and adding their own layers to it and sharing then that's winning.

- Mary Ellen S: [07:23](#) The other thing where people get caught up is I think that they almost put more too much attention on themselves in terms of just broadcasting stuff and not participating in the communities that they're in. Thought leaders are learner's, they're readers so you should spend as much time as you can also building up other thought leaders. That's the other piece of the generosity, so share your ideas and use your platform to share and elevate other people.
- Lee Price: [07:50](#) Yeah.
- Mary Ellen S: [07:50](#) That takes the risk out frankly. That removes that sense of, "Oh, God like I'm the focal point here," no you're just facilitating, you're just part of a community that's trying to make the world better.
- Lee Price: [08:00](#) I think you hit the nail on the head. You can't be afraid, like this is a risk to say what you think and publish it online, and I'm going to put something on LinkedIn, all these people are going to judge me about it. Maybe they don't agree with what I said, but that's part of being a leader. If you had something to say that everybody else agrees with, it wouldn't really be leadership. If you're just saying and recycling the same things.
- Mary Ellen S: [08:22](#) What would a thought leader say? What would they say? I just don't want to get in trouble.
- Lee Price: [08:30](#) Well, so let's dig into this a little bit. On today's episode, we're going to talk to four different experts about expertise. We're getting really meta here. We're going to break down what it means to be an expert and what it means to call yourself an expert in the world. Let's dig into it.
- Mary Ellen S: [08:50](#) David C. Baker is an expert on being an expert. He helps people figure out the real expertise at the heart of their work and he's also a master of positioning. Getting your story right. As an agency owner, I devour his email newsletter, and he has helped me rethink how I talk about my own expertise and how we use that on the behalf of our clients. He's written five books,

including one called the business of expertise. The first question I wanted to ask him, David, how do you define an expert?

- David C Baker: [09:22](#) An expert in the setting that you and I are describing here, is somebody that is paid regularly for their thinking. There are other experts like plumbing experts and carpentry experts and so on, but that's not the, it's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about expertise that sold and to me, I think in this context, people need to pay for it, it needs to be regular and they need to be paid for their thinking more than they're doing. That's how I would define an expert.
- Mary Ellen S: [09:58](#) A lot of people call themselves experts, so how do we tell the real ones from the fake ones?
- David C Baker: [10:03](#) Well, most of them are fake. I think the safe assumption you should make is that they're fake until they demonstrate otherwise. That demonstration should come primarily because they have a clear point of view, that's unique and supportable.
- David C Baker: [10:25](#) You can see how all of these things tie together. There simply is no such thing as an expert that doesn't read and then write or speak, it just doesn't happen. That it's just like a tree falling in the forest right that nobody hears. So the best way to test it is just the instinct test, read or listen to what they've come up with as a point of view, does it resonate or doesn't it.
- David C Baker: [10:56](#) There are other all kinds of things we need to use to test the true nature of an expert, but that's where it has to start. That's why it fits so well with the world we're living in where content marketing is basically demonstrating your expertise, and the whole theory there is that you should spend all kinds of time as an expert, demonstrating your expertise so that you're not investing in individual sales with potential clients.
- David C Baker: [11:29](#) You should be putting all of this out there because your prospective clients have a right to know how you think. They don't have a right to ask you to demonstrate that to them specifically, but they have a right to know how you think, and so that's just how all this big circle works, the expertise in the content marketing and sales and so on.
- Mary Ellen S: [11:51](#) A lot of people have ideas, but they're not sure what to share with the world. I asked, David how he works with clients to figure out their angle.

- David C Baker: [11:58](#) When I listen to them, when I have a conversation with them, am I regularly having aha moments? Am I learning things that I wouldn't know even though I am for the purpose of this exercise intelligent enough and know a little bit about their field? That's the problem when I'm reading so much of what, "experts" write is that I don't have aha moments. I'm not learning really interesting things that are changing my world. It's partly because people haven't made the right positioning decisions, and it's partly because they're just flat lazy. They're just not developing their craft regularly. Thinking about a sergeant on the field, maybe as Marines are being trained, and a cadet or a recruit does something wrong and the sergeant says, "Drop and give me 20 push ups." They can do that at any point, or maybe a coach on a football field says, "All right, go run 10 laps and think about what you just did." It's just at a moment's notice somebody should be able to do that and I just basically co opted that phrase to say at any point an expert ought to be able to drop and give me 20, give me 20 insights.
- David C Baker: [13:06](#) Of course, that's just a small portion of, there should be thousands of those insights, but before they decide that they want to pursue this potential positioning, before they do any more work in there, without putting any more thought into it, they should immediately be able to give me 20 of those aha moments.
- Mary Ellen S: [13:26](#) We all have drop and give me 20 moments, our little nuggets of genius, but you might not even know what your true insights are. David has some great ideas about how to find them.
- David C Baker: [13:36](#) Say you take somebody with you to a meeting, and maybe you're saying the same things that you say regularly, but all of a sudden, the client or the prospect pays attention in a different way, and the person that's with you in that meeting can observe that, "Oh, wow, they here she just said something really interesting." That's one of those drop and give me 20 moments. So recording those things, asking somebody else to watch the audience or watch the other people in the room to see when their eyes light up, when they start to pay a little bit more careful attention. What did he or she just say before that moment, that's the best way to pick up some of those things.
- Mary Ellen S: [14:19](#) Okay, so I told you that, David is an expert on expertise. Like I said, He even wrote a book on it but a hallmark of being an expert is knowing you still have room to grow and learn. I asked David when he knew he was an expert, and I was a little bit surprised by his answer.

- David C Baker: [14:36](#) Well, I would say I'm on the road to being an expert. When I look, I feel really comfortable with what I know now, but compared to where I am now with what I knew just three years ago, it's almost embarrassing to me and it makes me wonder how much more I really need to learn. I do feel like I'm an expert, but I feel like I'm really more on the road to being an expert and the road never ends. I think just like anybody who's really good at their craft, whether it's somebody racing motorcycles, or somebody who's an actor or whatever, they are constantly getting more and more comfortable with the core expertise that they have, but they're always pushing themselves. They're always slightly out over there ski, but not so far out that they're flipping over 40 times for ESPN.
- David C Baker: [17:54](#) I get discouraged when I come across experts whose work is just not very deep, or who learned five or six things years ago, and they keep repeating the same things over and over again. Let's just, let's quit making shit up for our clients. There has to be a little bit of that. That's when you're over the edge of your skis a little bit, but most of what you do should be tested thoroughly and do the hard work, play those small late night smoky bars, and you will get an opportunity to be on a bigger stage over time. I guess it's more of a plea to the experts out there and that's to think of themselves more like scientists who are constantly researching new things and learning. Expertise is such a ... Our world has created an ecosystem around us that allows for experts to flourish and let's not waste that it's such an amazing opportunity.
- Mary Ellen S: [18:58](#) Okay, Lee [inaudible 00:19:00] a little bit over your skis yet?
- Lee Price: [19:01](#) Every single day, you have no idea. Let's think about this. Okay, so if you have your drop and give me 20 ideas, you know what your big topics are. Part of being an expert is then selling those ideas to the world. I wanted to talk to someone who's really good at helping people make that sale, and I called Jayne Atkinson. She works with people who want to speak on stage, they really want to put their ideas out there and she helps them clarify and narrow their expertise and figure out how to market themselves to their buyers. She wrote a book about having a successful speaking business called The Wealthy Speaker 2.0 and, Mary Ellen I think you know that people in the speaking business really value what she has to say,
- Mary Ellen S: [19:48](#) Oh, yes like coach, Jane as they usually refer to her is like the secret weapon for people who want to become really successful public speakers.

- Lee Price: [19:57](#) Let's hear what she had to say. First thing I want to talk to you about is that so people come to you when they consider themselves an expert, and they want to share that expertise with the world, but they have something that's in the way, they have some stumbling block they need help with, right?
- Jane Atkinson: [20:14](#) Right.
- Lee Price: [20:15](#) I'm wondering what is usually keeping people from sharing that expertise with the world?
- Jane Atkinson: [20:21](#) I would say could be a couple of things. The first one might be that they haven't yet what we call picked a lane and the lane is that topic area of expertise, so maybe their umbrella of expertise is too broad. So if someone comes to us and says, "Okay, I'm a leadership expert," We're going to say, "Okay, well, what brand of leadership do you practice and what do you want to be known for five years from now?" We need to go a little bit more narrow because as you know, there is a wide pond of leadership experts out there and we need to somehow rise up above all the others. That's the best way to do it, is through picking a lane.
- Jane Atkinson: [21:11](#) The second thing that might be getting in their way and in my world most people are looking at becoming professional speakers or adding speaking to the mix, is that they haven't really defined their expertise yet. Sometimes writing a book can really help solidify your ideas, haven't really established like kind of really place their stake in the ground and said this is my area, this is what I know about, I write about it, and so I've interviewed a lot of people from my own podcast and that was one of the things that a 30 year veteran said. He's he wished he would have put his stake in the ground sooner and written that first book sooner that really said, "This is where I live."
- Lee Price: [22:06](#) It's not about having the ideas it's about deciding which ideas you're going to share and how you're going to differentiate yourself from all the other people that have similar ideas.
- Jane Atkinson: [22:17](#) Right. Like, if you try to solve all the problems with your idea, I think you're going to find that it gets difficult. Because let's say you are trying to write a book and you have every application under the sun is something that your idea can help like that becomes too broad.
- Jane Atkinson: [22:42](#) Let me give you a more specific example. Let's say that you are a leadership expert and you say, "Okay, I want to help parents

lead their children. I want to help executives lead their team. I want to help sports coaches lead their teams," like it's too broad. It's too, you really have to also identify who your avatar is, who your perfect buyer is, and then work backwards from there. Because if you try to apply your knowledge to every application, it gets watered down, and it gets a bit tricky.

- Jane Atkinson: [23:21](#) Now, once you've had like a best selling book on a topic, then you can take your tribe anywhere you want to go with them, but for starting out, you really need to plant that flag where you want it.
- Lee Price: [23:35](#) No, I like it. I mean, really, this is a marketing problem, right?
- Jane Atkinson: [23:38](#) It really is because how can people understand the value that you're bringing to the table if you're bringing it too broadly.
- Lee Price: [23:46](#) We all know the expertise isn't just about marketing, you have to be able to back up the marketing with actual insights because these days it's really easy to position yourself especially online as an expert, but that's kind of all the marketing stuff is the ego layer. Like, it's the stuff you have to do to sell yourself. The expertise is what someone finds when they-
- Jane Atkinson: [24:08](#) Dig deeper.
- Lee Price: [24:09](#) Right, when they are caught, they come in like, "Okay, you got me, what do you have to say?" And you really have to be able to deliver on that expertise side to-
- Jane Atkinson: [24:17](#) You do.
- Lee Price: [24:18](#) So you're saying really make it about the expertise and how you're going to help people and what you have to say and less about the ego and the packaging and what [crosstalk 00:24:26].
- Jane Atkinson: [24:25](#) Yeah, make it about the outcome of the work.
- Lee Price: [24:32](#) Then I asked Jane, the same question we asked David, when did you know you were an expert?
- Jane Atkinson: [24:39](#) I could say somewhere between years four and six, I think probably in the industry. I became an expert. At that point, people started saying, I was in Texas so they'd say, "Can I take you to lunch and pick your brain," because I wanted to know how I made my speakers so successful. That's when I knew I had something that other people wanted.

Lee Price: [25:05](#) Well, that's a great marker, so you know, you're an expert when other people are trying to buy you lunch or coffee and pick your brain.

Jane Atkinson: [25:11](#) Pick your brain. Exactly. Exactly.

Lee Price: [25:16](#) That should be on your quiz for your potential customers, is are people asking to pick your brain, if they're not you might not be ready.

Jane Atkinson: [25:23](#) Yes, exactly. I'd like to ask the question, do you consider yourself a thought leader?

Lee Price: [25:31](#) Right. Mary Ellen, I talk a lot about how I mean, I've been doing this for 10 years now, and for so long I was kind of like looking for the adults in the room. Like other people are experts on this. I need to see what they think is best. I had to realize, I've been doing this for a long time too like, I have a lot of pretty strong opinions about this, and I think I know what works best. I think, but maybe that's part of just developing in your career is realizing like, "Oh, I'm the adult. I'm the expert."

Jane Atkinson: [26:01](#) Take your seat at the table, Lee. Take your seat at the table. You really do know what it is that you're talking about. I think speaking actually can do that for you. I remember the very first speech that I ever gave. I was working for a speaker down in Dallas. His name was, Vince and he came in watch the speech it was at for the National Speakers Association, and he sat in the audience and afterwards he said, "You blew me away. I had no idea you did all that for me." He didn't even know.

Jane Atkinson: [26:35](#) Then a lot of other people came up and were like, "Oh my gosh, you know, that was amazing." That's when you get a feather in your cap and get some confidence and go, "Okay, yeah, this information is valuable to other people." I think feedback is often what helps to drive that idea that we are an expert. Before that, I don't know that I would have actually technically considered myself one. I'm saying to you four to six years, but that's in hindsight. When I was in it, I probably wouldn't have said it until I started my own company 12 years ago.

Lee Price: [27:13](#) You got your stage, right?

Jane Atkinson: [27:15](#) Right.

Lee Price: [27:15](#) Someone gave you a stage, or you got on a stage and then other people gave you that validation that what you had to say was really helpful.

Jane Atkinson: [27:22](#) They really did, including my own boss. I had no ... He said, his, his feedback to me, just blew my doors off. I have a horrible memory, but I remember the feeling that he gave me that day. I blew him away, and so that meant so much to me.

Lee Price: [27:41](#) He made you feel like an expert.

Jane Atkinson: [27:42](#) Yes, yes. Very much so.

Lee Price: [27:46](#) Being seen as an expert feels really good, but up until now, we've really been talking about self appointed expertise, people who had big ideas and wanted to be known as experts so they found a way to get there, but in the world of academia there's a really formal and specific process to become a certified expert.

Mary Ellen S: [28:07](#) Melissa Thompson and Anne Marie Garcia are both certified experts with the PhD's to prove it. They have gone through all of the horrors of academia to get that paperwork.

Anne Marie: [28:18](#) I have a joint doctorate in geography and anthropology from Louisiana State University. I have a master's degree in religious studies, and I have a bachelor's degree in English Cum laude with honors with a focus on American public cultures and minors in religion, gender studies, sociology and French. My dissertation title I've blocked from memory, but loosely, I can tell you it was about material culture and manufactured housing, and ultimately about how the stereotypes we have associated with manufactured housing serve as a metaphor for the stereotypes we have about the people who live in manufactured housing, which in turn has an impact on very real public policy actions and very real acts of discrimination in society.

Mary Ellen S: [29:01](#) See, what's interesting to me is like, so I grew up in a trailer park, but you've got the PhD in trailer park. That's like a whole other level of expertise in trailer park. What about you, Melissa?

Melissa T: [29:14](#) My PhD is in communication theory from the University of Memphis, where I also received my master's and received my bachelor's from LSU in Communication Studies. Basically, the same degree three times but they call them different things at different levels.

- Mary Ellen S: [29:29](#) What made you, I'm going to go back to you for a second, Anne Marie, what made you decide to go down this path? Like what makes, I mean, academia as a tough road, right? I mean, you were going down the process of again becoming certified in your expertise, essentially through this external process. Like why did you do this to yourself?
- Anne Marie: [29:44](#) There's definitely a sense of legitimacy that comes with having the paperwork to say that you know what you're talking about, and because I have the paperwork I also have the privilege of saying that the paperwork is oftentimes bullshit and I think I love my academic training, I love what I got out of it. I love the relationships that I built. I love the people that I got to connect with through it, and I still love researching that material, but I think a lot of the reason I have a PhD is because I was willing to do the paperwork. I think the learning happens in much bigger, broader spaces that we don't acknowledge. Again, I can say that because I have the privilege of saying that that comes with my paperwork.
- Anne Marie: [30:25](#) I knew that growing up, I wanted to make sure that I had some kind of external credentialing so that people would be more likely to pay attention to the things that I have to say.
- Mary Ellen S: [30:39](#) That actually is one of the reasons why I wanted to have you in this conversation. Because I think that we are in the era of self appointed experts, I think we're in this time where everybody can, you go and you do your research, as they say, and suddenly now you're an expert in whatever topic that you declare yourself an expert in.
- Mary Ellen S: [30:56](#) I think that that's a privilege that's not afforded equally to people. I think that PhDs like formal credentials are often more in my experience more valuable for women and for people of color to prove that they have the right to say that, would you agree or disagree with that?
- Melissa T: [31:11](#) I totally agree with that. Often people when they find out I have a PhD, not that I hide it or whatever, but it's in my signature line of my emails. When people say, "Well, what's your PhD in," and I will talk to them and they're like, "Wow, you must be really smart." I'm like, "No, to have a PhD you don't have to be smart. You have to be curious enough, and you have to be stubborn enough to pursue this and to sacrifice the things that other people my age were doing."
- Melissa T: [31:35](#) I went straight from kindergarten to my PhD and I was watching a lot of people at 22, 25, 30 doing things and making money or

getting the next job promotion when I was still studying on a Saturday night. You have to make that sacrifice which I think was well worth it. I'm a naturally curious person. So it was actually fun for me, but you have to be stubborn and curious.

Mary Ellen S: [31:59](#) Anne Maria and Melissa hve spent many, many years and a lot of money earning their expertise, and now they work together on a local TEDx event, TEDx LSU and their job is to go out and evaluate the other experts and find people who are good enough and interesting enough to get up on their stage.

Mary Ellen S: [32:18](#) Here's what I think is really interesting about their selection process. To choose speakers, they don't start with the people. It's not what would a thought leader say? They start with the ideas. Remember, we told you those were the, that was the most important part, you had to do that part first. Well, so do they. They make a long list of the ideas they want to feature and then they think about the people who can best speak to them. I asked how do people respond when you ask them to speak, are they surprised?

Melissa T: [32:46](#) A lot of the academics when we reach out to them, the people on LSU campus, they say, "I'm not ready to talk about it or I don't know I shouldn't be the one to talk about it. My research partner should be the one to talk about it." We have some of that imposter syndrome that comes up, and we suffer from that on a daily basis ourselves, but yes, people, people are surprised.

Mary Ellen S: [33:08](#) Because I find that is one of the funny things about expertise. I feel like there are people who decided they put themselves out there. They're like, "I'm the expert talk to me," and they're really eager. I find in some, I know in some cases, those people, they must be chasing you because they chase me because I know you and they really want that. Like, "We are experts, we want to get up and talk."

Mary Ellen S: [33:26](#) Then you've got the flip side of that of the people who are often really doing great work and they've got their heads down.

Anne Marie: [33:30](#) I think that people who self identify as experts tend to be the ones that struggle the most in that that process of sharing an idea because they, two things happen. One, they take for granted their expertise and assume that they do not need to be dynamic or adaptable humans connecting with others in a space and they push back really hard on the idea that there is such a thing as the rhetorical triangle. Where you frame your message in a way that it's accessible to the audience that you're connecting with. That can be a big, big hurdle for those self

identified experts that we might take. The best of them are the ones that have, for lack of a better word an, "Oh, shit," moment. They realize, "Wow, okay, I know I'm really solid in this area, but I do need to make the effort to stretch myself a little bit and figure out how to communicate what I know to be real and data driven and empirically sourced." When people can do that effectively I think that's when the successful talk really happens.

- Anne Marie: [34:35](#) On the flip side, to your question about whether people are surprised. I do think I buck a little bit at the idea of expertise, and so many of our speakers are people, and one thing I love about TEDx, LSU and TEDx programs and public scholarship in general, there are people who have something to say, they have an idea that is worth sharing, and it does not necessarily need to have the requisite 10000 hours of experience or documentation from an external source, verifying that you have an authority on this subject. Those are some of my favorite talks are the ones that come from a community member who has no idea who we are, who is genuinely like, you're actually calling me right now to talk to me about this. I have no idea why you were reaching out in this is amazing, and I can't fathom the idea that you would think that what I have to say is valuable.
- Mary Ellen S: [35:29](#) As a marketer, you might be working with high level experts who are very knowledgeable about a technical topic. Anne Maria and Melissa help scientists and other academics share their ideas with a more general audience on stage. I was very curious about how they help those experts make their ideas more accessible.
- Anne Marie: [35:46](#) I asked them you've got a very thorough talk and we're taking a deep dive into your research, but what's the tweet that our social media team will write about you when you're giving your talk? In 140 characters, what's the premise of your talk? That's really hard. It's as hard as writing a dissertation title.
- Mary Ellen S: [36:04](#) Anne Marie has another trick. She breaks down complicated ideas into their simpler building blocks.
- Anne Marie: [36:09](#) Anybody who is very competent in their expertise, I apply similar tactics as I was to a faculty member who's preparing their class structure, and I force them to reflect on their path to mastery of knowledge. The first thing I do is say, if you understood this, what was the last thing you understood before you got to that aha moment? And, what was the thing you needed to understand before that to get to the next step to get to your aha moment?

- Anne Marie: [36:33](#) Then I try to get them to rewind the clock a little bit. The myth is that you have to dumb down what you do for people, but in reality, it's simply translating what you do for people.
- Mary Ellen S: [36:43](#) Finally, I asked Anne Marie and Melissa how they would define expertise.
- Anne Marie: [36:48](#) I would say that expertise is not what you have or have accomplished, but rather what you do with what you know, and how you apply that.
- Melissa T: [36:56](#) Knowing what you know, and knowing what you don't know and being curious enough to know the difference between the two.
- Anne Marie: [37:02](#) I struggle with labels in general, but particularly with the label expert, because I don't want to rest on my laurels being labeled an expert in something, I want to be a practitioner in something and then that feeds expertise.
- Melissa T: [37:15](#) Yeah, that's exactly what I was going to say that I may have expertise in an area, but that that doesn't mean that it's time to stop or there's an endpoint. I think being an expert to go back to what I've said a couple times is, it's constantly being curious. You have to keep going and keep learning because you're never going to get to the end of the encyclopedia. They just create a new addition. You got to keep going.
- Mary Ellen S: [37:37](#) That's right. Thought Leadership is a never ending commitment. To be a real thought leader, you don't just get to push one idea out in the world and expect applause and to sit on that for the rest of your life. It's never ending work.
- Lee Price: [37:51](#) No matter the industry you're working in. Things are changing so fast that the really brilliant idea you have today that seems really novel it's probably going to be outdated in nine months or a year from now. So you just got to keep pushing and coming up with new ideas.
- Mary Ellen S: [38:05](#) That's why we're here to help you think through these ideas. That's it for this episode of Margins by Managing Editor. To hear more from us subscribe in iTunes, or wherever you listen to podcast. We're working on more great episodes about the messier side of marketing. Subscribe to this podcast to hear the rest of the episodes in this season, and to hear more from the Managing Editor team, sign up for our Friday morning email. You can find us at managingeditor.com/subscribe.

Lee Price: [38:32](#) Thanks to the team who helped make this episode. Our guests, David C Baker, Jane Atkinson, Melissa Thompson and Anne Marie Garcia, CEO of RepCap, Mary Ellen Slayter, editor and producer, West Kennison, assistant editor, Taylor Stoma, and me the managing editor of Managing Editor, Lee Price. We'll see you next time. Can you hear me while I drink my coffee?

Speaker 2: [38:58](#) Yeah.

Mary Ellen S: [39:00](#) Yeah.

Anne Marie: [39:00](#) I'm going to keep doing it for the record.

Izzi Cowart: [39:09](#) Actually some say tamari is cheese.