Mary Ellen: 00:07 From Managing Editor Magazine, this is Margins. If you have content in your job description or you're just interested in how we all talk to each other online, we made this podcast for you. And this season on Margins, we're breaking down the creative process. I'm your host, Mary Ellen Slayter.

Elena: 00:25 And I'm Elena Valentine.

Mary Ellen: 00:32 All right, Elena. Today, we are gonna talk about the scary process of taking your ideas out of your head and out into the world and finding out whether or not people, other people think that they're any good.

Elena: 00:44 Yeah. It's like showing off your new baby and hoping it's not ugly.

Mary Ellen: 00:47 Right? And all babies are ugly. And yet, not. Um (laughs) so, so I guess I [inaudible 00:00:53] how does, what does this feel like to you? I mean, you have tons of ideas, right? So, like, how do you decide when they're worth bringing out into the world, when they're ready? Like, how do you know?

Elena: 01:03 It's definitely socializing it with the core tribe. Right? So all of us have those go-to folks who are both our supporters, but also ones who will be no bullshit with us. And so, I know all of us have that kind of tribe. So typically, standard for me, would be I come up with what I think is a brilliant idea in the middle of the night and I write it on a messy note. And I wake up and number one, I ask myself, well one, if I still remembered the idea and is that idea still as good to me as it was at 1:00 a.m. in the morning.

Mary Ellen: 01:34 (laughs)

Elena: 01:34 But then from there, I'm slowly starting to pitch it. And one thing that I know that we'll learn in this episode is what it means to involve people early on, into the idea, so that they can also shape it and'll have some accountability towards it. So I would say that's been my biggest process. What about with you?

Mary Ellen: 01:53 I was gonna say, it's very similar. And I think, and I think this is hard for a lot of people, right? I think that, especially if something is really important to you, you know, if you're a perfectionist. People worry about other people stealing their ideas or they just feel nervous. Like, they think it's not good enough. But I feel like the reality is like the sooner you take it out, the better, right? And the sooner, like, you'll be able to

poke holes in it. Because what you don't want to do is, like, sit and work on something and work on something and work on something and then take it out after you've poured, like, months or years of your life into it, to find out it was a terrible idea.

Mary Ellen: 02:21 So, but I think, that's counter-intuitive for people. Like, it's scary. It's scary to, like, talk about your work.

Elena: 02:27 Yes. Especially, you know, as, as creatives or if this is a business idea or something very close to you, it can become personal. Right?

Mary Ellen: 02:34 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Elena: 02:34 It's very difficult to split apart you versus the idea. (laughs)

Mary Ellen: 02:39 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Elena: 02:40 And so, I remember, especially early on, in the beginning with Skill Scout, when I would pitch, people's critiques felt so much more stinging. And it, and it took, I think, a lot of pitching and a lot of critique to, I think, have the right attitude about it. To know that there's some things I should take in. There's other things that I can throw away.

Elena: 03:02 And really, the best advice that I was ever given was that inevitably, no one is gonna be in my shoes. No one's gonna have to take this business forward. No one is gonna have the pressure to make this work. And that I didn't have to take everything so seriously and just, potentially, use very kind of light suggestions that people have, based on if and when it makes sense.

Mary Ellen: 03:25 So I'm actually gonna dig in on this point and talk about one of your specific projects. I want to talk about Humans at Work a little bit. Take me back to whenever you first had the idea. Like, or the inkling of the idea, to do Humans at Work. And I guess, also tell our listeners what that is, exactly.

Elena: 03:39 Yeah. So Humans at Work is a documentary series that is being led, uh, by Skill Scout that's really showcasing people as they reflect on the meaning and the purpose behind what they do. So one of the most popular stories I could think of that's, that's quick and, and concise is the, you know ... imagine John F. Kennedy in 1961 going to NASA, walking up to the janitor and asking the janitor, "All right. What do you do?" The janitor

immediately looks up, points his finger, and said, "I'm helping to take a man to the moon."

Elena: 04:09 And it's basically a documentary that is showcasing people who have found their "taking the man to the moon" moment and what work means to them.

Mary Ellen: 04:17 What made you decide to do this? Like, where did the idea come from?

Elena: 04:20 It came from a couple of things. One certainly was a catalyst at a diversity inclusion conference. Uh, the former head of the [inaudible 00:04:26] inclusion saying that there's not enough positive stories in the workplace. And positive stories have the power to shift bias, counter-balance, and form our brains in positive ways. And that got us really thinking of, "Yeah. You're right." Right? You know, and you know this, too, right, Mary Ellen? There's with the onset of #Metoo and, and be it the Gig Economy, we're, we're just inundated with so many negative stories of the workplace, when there's so many more good stories that are happening. So many more good stories about the workplace of, um, how work is transforming lives and impacting this world that just need to be told, for one.

Elena: 04:59 I think the second thing that really catapulted this was just our experiences being out in field, capturing workers all day long, and seeing what special moments that were to highlight folks who were just meant to do what they were doing. And to just make these stories a bit more individualized and less company focused in the way that we typically work.

Elena: 05:16 Um, and so, by combining the two of those, we knew that this is something that we felt compelled to do. Um, and there's certainly so other precedents for this. Uh, so one of my big heroes is Studs Terkel out of Chicago. In the 1960s, he carried a audio recorder around and just started recording people about their work.

Elena: 05:35 And so, at Skill Scout, we see our roles as kind of being the modern day Studs Terkels, except with cameras. And really highlighting, you know, what, what does work mean to people now? And what does it mean to them in the future?

Elena: 05:46 So that's really the kind of the impetus for all of it.

Mary Ellen: 05:48 What I think is interesting about that is almost like something that you didn't say. You did not describe this experience to me

as a lightning strike. And I think sometimes people think that, like, big ideas come to you, like, "boom." Like, fully formed. Like, they, like, just drop down upon you. Like they fall on you or something or they strike you like lightning. But what you just described was the process of taking bits and pieces of things and having them all come together and taking them out into the world and testing them in tiny ways, until you got to the place where Humans at Work was, like, a real thing.

Elena: 06:19 Yeah. And I would say for the most part, I think that that's how a lot of ideas happen. You are informed by new people's opinions. You know, every interaction that you have formulates the idea. But you're right. I think part of it is, is demystifying the fact that it isn't necessarily some brilliant, lightning bolt, like, "Oh my God. We have to do this." Because nothing ever comes out of a silo. And that's the thing. Right? Nothing comes out of a silo, in terms of the ideas we have. And it's certainly not the way that we can push ideas on our own. And so, I think that's the, that's one of the biggest things to demystify is we come up with ideas because of the world around us. And the world around us also helps us to bring and carry that idea out.

Mary Ellen: 07:07 Chris Conley is not Elena's biological father, but she does consider him her professional father. Chris and Elena met while Elena was with Gravity Tank, a consulting firm that uses design principles to come up with big ideas for its clients. After selling Gravity Tank to Salesforce, Chris devotes his time to multiple philanthropic and business endeavors. He and Elena talked about design principles and how they can help great ideas come to fruition.

Chris Conley: 07:34 Uh, it's real simple. You have to go figure out what's really happening. This is something that people don't do. They use, um, existing data or they use existing stereotypical understanding of how the industry works or what customers actually do. So from the start, you're questioning what's really happening.

Chris Conley: 07:51 And I call it, you know, you always want to see what's really happening on the street. You wanna build trust with people who are in the field, doing the work, experiencing the service, and understand what's really going on. Not what the policy manual says is supposed to go on. Not what the data says is going on. But people's experience. So that's number one. You apply that notion of what's really happening, kind of in the human level with people's experience at the, at the product or kinda service level. Like, what do you actually offer to the

market? How does that work? And the business level. How do you make money? What costs what? You know, you're just a curious, inquisitive person in the beginning, to try to make sense of what's really happening.

Chris Conley: 08:31 Then the second part of it is you have to kind of be tangible about what that is, so you kind of frame it up and say, "Oh, given that this is happening, here's what the opportunity is or what problem that needs to be solved." So you're, you're doing a lotta work to solve the right problem. Whereas, traditional, we're taught usually that the problem is presented to us. You know, all education is the textbook or the teacher presents the problem that's well defined and you're supposed to use the tools you just learned to f- find it out.

Chris Conley: 08:55 Well, the worl- real world, problem solving's messy.

Elena: 08:58 Yes.

Chris Conley: 08:59 And so, that whole notion of taking time to understand the problem first. To sharpen your ax before you chop down the tree, et cetera, is critical. And, to this day, you know, 25 years later, that's still a revelation for people and they're still saying, "We don't have time to do research." And I said, "Well, you're gonna solve the problem and it's not gonna stick and you're gonna come back a year later and say 'we still haven't solved this.'" But you, you did a really fast problem solve.

Elena: 09:22 And, and what's fascinating about that, right ... and I think the reason why people are so uncomfortable with it is because one, there's no solutions. Right? People want to immediately get to the idea, to the solution. So it's living in a sea of unknown and ambiguity for a really, really long time. And that's uncomfortable.

Chris Conley: 09:39 The big argument is, "I don't have long, long, long time." But the, the reality is, long enough to get to some new understanding about what's really going on. So it could be two days in the field experi- ... I mean, you literally don't need that much time to understand what people are experiencing, but you do need to go there and get access to it. And those skills are important.

Chris Conley: 09:59 But yeah. You're right. Like, I mean, people argue all the time that they don't have time to figure that out, but it's, it's the exact opposite. You're, they're mostly scared and uncertain about the ambiguity, acknowledging they don't really know. You

know, everybody makes progress in, in the business world by being the one who answers first in a meeting and who kno- always knows the answer and who makes fast decisions.

Elena: 10:19 As opposed to asking questions. Right?

Chris Conley: 10:21 There you go.

Elena: 10:22 As opposed to providing response.

Chris Conley: 10:24 That's right. That's right. Exactly right.

Elena: 10:25 And to that point, you know, so obviously to come up with the new big idea, it is to be naturally curious. It's to ask the right questions. And, and to tie with, inevitably, what you've helped people and clients do is, you know, through this entire process, it's, it's helping them get to these next new big ideas. And oftentimes, especially in the work that we were doing, these were quite out of the box, maybe laughable to some folks? I mean, I'm curious, you know, if you could think of even some examples of just wild, crazy ideas that have come out of, of this process and, and maybe the laughability, sometimes, that, you know, outside colleagues might have.

Chris Conley: 11:05 So I, I think about that in a couple ways. One is, I actually believe that great new ideas don't look that wild. And that's one of their challenges. Uh, because people ... we, we had a saying at Gravity Tank, we still do to this day, is bipolar concept disorder.

Chris Conley: 11:21 So what that means is if the stuff doesn't look crazy enough, people don't think it's innovative. And so, they're like, "Oh not, that's not innovative enough. It needs to be, you know, really wacky." 'Cause our, the stimulus we want, if we're doing a innovation program, is something crazy that nobody has ever thought of. And then, if you do something that's really wacky, the other side kicks in or crazy. You know, something cra- that's obviously, you know, outside the box. People are like, "Ahhh, I'm not sure that that's gonna work."

Chris Conley: 11:48 And so, the real, you know, the real challenge of this is not having the crazy idea or having a just right idea. It's shaping the idea through the process socially, with others. Which is the hardest thing to do. So creatives and designers and the advertising industry, it-

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Chris Conley: 12:03 So creatives and designers and the advertising industry, they're historically, the way they approach this is come up with really whatever the great idea is, and keep it secret until they can polish it really nicely.

Mary Ellen: 12:13 Hold is super close to their chest.

Chris Conley: 12:14 So when they're... Yeah, hold it super close, and "We're not ready yet, give us another week." At the end, they, you know, remove the, the cape from the, from the product or prototype or from the interface and go, "Ta-dah!" You know? And they think it's the best work in the world, and then the client starts asking questions, "Hey, did you consider this? Or did you also consider that?" And the problem there is they didn't go on that journey together. And so, that's really how the world has changed the most in, that I've seen over 25 years, is the way you go on the journey together to get to new ideas has to be a social process. It can't be, uh, a do it for me expert process.

Mary Ellen: 12:48 But remember, it's not just about coming up with a great idea, it's about coming up with a great idea that also helps your client propel their business forward.

Chris Conley: 12:57 Yeah, I think it's all about the attitude. What makes it work is the same thing that works in content marketing, which is you're solving somebody else's problem. So, if we come up with an idea, yes, that idea is solving it for the marketplace. But you have a parallel problem to solve which is your client needs to succeed in their organization. And so our stuff is only successful if we're helping our client succeed in their navigation of their own organization, and that's, that's the real trick because historically, consultants want their ideas to be complimented by their client, "Oh, this is great." And you're like, "Successful project." But that's not the successful project. The successful project is your client can move that idea forward in their organization and get it to happen. So, you know, with Skill Scout, it's all about somebody you made a connection with.

Chris Conley: 13:44 You make that HR person, that hiring manager more successful because over time with your service, it's not they think... They have to start by thinking Skill Scout has something there, that that service might be helpful. But you only win if they're successful in their organization at better hiring, becoming more influential, changing their workplace culture through their practices. And so, you've always gotta be thinking that not, "What ideas do I pitch that m- that give me satisfaction that I

come up with good ideas?" It's a little bit more service leadership than it is, "I'm the smart one in the room."

Mary Ellen: 14:17 As we kind of near the end, um, of our conversation together, is there anything else that you would add or have listeners keep in mind?

Chris Conley: 14:26 You know, I do believe more than ever, your role as a professional, your role in pursuing work, uh, your projects, et cetera, is a human ende- endeavor. It's a social endeavor. We're kind of... Un- unfortunately, we're taught that it's about knowing your stuff and being an expert, but the future of business of society is social, not in social media but in, in true connections and relationships, and you will never, even if you have a challenging project, which you will have because they're complex, if you've built relationships with people, that will be the foundation for a successful professional life, a meaningful professional life. Do not shortchange relationships. Take time to have lunch with each other, ask curious questions of your client, uh, be real, that's gonna be a foundation for communication, for learning what's really going on, for long-term success in your career. That's, that's what it's all about.

Chris Conley: 15:23 Maybe more so 20 years ago, people were taught, "Leave your personal life at home, leave your, your, and your passions and stuff, do your job here. Do what you're supposed to, follow the policy manual, I don't want to hear anything." Forget that world. Meaningfulness is, is going to be the currency of the workplace for a long time.

Mary Ellen: 15:48 If you're in marketing, then you've probably heard of David Meerman Scott, and even if you haven't, there's a good chance you're familiar with some of the concepts he's come up with, such as news jacking. David's got a new book out called Fanocracy: Turning Fans Into Customers and Customers Into Fans. And as for this big idea, he's turned to a new collaborator, his daughter, Reiko.

Mary Ellen: 16:09 We started our conversation by discussing what gave David and Reiko the idea to write this book, and I hope you'll forgive me if you hear me fangirling out a little bit in this one, because I do love David's work. Perhaps I'm just proving their thesis, after all.

Chris Conley: 16:23 So it's called Fanocracy: Turning Fans Into Customers and Customers Into Fans, and I've been so excited about this one, because I am a massive live music fan. I've been to 780 live shows. I've been to 75 Grateful Dead concerts, and I was

thinking to myself, "What's up with this crazy fandom that I have?" And I was talking to my daughter Reiko, and she's like, "I know, I've not only read every Harry, Harry Potter book multiple times, not only seen every movie multiple times, went to Orlando to the Wizarding World of Harry Potter, went to, uh, London, to the studios and I just finished a 90,000-word alternative ending to the Harry Potter series, where Draco Malfoy is a spy for the Order of the Phoenix. I am a massive fan too." So my daughter Reiko and I actually teamed up to dig in... Five years ago, we started the process of dig in to why are we crazy fans? And how can organizations of all kinds, brands of all kinds develop fans? And that's what turned into Fanocracy.

Mary Ellen: 17:27 So how would define a fan? Like, when you use that word, what does that mean?

Chris Conley: 17:30 A fan is someone who is incredibly passionate about something, who can't wait to do that thing again, who is willing to spend time and/or money to do it, and, and I think this one is key, has some of their closest friends in the universe who also are active in that same fandom. Those are where their closest, um, friends also exist.

Mary Ellen: 18:00 And then when, oh, uh, one of the things you were describing to me, like you met the Grateful Dead and how many shows you've been to, like, um, if somebody's interested in the creative process, like what's the difference between different Grateful Dead shows? Like, w- if you haven't... You've seen it once, right? This is, uh... Why, why would you go back again?

Chris Conley: 18:14 Interesting question, and that's something that they've done a really interesting job at building fans around, because if you go to say, a Rolling Stones concert, um, which I've been to five or six of them, if you were to go the next night and next night, it would be essentially the sha- the same show, with maybe one or two songs substituted in. However, a Grateful Dead concert the next night almost never will r- repeat a song. I went, um, to Gr- the Grateful Dead so far in calendar year 2019, six times. And three times in Mexico over four days, and then three times in June over about seven days, and those three-day and four-day, three-day periods, they never repeated a song. So everything is different, the way they play the music is different, how it's feeling that night is different.

Chris Conley: 19:07 The songs they play are different. And so people partly go because they're like, "What in the world are they gonna do tonight?" And then crazy Grateful Dead fans, I'm not quite this

crazy but, (laughs) but they keep spreadsheets of what songs are played and, "Oh my gosh, it's been four years since they played this particular song." And those are all things that contribute to wanting to see them, contribute to their fandom.

Mary Ellen: 19:34 So, I don- I'm thinking too like, from their perspective like how, how do you think that they maintain the energy to like, re-invent like, the show every night like that? Like, what, what do you think is the key to that?

Chris Conley: 19:45 I think they love it. (laughs) I think they... I think the idea that they're in a, in, in a sort of way playing with fire, you know? They go on stage, and it's a jam band. They, um, they don't know what direction they're gonna take the song until they begin to play. They know what key it's in, they know who's gonna sing what verse, but whether the guitar solo goes for 45 seconds or, or four and a half minutes, they j- they don't know until they begin to play. And so therefore, there can be some nights that they're just hi- hitting all notes, their kind of minds are coming together in a way that they're almost... I, I, it was once described, I've, I've had a chance to meet all of the members of the band, and it was once described to me that it's almost as if we're hearing each other think on a good night. And on a bad night, they can really stink. (laughs)

Chris Conley: 20:43 And for whatever reason, you know? They're in a bad mood, or one of them's in a bad mood because it's really is a, uh, uh, a unified band that, um, if they're all doing well, the entire band does incredibly well.

Mary Ellen: 20:55 If I'm curious, like how have you sustained this? Right? Like you've produced these books, so you're like, you get up and you give these keynotes, and you're also bringing that, again, I think a similar thing... You're bring that same energy. You're having to reinvent it, you can't give the same show every time. How do you do that? Like, how do you think about that work?

Chris Conley: 21:10 What I think about all the time is what are the patterns in the universe that I'm seeing that other people aren't seeing, and are those patterns worth talking about? I, it, it, it's constantly going through my mind. So the first time that that became really big for me started about 2002, and what I noticed was that what everybody was talking about with digital marketing was not what I was seeing. Everyone was saying digital marketing was about advertising, it was about banner ads, and it was about email, you know, email, uh, marketing. And, and it was about buying lists and I just didn't agree with that, and so the pattern

in the universe I saw was that I had come from a, uh, a real-time news business background. I had worked for companies like Thomson Reuters and Dow Jones and I was seeing online marketing way back in '02, 2002, as publishing, not as advertising.

Chris Conley: 22:13 And so, I felt like I had an unfair advantage because I had worked for Dow Jones and Reuters and companies like that, and so I said, "Wow, there's something new going on here." It was a pattern in the universe no one else saw, so that's what prompted me to write The New Rules of Marketing and PR, which eventually came out in 2007, and became quite popular, it's in the sixth edition right now. It's in 29 different languages.

Mary Ellen: 22:37 That book's like the Bible for digital marketing. It's held up really well, I think.

Chris Conley: 22:41 It has held up, well, I've, I've updated it every, every couple of years. But it had held up very well, uh, and a couple of other times, I just hadn't... This, I'm seeing patterns other people aren't seeing. Another time it happened 10 years ago, I recognized that the rise of Twitter was not just social media and all the airy, fairy things people were talking about. I thought it simply meant that now marketing was becoming real-time. And that was a pattern in the universe I was seeing that other people weren't seeing for whatever reason, and I started to talk about it and write about it. I wrote a book called Real-Time Marketing and PR, invented a concept called news jacking, which is the idea of following the real-time news and then creating content based on the news. And so, I r- you know, I'm using your word, I reinvented myself around the idea of instant marketing.

Chris Conley: 23:31 Real-time marketing and, uh, instant engagement, and five years ago, again I was seeing patterns in the universe that other people weren't seeing. The patterns I was seeing starting five years ago were that the pendulum has swung too far in the direction of superficial online communications. You know, we're doubling down and sending yet another email to our list. We're yet another LinkedIn connection who then we immediately try to sell to. I mean, there was sometimes on social networks, uh, I'll be communicating and it's a, it's a-

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Chris Conley: 24:03 ... on social networks, uh, I'll be communicating and I said, "It's a darn bot," you know?

Mary Ellen: 24:05 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chris Conley: 24:06 I mean, it's a robot I'm communicating to. So the pattern I'm seeing now is that the... that pendulum has swung too far. Digital is great. I'm one of the pioneers of digital marketing but we've gone too far in the direction of superficial online communications. We need to swing back to true human connection. So as I was thinking about what true human connection means, that was the point. Five years I was talking with daughter about, "Jeez, we're- we're fans of these things like the Grateful Dead and Harry Potter," and I'm a huge fan of surfing and- and my daughter Reiko is a huge fun of getting dressed up and cosplaying at Comic Con.

Chris Conley: 24:44 And so we recognized that this was about human connection, meeting with people who are like-minded, other people who go to Grateful Dead concerts, other people who love Harry Potter. And that's a pattern in the universe that I noticed that other people weren't noticing, and that's- that's what drive me, Mary Ellen, is- is... What drives me is, I'm seeing something which I think is incredibly important. For whatever reason, other people... maybe they're seeing it but they're not articulating it and this is what I... I have to talk about this. It's non-negotiable. It's, like, I need to get this out of my system or I'll explode.

Chris Conley: 25:20 And that... And that's really what drives... you know, you call... you call it creativity. I- I... To me, it's like if I don't get it out there I'm not a whole person, and that's what drives me.

Mary Ellen: 25:30 Okay. I mean, well, I guess that's... I guess you could think that's where the creativity comes from. I do wonder, though, do you regret unleashing newsjacking on us? If you could go back and take back newsjacking, would you?

Chris Conley: 25:41 I don't, for this reason. When I did newsjacking, a lot of people told me I was wrong to not copyright newsjacking, to trademark newsjacking. So newsjacking is a concept I made completely open. I put a creative commons license on it. Anyone who wanted to could take my ideas around newsjacking and transform them. But so many people said, "No. No. No. You've got something here that you can own. You can start to sell agency services around newsjacking. You can... " And I said, "No. This about sharing something with the world and letting the world use it in many ways that they want."

Chris Conley: 26:25 And, yeah, there's people who've taken that in a negative and dark direction and... You know, the President of the United

States newsjacks every day. The President of the United States is president today because of newsjacking. The President of the United States, Donald Trump, during the 2016 campaign was the only candidate who was engaged in real-time communications and newsjacking, and he won because of it. And now... And now he's doing it as president, which I don't- don't agree with. But he did it during the p- ... uh, the election cycle.

Chris Conley: 26:56 And I think the idea of letting something go and letting other people take over it, like I did with newsjacking, was the right decision. And, in fact, recently, the word (laughs) newsjacking was named to the Oxford English dictionary and my name... my name was attached to it, which is kind of cool (laughs).

Mary Ellen: 27:18 But you gave us Trump (laughs).

Chris Conley: 27:21 Um, I don't know... I don't know that I did because I suspect, whether I named or not, Trump would've still probably done the technique. But I'm doing the same thing with Fanocracy, my new book. Um, yes I own the URL. Yes, I wrote the book with a title, Fanocracy, but I'm really hopeful that other people will take the concept of Fanocracy and turn it into something else and make it bigger than it is. And, again, I did not try to put a trademark against the term and say I own it, rather I said, "Hey, this is a new form of marketing that I've named and I want other people to use this. I want other... " I would it to have an agency teach Fanocracy, the way that pe- ... the way that many agencies have been teaching newsjacking.

Mary Ellen: 28:02 Well, because that's actually... that's thought leadership, right? So is one of the things that I wound up getting into with our clients, where people are so scared. They said, "Well, if I publish this, people will take my ideas," you know, or, "I have to copyright this." And it's like... Well, the way I look at it, if somebody is copying my ideas, like, if I put it out there and they're copying, I'm winning (laughs).

Chris Conley: 28:18 That's a good thing. Yeah. That's a good.

Mary Ellen: 28:21 That means that my idea is, like, a virus that's spreading without me. Like, that's my goal.

Chris Conley: 28:28 That's the way that I look at it and that's the way I've always looked at it. And, you know, am I leaving money on the table? I don't think so. Sure, I could try to own something and get people to pay me for it, but I'd rather not try to own it, let

people use it, and then have them say, "I want the guy who invented this thing to help me to... I don't know, speak about it or do whatever about it."

Mary Ellen: 28:48 And now our final question of this episode.

Mary Ellen: 28:51 How do we even know if our ideas are any good?

Chris Conley: 28:54 So, um, what I do... my strategy is when I think of a new pattern in the universe, almost 20 years ago that marketing is about content. You and I both thought of that at the similar time. Later on, 10 years ago, marketing is real-time. Uh, now, the idea of growing fans is si important. When I think of these things, I test them out in multiple ways, first. I, um... I'll- I'll begin doing a few tweets about the topic, and I'm looking for how much engagement I'm getting. I'll do a couple of blog posts. I'm looking for how many are sharing or commenting on those blog posts. I might do a riff or two in one of my speeches to see, um, what are people saying when I introduce this new concept?

Chris Conley: 29:36 So even going back four or five years ago, I started to talk about fandom in presentations just to see how people reacted. And I used that as kind of a gauge to this idea that's rattling around in my brain, all of those ways and they tend to work pretty well for me. And I've had ideas that I've experimented with over the years and rejected, and then I've had other ideas over the years that I've experimented with and it really feels like something is there. The three that we've already talked about, you now, marketing is content, marketing is becoming real-time and there's too much digital chaos so, um, human connections and growing fans is essential.

Chris Conley: 30:16 All of those cases are ones where I looked at of just exploring the idea through social networking, through my blog, through sharing ideas on the stage. I actually learned the technique from comedians because a comedian will try out a new joke and see if its works, and if it's a dud they'll never do it again, but if it works they might begin to riff on it and... become a whole set of jokes. And then, once I think that idea's big and it becomes a book, then I've got this massive challenge, which always freaks me out, which is, how am I gonna birth this book into the world? (laughs)

Chris Conley: 30:53 And, you know, it's like, "Oh my god," you know? Like, "How do I get people to think that there's something new out there?" So what- what I've tried to do is use the technique I'm writing

about to market and promote the book, because how good is it if you don't use it yourself, right?

Mary Ellen: 31:11 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chris Conley: 31:12 So, um, when I first did The New Rules of Marketing and PR, the very first edition, the first edition that came out in 2007, one of the things that I was talking about, quite early, is blogging. And I had had my blog for a couple of years by then. There- There had only been a handful, a very small handful, of books that had even mentioned blogging at that point. So what I did was I gave early copies of the book to 147 bloggers, ended up, then, talking about them, ended up putting each of their names in the book. And then all of those bloggers were people that I had personal interactions through my blog, prior to doing this.

Chris Conley: 31:47 So these are people who either commented on my blog or whose blogs I read or, one way or another, people who- who influenced me in the way I wrote the book. And it exploded because all... almost all of those people ended up talking about The New Rules of Marketing and PR, and that was the catalyst that got that book into the marketplace.

Chris Conley: 32:06 When I started to do the idea of newsjacking I looked for ways that I could do newsjacking myself. And now with this idea of Fanocracy and fandom, I'm doing a project which has been sort of fun. Number one, I'm asking interesting people what they're a fan of and getting video, and in particular, I live 20 miles from the New Hampshire border, I live outside of Boston, so I've traveled, over the last six months, to the presidential campaign events and I've actually been to 22 individual campaign events, town halls, and I've got 16 candidates on video telling me what they're a fan of. And I've got video, actually, of people who are fans of those candidates.

Chris Conley: 32:57 Now, I'm doing this in a non-partisan way. I'm doing it in a way where I'm not talking about, "What are the candidates positions on the issues," or who I do or don't support. It's completely, what are they a fan of? It's been fascinating. Uh, it's absolutely interesting. Pete Buttigieg is a fan of Gershwin. And Beto O'Rourke is a fan of reading books. And Kamala Harris is a fan of Bob Marley. And it was... And I've got all of these on video and it's... you know, it's interesting. So I'm- I'm in the process, now. I'm working with a New York City based television commercial producer to cut this into a five minute video, in which I'm going to release in the near future.

Chris Conley:	33:39	What I love about this is I'm hopeful that it will help to introduce the concept of fandom in a broader way and serve as a way for people to think, "Oh, that's really interesting. You know, David Meerman Scott's talking about fandom in this weird way. It gets me thinking about fandom. Oh, he's got a new book about fandom. Okay. That's interesting." You know? And so I'm always thinking about how the stuff rattling (laughs) around in my brain, the patterns I see in the universe might become a book and then a speech and then, also, how can I use those concepts to get the ideas of those books and speeches out into the universe in a new way?
Mary Ellen:	34:22	So that's it for this episode of Margins by Managing Editor. You can find us on iTunes, Stitcher or wherever you listen to podcasts. Subscribe to hear more about our deep dive into the creative process, and if you like what you hear, share us with your friends and rate us on your favorite podcast platform.
Speaker 1:	34:37	If you'd like to hear more from the Managing Editor team, there's an easy way to do that. We send out an email every Friday morning. You can join the club at ManagingEditor.com/Subscribe.
Mary Ellen:	34:47	Thanks to the beautiful men that helped make this episode happen, producer Rex New and audio editor Marty McFadden.
Speaker 1:	34:53	We'll see you all next time.

PART 3 OF 3 ENDS [00:35:03]