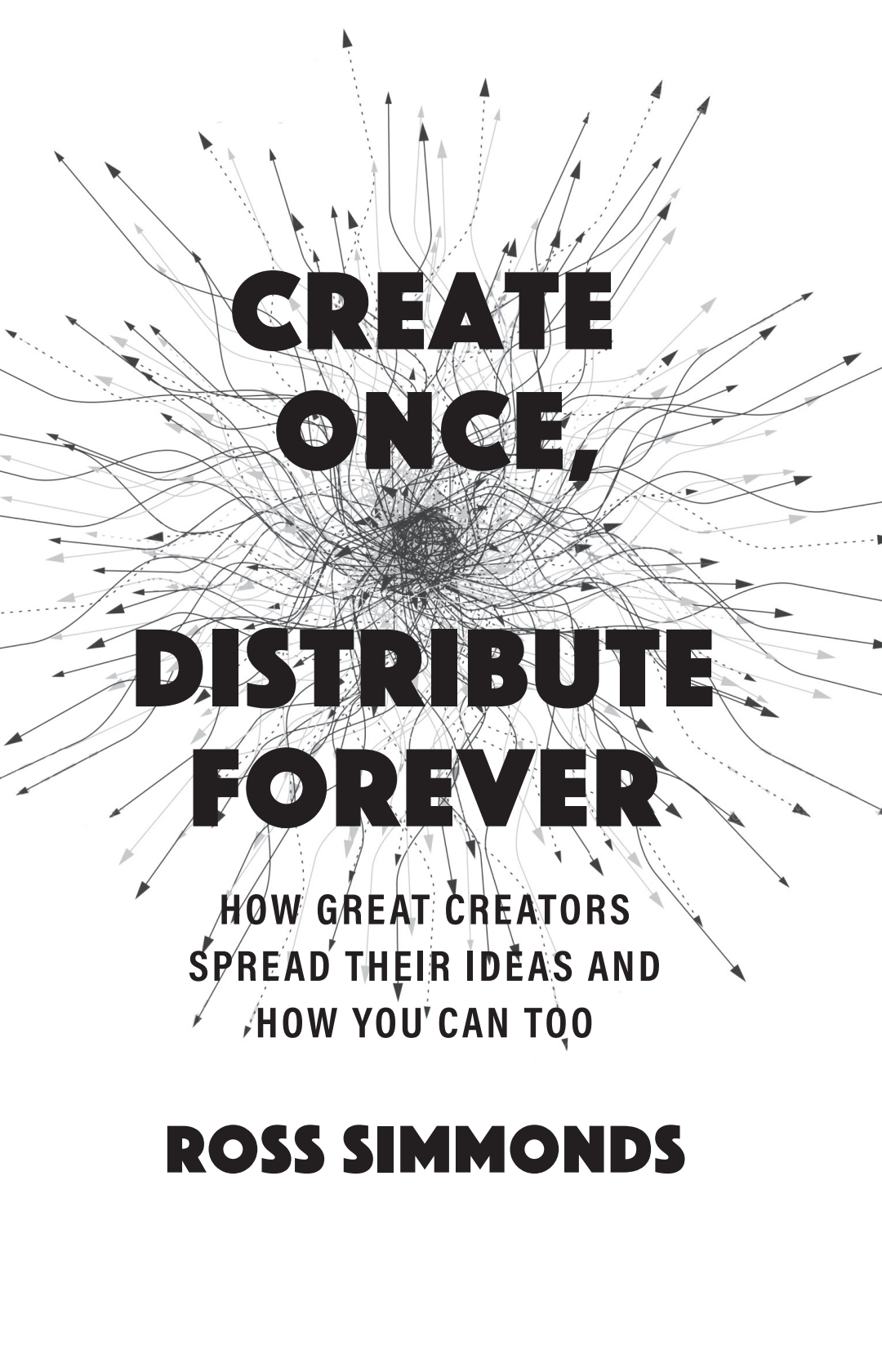


**CREATE ONCE,
DISTRIBUTE FOREVER**



**CREATE
ONCE,
DISTRIBUTE
FOREVER**

**HOW GREAT CREATORS
SPREAD THEIR IDEAS AND
HOW YOU CAN TOO**

ROSS SIMMONDS

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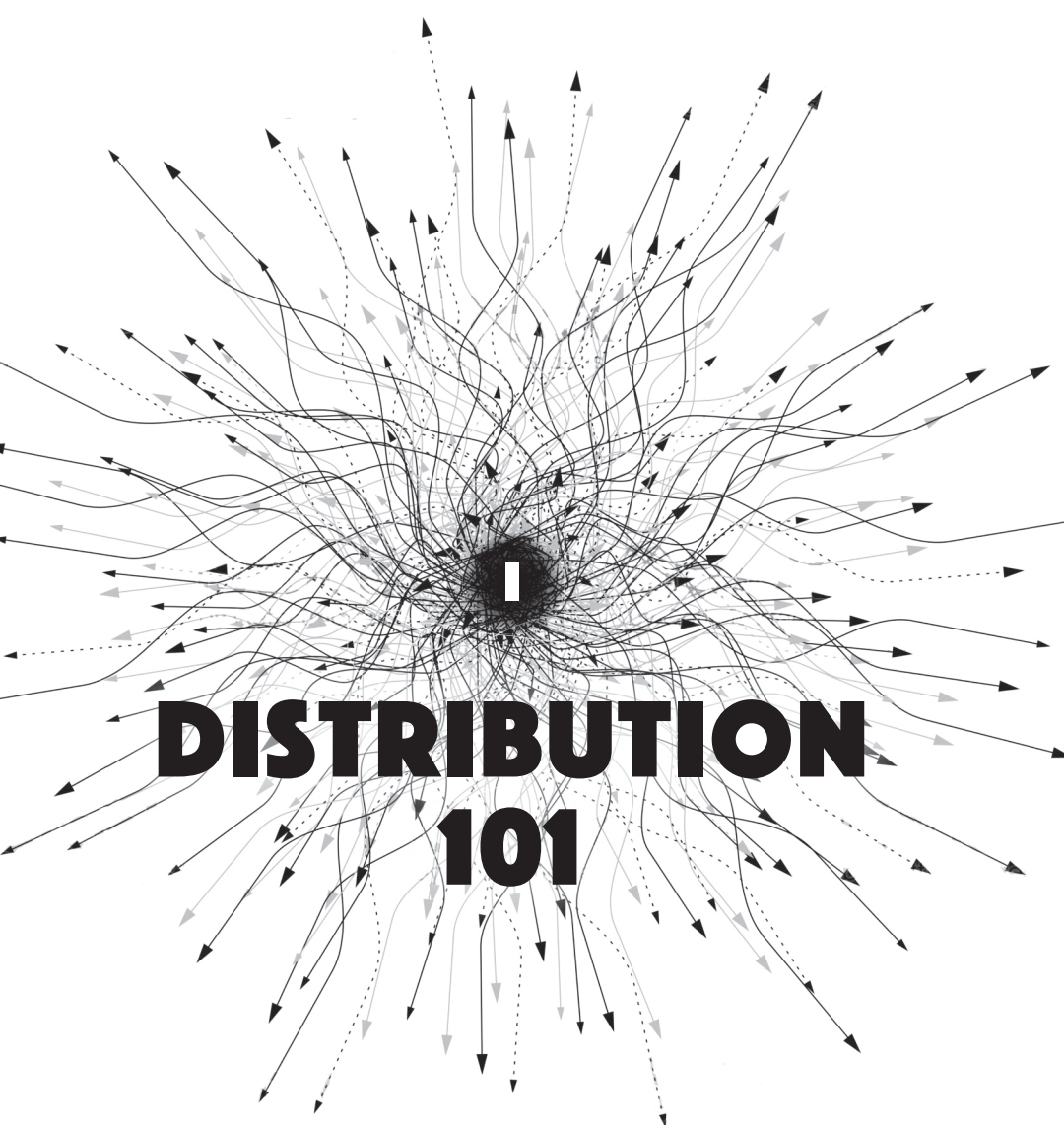
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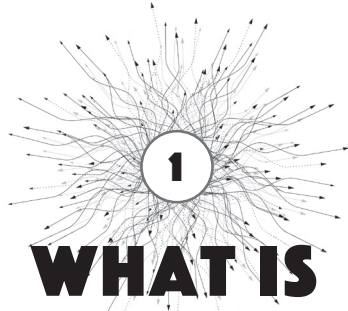
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DISTRIBUTION 101



WHAT IS DISTRIBUTION?

WHAT'S VIRAL SPREADS, CATCHES ON, AND becomes instantly recognizable.

We saw it with the COVID-19 pandemic. We see it each fall with the flu and the common cold. Every few years, we become aware of a prolific virus spreading, and we have to stay vaccinated or vigilant. Ebola. SARS. Zika. Smallpox. These are but some examples of viruses that have entered our lives, and they make for a great analogy of what great distribution looks like when it's happening and operating in full swing.

The influence of pandemics is real and vast. Never isolated, a virus spreads and spreads, from human to human, and it moves through us until all of humanity is either infected or impacted. Depending on the severity, viral pandemics can change the world. Just think back to your experience in the three or so years of COVID-19. We wore masks, sheltered in place, cleaned our groceries with bleach, and washed our hands while humming “Happy Birthday.” Wild times.

What makes a pandemic such a global event? In one word: distribution. It’s not so much the virus itself that matters, it’s the virus’ ability to spread quickly that determines the scope and impact of the given pandemic.

In the business world, distribution very much operates like a viral pandemic. Of course, that is why the term “viral” is associated with business and social media trends. For good or for bad, we see it when TikTok videos explode in popularity (or Instagram Reels if you are older than a certain age). Like a flashbang, the popularity of content can strike through the heart of the internet. If one person with 100,000 followers shares your content, it could be considered a digital equivalent of a super-spreader event.

Well-distributed content can spread around the world in a matter of minutes or even less. The internet means global connectivity. Mere seconds is all it takes. A click here,

a swipe there, and content with a significant viral impact can travel the globe instantaneously to shape the minds of millions and billions of people.

The reality is this: one piece of content, when distributed properly, can leave a massive impression on the planet not dissimilar to the game-changing impacts of pandemics. A great piece of content benefiting from great distribution can fundamentally change your life as an individual and the world as a whole. I know this because I have had single pieces of content utilize monthly promotion and distribution strategies to generate well over a million dollars in revenue for my company and change my life.

A well-distributed piece can drastically alter how your company operates. Maybe it increases your traffic, your downloads, or any desired metric that generates new leads and business. With the right distribution engine, the growth, influence, and spread of your content cannot be stopped.

Your content can spread like a virus and morph into new strains. People will translate it into international languages. Others will make graphics to visually aid the material. You published it on Reddit, but your friend saw it on Slack. Another friend texts you a headline from Facebook. It will be transformed into an Instagram post or a TikTok video, and it will cross mediums the likes of which you will have never imagined.

Your content, work, brand, and story can change the world, and that is the power of distribution. When you have the right vehicle—the right distribution—your great content will spread like a virus. It's not so much the content itself or a virus itself that matters most, it's the distributive power of the vehicle that spreads the content. And throughout this book, we will cover the strategies required for you to spread your story all over the world.

DISTRIBUTION IS FOUNDATIONAL

Prior to our earliest communication technologies of smoke signals and carrier pigeons, stories were spread primarily through word of mouth. Even the world's earliest forms of literature were first spread orally. It is believed Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*—both considered the first written texts in Western literature—were written an estimated 500 years after the former's subject matter, the Trojan War. That means centuries of passing along both poems through word of mouth. Oral tradition meant passing stories from generation to generation. The texts that survived had a long gestation period, but they nonetheless found distribution channels and continue to circulate to this day.

Much later, humans started utilizing letters and mail carriers. Then they invented the telegraph to communicate

over vast distances even faster. Then came the radio and even television. Companies could reach large audiences by buying Super Bowl ads once a year, but that's no longer needed. Now, millions and billions of people are within reach with the click of a button. You can put up a great post on LinkedIn, X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook, TikTok, Reddit, and many other platforms to reach massive swaths of people.

When tracing a history of communication and consumption, we find two things. First, the capabilities of distribution only increase over time. More and more people are within reach as communication and distribution technology continues to develop. Second, we learn that for something to survive or thrive, it must maintain some semblance of distribution.

Let's return to the concept of virality. Founder and entrepreneur Kevin Kwok once tweeted, "We [have learned] in vaccines what most startups inevitably realize too late. Product is great, but most of the time, you live or die by distribution."¹ In this sense, what Kwok suggests is that for a virus to be stopped, the distributors (a.k.a. humans) need to be taken into consideration.

1 Kevin Kwok, Twitter post, January 20, 2021, 12:16 a.m., <https://twitter.com/kevinakwok/status/1351805737727533056/>.

Thankfully, distribution of content has never been easier, but it's also never been more valuable. Regular human beings with meager means have the ability to distribute their content at levels that are comparable to media giants with billion-dollar distribution budgets.

There is no better example of distribution's necessity than the newspaper industry. For over a century, and prior to the spread of the internet, newspapers had a lock on distribution by having access to the doorsteps of millions of people all over the world. Their content-distribution strategy consisted of delivering their copy to their readers' door every single day (or once a week, depending on the publication). There were no other channels to consume long-form news and information. Television certainly had news programs, but they had to short-cut the details to keep the half-hour time slot.

As the internet started to become more accessible, people were given the opportunity to consume news whenever they wanted. Soon, that distributive power transferred to their mobile devices. Online news distribution was able to one-up print news. It bypassed the front door and went straight into the consumer's pocket.

With a better distribution strategy, online news prevented print news from standing out. Losing their monopoly on distribution, newsprint has slowly gone the way of

the buffalo. On the other hand, online news has thrived. The old-world jobs of journalists and reporters still exist, but they wield their phones and Twitter profiles instead of their typewriters. Competing with them are creators, bloggers, and other folks who have found a way to distribute news content online to niche audiences.

In the history of newspapers, we can demonstrate that distribution has the ability to change everything. Nobody thought that newspapers could ever die. But they did, or, at least, they are still on life support.

DEFINING DISTRIBUTION

Certainly, everybody in the industry will have their own definition of the word *distribute*. Here is how it might look if you were to find it in a regular dictionary.

dis·trib·ute

noun

either to divide among many or to spread out, so
as to cover something or give out or deliver,
especially to members of a group.

This is a great place to start, but it is not quite tailored for our purposes. This is how I would define the term in

the context of content marketing, an entry in the Ross Simmonds Dictionary of Marketing.

dis·trib·ute

noun

to spread your content, product, or stories to a large target audience by repurposing or remixing your content into a wide range of different content channels and mediums.²

At its core, distribution can be defined as taking an asset that you've produced and repurposing it for placement in a number of distribution channels to reach the widest audience possible. Why is leading with a definition an important place to start? Tying distribution to widening the audience helps you embrace the importance of distribution to the success or failure of a given product or piece of content.

And why can we tie distribution to success, not content? It's not necessarily the best product that will win the market. Rather, the best distribution wins. A lot of startups and entrepreneurs make the mistake of allocating their budgets to creating the perfect product or content. They are

2 Ross Simmonds, Ross Simmonds Dictionary of Content Marketing [Unpublished manuscript]. Publication TBD.

trying to create the next blockbuster film, the next industry-changing software, the most-used app, or anything else that will dominate the attention of consumers. To a certain degree, all entrepreneurs, even me, become obsessed with this idea that we can be part of creating the “next big thing.”

What is often overlooked in that recipe are indicator words revealing that the audience is the most important ingredient, not the product or content itself. The “most-used” app has a large audience. An “industry-changing” piece of software gets that moniker after mass adoption. A “blockbuster” film suggests that the reach of a film is carried to a huge audience. Effective distribution made these products successful, not the products themselves.

Over the years, there has been example after example of mediocre products outselling better quality competitors. Just walk into any grocery store and go to the granola bar aisle. In that aisle, there’s a brand-name, low-quality granola bar that tastes like cardboard and is made with unhealthy ingredients. And it sells like gangbusters. Elsewhere, only one or two local supermarkets might carry the under-the-radar, delicious, organic, oatmeal bar created by a local producer operating out of a farmer’s market, which very few people buy. The difference between them is distribution. The bad product wins because it is in more places and in front of more faces.

I'm also reminded of 2009's blockbuster film, *Avatar*. I'm not saying the film wasn't revolutionary. It was enjoyable, but the distribution was a masterclass. In his press tour, James Cameron spoke openly about the film's at-the-time gigantic budget of \$237 million. Cameron revealed that the film's distribution company had nearly the same budget as the film itself. With excellent distribution, *Avatar* was certain to make its money back. Today, the original *Avatar* sits as the second highest-grossing film of all time, clearing three-and-a-half billion dollars (adjusted for inflation) in box office sales.

So yeah, they made their money back and then some.

DISTRIBUTION IS SERIOUS BUSINESS

What do granola bars and Hollywood films have to do with you? Right now, there are creators, founders, and entrepreneurs creating startups, top-of-the-line content, blogs, e-books, products, and more, yet they are not leaders in their given market. It's because they've yet to crack the distribution puzzle. Subsequently, their amazing ideas and deserved opportunities go unfulfilled.

If you aren't distributing your work, you might never reap the benefits. What's worse, the people who would have benefitted the most from your content or product

never even got the opportunity because they were never reached. You can fundamentally change your own life and the lives of others by distributing your work. That is why distribution is important, and that is why I'm so passionate about this topic. I am convinced that some of the greatest ideas in the world already exist, and you might be holding onto one or more of them. But because you don't know how to distribute it professionally, it might die with you someday.

It doesn't matter where you are right now. Every YouTube channel starts with zero subscribers. If you look at the early days of YouTube, one of its emerging creators was a kid named Justin Bieber. At that time, he was not an internationally known musical phenomenon. His early attempts at spreading his content didn't gain much traction. YouTube, in 2007, was not a major distribution channel for musicians. But, he studied the YouTube ecosystem and generated a wider viewership by learning how to distribute stories on the platform. YouTube distribution landed him in the hands of a music distributor who had access to the proper channels, and the rest is history. Because he understands that distribution is something to embrace forever, Justin Bieber has kept his YouTube channel—which has one of the largest audiences—and continues to post content.

But not everybody is looking for musical stardom. Scalable growth and revenue is the goal of many businesses and founders. Distribution offers that for companies. I might be dating myself with this example, but let's recall the power of distribution for Hotmail, the predecessor of Gmail. They had a default signature set up in users' email accounts. Every time the user sent an email, the bottom signature would read "PS: I love you. Get your free email at Hotmail." This distribution hack gave them the ability to unlock and generate millions of new signups.

Within hours of implementing the signature as a default setting, they saw a hockey-stick curve in growth. Hotmail started with 3,000 users. Within six months, they were up to a million. Five weeks after that, they hit two million. In essence, Hotmail generated free advertising and put their name in front of every recipient of an email from a Hotmail account. It went down as perhaps the most brilliant moment of early-internet content distribution. And it demonstrated the viral power that distribution has in business growth.

DISTRIBUTION IS OFTEN OVERLOOKED

The major mistake most individuals or companies make is to over-obsess the thing they want to distribute. The product is placed over the distribution process. Not enough

time is spent thinking about how to spread the content or product, nor the importance of getting it in front of the right people.

Returning to the demise of print news, so many journalists romanticized the importance of physical newspapers. The layout of one story next to another. The tackiness of the ink. The importance of different font sizes on the paper. It's easy to romanticize the past when it has allowed you to reap significant rewards. That makes it easy to push back on burgeoning norms. For print news, the writing was on the wall. Well, that writing was actually in code and in a computer. Yet, many journalists and their employers refused to transition to an online format. That led to the shuttering of hundreds of newspapers across the country. When the product or content is put above distribution, the former usually fails.

Not distributing your work means withholding your solution to a user's pain point. As you read these words, it is very likely that somebody out there is struggling with a problem that *you* have a solution to. You might have an e-book, a product, or a blog post that can help a consumer solve a pain point. But because you haven't spent any time learning how to distribute, that person will continue to struggle. Why haven't you distributed it to them yet?

Perhaps the importance of distribution never crossed your mind. Or maybe you are afraid of your content being

judged. These are legitimate concerns and experiences, things I hope to help you address as we continue through this book's lessons. The foundational concept holding everything up, though, is that business failure is often the result of not distributing your content or product.

If you want to unlock the full potential of the assets you're creating, you shouldn't allow your content to collect dust. You must have the ability to create great content, but it has to reach the right people. It's more important than ever to make it spread like a virus.

No matter your industry, no matter the space you work in, no matter where you are in the world, there are people out there who want to consume your content or product. And as you will discover in detail, your audience might be meeting in unexpected places. You have to find their channels and meet them there to display your content.

Every week people use the excuse that their audience isn't on such-and-such channel. For example, accountants might be scared to use social media because their potential customers may perceive them as unprofessional. Therefore, they give up on distribution.

What they fail to recognize is that their audience might be on LinkedIn—a serious, professional social media channel—instead of TikTok (in reality some of them probably are on TikTok, too). On LinkedIn, there are millions of

people with any given job title using LinkedIn as a channel to learn, stay connected, and discuss things happening in their profession. Today, LinkedIn has well over eight million users who identify as accountants. Sounds like an excellent opportunity.

If you or anyone says “Our audience is too professional” or “Our audience doesn’t spend time on these massive channels,” I’m here to say you’re wrong. Certainly not all eight million accountants will be the ideal customer. But, even if 1 percent of them were your ideal customer, that means 80,000 people will be interested in what you’re selling. That’s a pretty good uptick in engagement created by distribution. And this story can be repeated to some degree or another using any niche group. An obscure group like waste management software engineers have their own, exploitable distribution channels.

Anyone can continue down the path of suggesting “distribution might not be for us.” But you’ll lose out. Your audience exists, and they are waiting for you.



WHY YOU SHOULD EMBRACE DISTRIBUTION

MY FIRST LESSON IN DISTRIBUTION CAME IN HIGH school. I grew up and lived in a community called Preston, which is on the outskirts of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Halifax is a relatively small city with an even smaller Black population. As one of the few Black people in Nova Scotia, I happened into a not-often-frequented-by-Black-people store selling hair products. I noticed they were selling durags. When I was growing up, durags were

just starting to become popular as Hip Hop artists like 50 Cent, Cam’ron, Ludacris and more brought them into the limelight as a fashion statement.

This store had durags of all different colors: red, yellow, pink, blue, you name it. They had every option. That caught my attention, because local grocery stores would only carry black or white, colors that were guaranteed to sell at higher rates.

I recognized almost immediately that this hair-product store didn’t have access to the community I had access to. I had the distribution advantage. This is where I should probably mention that this was pre-internet, so it wasn’t a world where anyone could order a durag online. So, I asked my parents for an advance on my allowance and bought them out.

The next day, I hung the durags in my locker at school and sold them at \$7.50 a piece, twice what I paid for them. I sold them all by midday. The store I bought them from hadn’t sold a single durag in months until I started making regular purchases. I continued to sell the durags consistently, and it provided me with the money to buy my favorite high-school lunch: poutine.

That was my first taste of distribution and entrepreneurship. If you find the right audience, your content can command quite a bit of attention and capital. It’s a lesson I continue to implement as a marketing professional. For

example, in 2018, I wrote a professional blog for my website called “Why Gangster Rap & Coffee Is The Perfect Recipe For Productivity (Research Backed).” I’m obsessed with coffee. I’m also obsessed with hip-hop. So I created that piece after doing a bit of research and analysis.

Using evidence, my article argued that if you listen to high-tempo music, such as gangster rap, and you drink coffee, your productivity can increase. Interesting, right? I agree. So I put this piece out there. I pressed publish on it with anticipation, as I thought it would be received with amazement. What happened? Crickets.

It didn’t generate any engagement at all. Nobody pressed the ‘like’ button. Nobody shared it. Nobody commented on it. Was it over? Was it time to create a new, better piece of content? No, it wasn’t. I decided not to let this piece die or collect dust. I had faith that this was strong content that could influence people. All I needed to do was get it into the right hands.

Doing the sharing on my own, I distributed this piece into a number of communities. I posted it to Hacker News, LinkedIn, Medium, Reddit, Twitter, Facebook, and the like. Depending on the platform, I would share it with niche-specific groups, such as coffee enthusiast groups and “Hip-Hop Heads” on Facebook. By the end of that day, my post had 35,000 views.

Within six months, it took off. Celebrities were tweeting, promoting, and amplifying my article. It created thousands of daily visitors to my website. My DMs on Instagram started blowing up. People were telling me that they had read my coffee blog post and how it inspired them.

This was a piece of content that took me about three hours to create. It could have easily been discarded and offered no return. But, I ran it through a distribution strategy of getting it in front of a larger target audience, and that three-and-a-half hours worth of work led to significant revenue. I frequently update this piece to renew interest and redistribute its ideas. More on redistribution later, but suffice it to say, this piece still generates a lot of traffic, followers, and revenue for me.

And this is a little-known fact, but I also ran a company called Hustle and Grind in 2018, which sold coffee mugs. With some thoughtful content marketing, we sold quite a few mugs, simply from the distributive popularity of my coffee and gangster rap article.

That is the power of distribution: from nothing to revenue. That power is why you should embrace it. In this chapter, you'll learn why embracing distribution now will set you up for long-term success. You should embrace distribution because people are sharing more than before and will continue to share in the future, distribution is more

important than the content or product itself, competition is fierce in this noisy world, you likely have the content you need, and real revenue opportunities await.

REASON 1: MORE CONTENT THAN EVER BEFORE

If you don't distribute your work, the abundance of available and soon-to-be-published content will erase the awareness of your valuable content. This is what you're competing with. People share and consume more content than ever before, and you have to compete with that. Embracing a distribution strategy—or even being aware that you need a distribution strategy—can make or break you.

How do we know distribution is powerful in an ocean of content? Many, including myself, view it as more important than the content or product itself. Take finance and tech CEO Alex Rampell, who once famously said, “The battle between every startup and incumbent comes down to whether the startup gets distribution before the incumbent gets innovation.”³ This sounds a little harsh at first glance, but let me explain. Whether we are talking about content

3 Alex Rampell, “Distribution vs. Innovation,” Andreessen Horowitz, November 5, 2015, <https://a16z.com/2015/11/05/distribution-v-innovation/>.

or product, Rampell’s point still stands that already-successful companies essentially leverage their distribution to reduce the likelihood of any newcomer entering into their space to disrupt the market. These incumbents can only have competition if their distribution is stripped. Any “innovation” that comes from a startup competitor will simply be used by the incumbent.

Take TikTok as an example. In September of 2022, TikTok added a new feature to allegedly squash burgeoning French social media app BeReal. The new feature, called TikTok Now, functions in nearly the same way as BeReal. The feature invites users to snap photos from the front or back camera at a random time each day. It’s not that TikTok is better than BeReal. It’s that TikTok already had the distribution, and its ability to generate more revenue rests with its larger audience. So, as Rampell rightly argued, startups need to focus on distribution first prior to innovating. Otherwise, they face their ideas being—the lawyers are advising me to say—borrowed.

The same thing happens with content marketing. Two content marketers can create the exact same words, but one of them has a bigger audience, and the one with the bigger audience is likely to generate more revenue. The other person is left scratching their head and wondering why their amazing content led to nothing.

Distribution itself is an opportunity for revenue generation.

When I talk about the opportunity for revenue expansion offered by distribution, it cannot be overstated that tremendous financial gain is at stake. To demonstrate how, allow me to share an example from my company, Foundation Marketing. In a blog titled, “These SaaS Companies Are Unbundling Excel—Here’s Why It’s A Massive Opportunity,”⁴ I felt I had hit on something important for the business world to see.

Everyone is familiar with Microsoft’s Excel. It’s a popular program we learn in school. Entire industries operate on the back of Excel. My hypothesis was that there’s an opportunity for brands and businesses that utilize Excel to create use cases specific to their industry, such as invoices or CRMs (customer relationship management). Using their use cases, they could develop a niche-specific product because, of course, riches are in the niches. These products could be unbundled from Excel, the way Tinder was an unbundling of the “Missed Connections” of Craigslist.

Once I posted this piece, I linked it in a few Tweets, seeded it on LinkedIn, and uploaded it to Hacker News. Within

4 Ross Simmonds, “These SaaS Companies Are Unbundling Excel—Here’s Why It’s a Massive Opportunity,” Foundationinc.co, July 22, 2022, <https://foundationinc.co/lab/the-saas-opportunity-of-unbundling-excel/>.

a matter of minutes, it was shared hundreds of times on LinkedIn and thousands of times on Twitter, and it continues to be shared.

I generated eight customer leads within a month. One client, then a stranger, held a brief phone call with me, started briefing me on their company's product, and then shared a \$250,000 opportunity worth of business with me. Not a bad outcome for a few hours' work. Create once. Distribute forever.

This type of life-changing money is available to you, too.

You should know that I did this when I was twenty-eight years old. Now I'm much older with a lot more gray hair, but I've reused this single piece of content in a playbook of distribution to generate millions of dollars in business for my company—all by simply embracing basic distribution principles.

If you don't distribute your content consistently and systematically, especially when you're just getting started, you will lose out to those who are louder or have worked to generate a large audience. And the importance of distributing your content surgically to outduel the modern content landscape will only get more important. There's more content, competitors, and distribution than ever before.

Zuckerberg's "Law of Sharing"

The modern content landscape is always changing, but not many recognize how dramatically.

When you create a piece of content, you're making an investment. You want what you've created to have a return. You want it to help people. You want it to drive conversions. You want it to drive sales. You want it to have a positive impact on your business, however that might apply to your situation. The reason? The time that you invest into your content asset is something that will generate an ROI (return on investment). Time and time again, content creators and CEOs are disappointed when their great content marketing is met with silence. Their expectation of its ROI collapses like a flan in a cupboard. How quickly is the landscape changing?

In 2011, while talking at a small conference, Mark Zuckerberg introduced the "Law of Sharing," which is the idea that the amount of online sharing doubles every year. This doubling will continue at that pace for the rest of eternity.

Do a gut check. Think back to 2011 and gauge for yourself. When I reflect on this, it's safe to say there is a lot more online sharing now than there was in 2011. The reason is simple. Millions of us have devices in our pockets that can share anything. You can take photos or even

record a video, edit the content, and publish it in a matter of minutes right now.

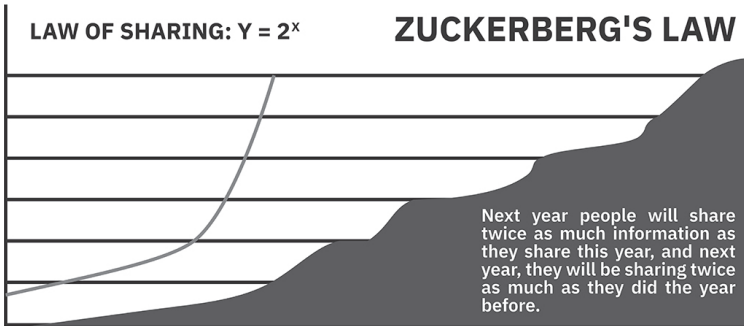


Figure 2.1

Back in the day, maybe somewhere in the 1990s, if you wanted to create photo content to share, you would need to operate a film camera, wait until the roll ran out, take that film to a local store, wait a few days for the pictures to be developed, return to pick up the pictures, scan them for digitization on your home computer, and then upload them to a website. But not everyone had websites and scanners. What was more likely was sliding the photos into a photo-book and sharing that album with the people that visited. So, if it were the 1990s and you had photos you wanted to share, your immediate family might see them around the holidays. Cameras didn't exactly have the distribution they used to, did they?

Now things are different. You can snap a photo of anything and share it with the world instantly. Cats, coffee, food, or this book's cover. You could take a selfie with this book and immediately post that photo to X (formerly known as Twitter), LinkedIn, Instagram, or the social media platform of your choice to show people what you're up to. Do it! I'm serious... I dare you! Take a picture with this book, tag me—@TheCoolestCool—and I would be very grateful for it. More people need to understand the power of distribution, and your share could help one of your friends or peers uncover new opportunities.

The point is that people are sharing and consuming at increasing rates. As more and more people come online, with inventions like satellite internet constellations on the verge of giving universal internet access across the globe, more and more people will be connected to devices. The frequency of online publishing hits all-time highs every year. As a result, brands are up against more noise than ever before when they press publish on a new asset.

Things are noisy. So how do you stand out? You stand out by embracing distribution. Further, as I will detail in Parts 2 and 3, you need to distribute well. You can't assume that publishing something and leaving it in one spot will allow users to happen upon your piece among the sea of stories flooding the internet every single day. There is too much competition.

REASON 2: MORE COMPETITION THAN BEFORE

Embrace distribution because you are competing with more creators than ever before. It's easier than ever to create software, build a following online, and launch a small business or start a freelance company. Creating a business in general has never been easier. There are multiple reasons why. First, as generations that grew up with modern technology enter the working world, their skills translate easily to the age of content. But also, barriers to entering the entrepreneur's or a creator's worlds are at an all-time low. Give someone a bit of wifi, good coffee, and a vision, and they can build something special from a laptop or phone.

In the past, it was expensive to launch a software company or create an amazing piece of content. There used to be lots of specialty equipment that, because of their niche functions, required a range of professionals. Now, anybody can use a phone to write a blog post, record a podcast, or shoot a video and then edit it to professional quality and post it to their desired distribution channels—all within that same device.

In 2011, there were around 150 marketing technology (martech) companies in existence. Today, that number has ballooned to more than 9,500 companies. No need to pull out your calculator, I'll do the math for you. That's

a 6,233-percent increase. The number of total martech companies will only continue to grow as technology keeps changing. This rise in new businesses, new technologies, and new innovation is what you're competing with.

Here's something else that you're competing with: the teen up the street. A recent survey found that 54 percent of Americans aged thirteen to thirty-eight want to become a social media influencer.⁵ In that same study, 30 percent of kids in the UK listed "YouTuber" as their top career choice. Whether you love it or hate it—the world wants to create. And content creation and its importance are only going to continue to grow and become more prevalent as time goes on.

Because of this surge in the creator economy, you again are up against a plethora of people looking to capture the attention of your ideal audience. And, as I discussed earlier, it doesn't necessarily matter how strong or weak your competitors' content or products might be. Their ability to distribute supersedes the content, in many ways. Marc Andreessen, the Co-Founder of Andreessen Horowitz, a VC firm that invested in a few startups that knew a lot

5 Baz Macdonald, "54% of Young People Want to Be Social Media Influencers—Is It a Bad Thing?" 1News, September 29, 2022, <https://www.1news.co.nz/2022/09/29/54-of-young-people-want-to-be-influencers-is-it-a-bad-thing/>.

about distribution—like Stripe, Instacart, Databricks, and OpenSea—summed it up this way: “The general model for successful tech companies, contrary to myth and legend, is that they become distribution-centric rather than product-centric.”⁶

Every day, people are getting emails from people all over the world, asking them to check out a demo, a product, read a piece of content, or give them feedback on something. You are competing with all of that. As every day passes, more and more competition is actively and intentionally going after your audience.

Promoting your company and distributing your content becomes the necessary tool to set yourself apart. So you need to not only embrace the process but think about *how* to distribute it. You can’t just press “publish” and wait. Don’t forget the revenue expansion at stake. You have to publish and then be aggressive, if not relentless, at spreading your stories and getting your content in front of the right people.

In total, and because there is so much to compete with, you need to ensure two things:

6 Elad Gil. “Where to Go After Product-Market Fit: An Interview with Marc Andreessen,” Future.com, July 20, 2018, <https://future.com/go-product-market-fit-interview-marc-andreessen/>.

1. That you're producing and creating high-value content, and
2. You're distributing in channels where your audience is spending time.

Don't worry. I'll be showing you how to do and think about both of these later on.

REASON 3: MORE DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS THAN BEFORE

Embracing distribution is crucial because of the multiple opportunities offered by the vast array of modern channels. In the early 2000s, there were limited social media platforms and forums like Reddit, Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), and LinkedIn. However, technological advances have resulted in the emergence of Slack, Discord, Instagram, Twitch, TikTok, and many more.

Each of these newer platforms has steadily garnered the prolonged attention of audiences. As audiences spend their time on more and more platforms, user attention spreads to the many channels and away from the previously few options. Market trends indicate that users will continue to spread onto new platforms.

Every single year, a new channel pops up that captures the attention and minds of millions of people. The increasing

number of social networks has also made it more important for us to invest in distribution not just because the channels exist, mind you, but because these channels are capturing more and more of your target consumer's time. You will need to evolve your strategy with your evolving audience.

“Channel” may be an odd word to use, especially for folks over thirty. But TV channels are out, online channels are in. Less and less time is being spent sitting in front of a TV and more and more time is spent on new, online channels, such as TikTok, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Instagram, and any number of others that have become popular since this book's publication.

Where there is attention, there is opportunity. Make it a point to understand channels and the people spending their time there. So, another answer to the question “Why should I embrace distribution?” is prompted by audience dilution across many channels. With audience dilution part of the challenge, you have to extend your content tentacles beyond a single distribution channel while also adopting a choreographed distribution playbook—but more on that later.

REASON 4: MORE OPPORTUNITY THAN BEFORE

It's easy to be overwhelmed by everything standing in your way. With each passing moment, there is more competition,

more content, more cat photos, more memes, and more everything than ever. How are you going to navigate the complexities of distribution and succeed? By understanding that the opportunity outweighs the difficulty. Embracing distribution means life-changing revenue opportunities.

If you're willing to put in the work and compete with brands willing to get scrappier than you, you can use a think-quick strategy to distribute your content that takes full advantage of distribution channels. You will be focused on navigating international distribution in ways that you have not in the past.

We live in a global world. Your audience is bigger than you might realize. Think about how your life may change if you adopt distribution. In fact, I like to imagine how distribution might change the life of a person with an "ordinary," non-tech job to demonstrate distribution's importance.

Let's imagine the life of a locksmith. Mere decades ago, a locksmith could only distribute to the people who lived in their local, surrounding area. They built their business around a service many found value in. Those in their city or district were the total customer pool. Perhaps the customers were primarily builders and local residents wanting new locks or keys.

But today, thanks to online distribution channels, that locksmith could offer their services and content on a global

level. They could produce how-to videos on YouTube or buying guides on Instagram to spread their story even further. Let's say they wanted to connect with interior designers who then act as a reseller of their locksmithship in many ways. At the time of writing, there is a Facebook Group called Interior Designers with over 478,000 members. By offering products online and creating content that resonates with interior designers this locksmith could grow their sales by distributing their story in this Group. The truth is that the potential audience for this locksmith is bigger than ever.

A sports coach need not be relegated to coaching one team in their neighborhood, thanks to YouTube. A make-up artist need not beautify just the person sitting in their chair, thanks to Patreon. Name any occupation, and there are vast distribution channels waiting to help scale and reach more people.

I am living proof of this growth. As mentioned, I live in Nova Scotia, and not many have heard of this relatively remote area, unless it was from a movie about fishing or rural Canadian life. Yet, I'm able to create content for millions of people and work with the CEOs of billion-dollar companies.

Not only is your reach long regardless of your place, but your ideal audience tends to spend their time in specific corners of the internet. That means you don't have to cast

an impossibly wide net. Instead, you can precisely target your distribution to serve specific groups, even redistributing content that didn't generate traction the first time around. When you do distribute, you can overcome the modern market difficulties of more channels, more competitors, and more noise.

Just think of your possible audience pool. Take Facebook Groups. Every month, there are 1.8 billion people who use Facebook Groups. These groups are filled with people who have interests in all kinds of wide-ranging topics—things like interior design, machine learning, sales, marketing technology, the Philadelphia Eagles (Go Birds!), and BBQ, to name a few.

A nearly two-billion-person audience is available to you with just one feature of one social media platform. As the book continues, we'll cover all of the major online channels. So, if you do not believe your audience is online, I challenge you to see if there's a group or forum that exists where your audience is spending time. And I can say this with confidence: these are audience forums where you should be thinking about how you can capitalize on distributing your content.

Distribution is your best opportunity to realize the vision and dreams for your product, service, or content at large. Embrace it. As LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman

once remarked, “Product distribution is more important than product.”⁷

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE YOUR VALUE

When I look around, I notice that many creators, founders, or content marketers hold themselves back from distributing their work because they underestimate the value of something they've created in the past. To these folks I say this: remember that the one day you decide to share your work, be it three days, three weeks, or three months ago, your audience just might not have been there that day. So, just because it didn't get traction doesn't mean that it did not have potential and that you should call it quits.

Remember my own initial “failure” with my piece about coffee and hip-hop. It was met with crickets the first time I shared it. It wasn't until I put it through a carefully thought-out distribution engine that it reified into something widely read.

Don't be afraid to repromote something you have previously published that didn't get any traction. Too often, that first iteration's lack of success is used as an indicator that

7 Josh Elman, “Reid Hoffman Fireside with Josh Elan,” Boomplay, December 6, 2016, <https://www.boomplay.com/episode/1864646/>.

there is something wrong with the content itself. However, non-engagement is more likely a signal that the content actually needs a better distribution strategy.

Yes, there are challenges. There are more channels and more content than ever before. But there are also more people online than ever. And where there is challenge, there is tremendous opportunity. You should focus on the potential in front of you. You could fundamentally change your life by simply taking an asset that you've created in the past and spreading it online to the right people in the right channels at the right time.

My essay about Excel and SaaS has generated me hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue. Other blog posts that we distributed about brands like Canva, Masterclass, Salesforce, and more have earned millions. And guess what? As you're reading this, our team has probably reshared all of the above somewhere on the internet within the last week, and it will continue to reap benefits. We created these pieces of content once, but we will distribute them forever as they continue to ring the cash register for hundreds of thousands of dollars each month in sales. Amplifying your content means overcoming the mistake of not believing your content is worth sharing.

I want to give you more space to acknowledge the possible apprehensions you feel. It is normal to resist

self-promotion. Distributing content can feel like one is selling themselves at times. I hear you. That's a valid feeling. But you need to overcome some of those mental roadblocks that are holding you back.

On the other end of those roadblocks is a dream life you could have only imagined. In order to free up the path to that dream, I'll move next to discussing the typical reasons people don't embrace distribution. With those reasons identified, we can move beyond them to unlock the power of distribution.