

## Are You Making Content For Your Audience? - Licensing Expo

I think most people when they make content say what's in it For me I'm gonna get likes I'm gonna get a customer I'm gonna get that blue check mark I think the reason I have the career I have is from the first video made about wine on youtube in February 2006 To the stuff I put out today My brain has always thought why would anybody watch this I think something I've been spending a lot of time on recently is the 1st 56 years of someone's life is so formative and I have this hypothesis lately that if you are lucky enough to be born into a family that doesn't have a lot financially but is incredibly happy and loving You've started life in a foundation that gives you a massive advantage because you realize that money is not the answer to happiness And I am that person I was born in the Soviet Union I got very fortunate to come to this great country when I was three years old and life was super hard I lived with nine family members in the studio apartment the size of this stage in Queens we grew up lower middle class the majority of my early childhood but it was a happy household My mom as you mentioned quickly is the hero of my life And she uh instilled incredibly massive foundations for me around kindness and empathy and compassion and all the things I mean literally be friends The IP that I'm building right now on the back of NFTS which will have the biggest booth at this convention in 10 years is really is really really really the seed of how my mother saw the world My mom lost her mom at five grew up in the Soviet Union like real tough life and really showed me all the true answers to the world And so I grew up very very much not entitled My mom was the sweetest as pie but my mom is super cheap and we were poor So everything I ever wanted she looked me in the face and said go get it So lemonade stands washing cars shoveling snow you know I'm I'm built on hard work Uh I think entitlement is a disease I think a lot of people have it today Uh And uh I'm very grateful I don't And um I think we're all by products of our childhood I think there's things that I've had to work on just like anybody else I think as grown ups we can do that You can't just say oh my parents fucked me up you know you've got to work at it but I am as grateful as one can be on earth I've been writing a book in my head I've written a lot of books but the one that I've been holding nearest and dearest is a book that I'm gonna call perfectly parented and I'm gonna talk about how they did it what they did and I hope it uh creates different

conversations because I think parenting is one of the most important conversations in the world Um So I had also incredible parents growing up Uh I my mom same thing Gary was really focused on inclusivity She whenever we had people over whenever we did anything whenever I was invited anywhere she always said did you invite so and so did you talk to So and so um we'd be at an event she'd say inviting this person to the table And um you know I'll just be honest with you when you're a little kid and you're always having to with conversations and invite people places and make sure people are taken care of is slightly annoying And then as an adult you become this person like you know what let's bring this person into my room let's bring this person into the conversation It makes you a great leader It it makes you a great person right You don't take advantage You don't look at me we're going to get into leadership But you know when you grow up with that bedrock and people who actually care about people care about other people's feelings Um I mean again I you know again we we share a lot in common but having great parents um is something that you know I don't take for granted for a second On the flip side there's a lot of people sitting here My father is one of them I love my grandma May she rest in peace but boy oh boy she saw it different The thing that inspires me daily and why I put myself so out there and built the following that I built and definitely why I'm building the friends is we have the capacity to change humans inspired me so much You know we're sitting here as the by-product of some good situations But listen you and I had a bunch of stuff I didn't know my dad at all He worked every day of his life until I was 14 Like you know like everyone's got stuff But taking on the challenge of leaning into optimism and figuring out whether it's meditation exercise counseling uh education the consumption of positive content versus negative content or whatever your path is I I think it's really inspiring that we have the capacity to evolve as well And I and that's what I spend my life on which is I have a level of guilt and gratitude of thinking I had a great situation and I wanna and continue to push the conversation that if one doesn't you have so much capacity to change your outcome and I'm inspired by that I love that All right So let's so so great foundation Yes I mean how do not applaud that great foundation Uh And you always I mean listen we're at the licensing shop we have to talk about licensing and branding and blacking And you have always been a collector um big business collectibles Um You've always been very focused on branding I want to ask you about your personal brand versus your professional brand Uh And then also the fact that you are um you you you've

been obsessed with intellectual property In fact uh many years ago Gary and I were uh talking and we might have been talking about spongebob I don't want to leave Look at me I love intellectual properties one day I'm not gonna buy one or I'm gonna make one I mean that was a long time ago and here we are at the licensing show It's kind of weird Um And you have really thought a lot about this space for a long time So talk a little bit about branding um and talk a little bit about how you got into Then the licensing space I'm 46 years old Um And that means I'm of the age where 19 eighties after school television of the eighties cartoons were driving Nickelodeon is a little late you know I loved Pin Well yes pinwheel I remember early Nickelodeon but Nickelodeon really hit its scaled way that we know it today That's right That's more AJ yes I was more after school He Thundercats transformers my little pony strawberry shortcake the rebirth of GIJ I love strawberry shortcake care bearers And so these were brands that were being built on the distribution of after school television There was a lot that happened in the seventies and early eighties on Saturday morning But if you really look at the mode of mid eighties early eighties after school that was a monster of IP building I was very affected by that Toys R US was like the holy grail I was we were you know again we didn't have a lot of money So on my birthday I got to go there you know wrestling WWF Vince mcmahon built IP through humans There was just a lot going on during that era as a lot of us know So I'm affected by that baseball cards I I like selling things there's a lot of that going on And so I was really affected by that era And then very honestly communication has always come natural to me So not only was I fascinated by he man but I was getting D's and F's in school but getting A's and B's in history because I thought coup d'etats were fascinating Like why would they take the newspaper and the radio station at the same time as the palace Like why does the radio and television the newspaper matters so much so for me to be where I'm at at 46 years old somebody could have easily figured that out at 12 based on what I was paying attention to social media became very natural to me because I knew that that was going to be the new moat of brand building and storytelling I mean why brand why intellectual property Because religion is that the world is only based on stories stories that people have decided to believe in There's not a very big you know this may be emotional for some people And I'm saying this respectfully but the delta between religion and the Marvel Universe is much smaller than people realize especially when you start looking at some of the most successful IP S of all time you break down Star Wars it gets real religious real fast right And

so I think that people are really in a place where they need to attach to the emotions of stories we've done around campfires we do it today on Roblox and Minecraft and everything in between And so I've always been fascinated by it I've always been a collector I was a very heavy toy collector in the mid-2000s I properly felt that sports cards were about to collapse I sold my entire collection it went heavy into toy collecting Uh I was in the right age when ebay came out I've been garage saleing and buying IP stuff for years It's just always come very natural to me to the point where I the level of happiness I have in developing the friends for the rest of my life is profound but it's it's it's when I and I'll tell you why because the Gary B thing kind of sucks Having a personal brand is amazing but it comes with enormous baggage You know you get hate thrown at you you get assumptions about you Uh And you know you're a human being you're you're just taking on for me I've been willing to do that because I believe in kindness and gratitude And I know that I'm a unique communicator and that I can get things into the world and I want to leave it better than I came into it if I can But accountable my character accountable aunt like for me right now the lack of accountability is why so many people are anxious Accountability is an incredible human trait that leads to happiness Yet we've demonized accountability we've demonized merit We created entitlement because we decided to have an era of ninth place trophies And we've created a lot of structures that have demonized losing when actually losing is foundation phenomenal And so for me knowing how I'm gonna make an iPhone game or build in the Metaverse or do children's books or do an animation show on a streaming service around the trials and tribulations of the countable ant if I can affect a generation to think of accountability is cool versus the current generation that wants to point fingers at everything and never point the thumb at themselves I can make the world a better place So so what I know is I've built one of the largest social media platforms in the world off of no distribution in real world All social That's been fun I like it but I don't need you know me I don't need it It's not what I want It's the message that I want And I've used myself as a vehicle The IP allows me to make that 500 X and what I saw faces and I saw people understand like I've got six or seven things I want to put into the earth in a different way I want to show young men that you can build an empire and be kind not a dick So so um before we get there I wanna I wanna go back a little bit just a little bit Uh Yeah Uh because one of the things that I think is so amazing about what is you hit the nail on the head And that is I think one of the things we all love about the business of

brand is emotional connection And for a lot of years this business was very transactional It was looked in and put it on product And song is really about building grounds and you know I enrolled in the licensing industry I came to it at the company I work for I was working in marketing Marketing is about creating consumer connections And the privilege of working across some of the most economic brands in the world like spongebob turtles etcetera is that this means a lot to people a lot and and to your point some of these shows been with us in times that are really really challenging And I think that that's what this business is That's why this is so exciting and that's why you're seeing so much growth And so you know you are literally the perfect person to step into this space because of your foundation about understanding the importance of the brand the importance of the brand Before we go to the firms you are Red Gary let's just take a minute and talk about Gary V Gary Vader Chuck and Gary Lee And uh you know this is a personal question How do you unpack it I mean you are how do you separate that you are a very private person living a very public life and now you're gonna be more public because of what you created And obviously then how how do you distinguish between the two I tell people all the time you're in control like you're in control of what you put out into the world I I deal with it and unpack it very easily I put into the world what I'm willing to share and I don't what I'm not willing to share And too many people get caught up in the game They want likes they want followers they want the blue check mark and what what usually does well kids family stuff but as a private person that's not something I'm willing to share on the flip side I'm willing to be the most intellectually generous around everything that's ever worked for me I think the thing that works for me is when I make a piece of content I think most people when they make content say what's in it for me I'm going to get likes I'm gonna get a customer I'm gonna get that blue check mark I think the reason I have the career I have is from the first video made about wine on youtube in February 2006 to the stuff I put out today My brain has always thought why would anybody watch this Like like why are you watching this Like why is this good for you And for me I have always lived under abundance I'm not gonna talk about the wining company because I can spend the next half hour to win if you don't get it Thank you You know I I respect people's time I don't have entitlement I think I have to fight for it And so I spend a lot of time reading my direct messages and my emails to try to figure out where the temperature is in the world and what are the issues and what are the opportunities What do people struggle with What have I I never talk

about anything I've never done So I think one thing that's really worked for me is I don't talk about stuff I don't know I never tell people to do something I haven't done Go to that because that's really really unusual You will not endorse or talk about anything I'm very narrow I love your recent article and I think I just read where you talked about how people are endorsing entities that they experience Why is that So people a little bit about that it it it's this industry I'll make a really interesting cop You brought it up and I've watched this industry from far for a long time I think the reason the industry is doing better macro is we've become less transactional People are protecting their brand They don't need the brand in every category to maximize the P and L They realize that they make some sort of silly thing for short term money It might hurt their overall thing That's how I've always thought I've been very patient I never do anything that can tarnish me I really work on that I think it's important I don't I just don't know how any level of money is worth you Not putting your head on a pillow at night It doesn't make sense to me it's not how I see the world And so I focus on that I also think the world is abundant I also am incredibly patient You know I spent the 1st 12 years of my career building my dad's business for him I started my company at 34 years old in another company's conference room because we had no money I was 34 before I ever made \$100,000 a year Like you can accomplish a lot Everyone's so anxious everyone wants it so fast Everybody wants to keep up with the Joneses They want to make it now so they can show or enjoy like to me enjoying the process of your career not the money you make from your career so you can then enjoy it And that's the game I play So a lot of us here we're working for companies we're managing teams we're working with colleagues and um you know Gary written a lot of the books that I will tell you again as both a friend and a fan The book he recently written uh which I will talk about the uh called 12.5 is actually incredible It is called uh Exactly Letter Emotional Ingredients I had it I got it It is necessary for business success And this book the minute I got it I said to my not I said this this resonates because it's one he's one of the few people in the industry talking about identity talking about kindness candor and most of the more soft skills which I really agree with you are so undervalued And so I just want you to talk to this room before we get into Uh obviously me I want to talk about your perspective on that So important I think business has a bad name I think we've missed branded business The brand of business is broken I think a lot of people have very honorable very kind business skills and the world thinks business is rough and sharp elbows and nice Like even like it just made me

like jump up a little bit This concept that the world has been pushing on us that nice guys finish last is a travesty It's a travesty that people believe that it makes people behave in ways that they don't have in their soul and it's broken And I think we have to have a new conversation I think hard skills are commoditized machine learning A I many other things that's where the commodity is It's the people that know how to lead too many people lead out of fear It's not healthy it doesn't work in the end And I just think we need to have a more thoughtful conversation I think if you look under the hood and pay attention the most meaningful long term things have been built far more on good behavior than bad behavior you can get short term results through fear and negativity but it is not a sustainable action And I think it's time we talk about it and how many times have you shut down a conversation when you walk past someone's office to comments where they are and someone's being yelled at II I just wrote that down Pam I just need to understand how anybody believes that verbally undressing another human being in a business meeting ever has any reasoning And I just want everybody to hear this I'm not talking about let's do foof foof entitlement Everyone's now thinking about like what about these fucking gen Zers They don't want to do shit No I'm not talking about that I'm not talking about like we have to do stuff Of course I'm talking about people using negativity and and fear as drivers Yeah So many people so many people are struggling when I'm pushing this out because they're worried about entitlement And I understand that it is a fine balance but we just need to have a different combo because you get way more out of honey than vinegar It is documented proof But most of all the thing that bothers me the most is I watch nice people navigate their careers and try to develop less nice skills because they believe subconsciously and consciously that it gets them further and that has to be eradicated I totally agree Let's give a fuck that And I I again I I love the way you're leaving that message and back and forth It's so important OK ma I got the I got the time frame so I'm gonna move to Von So um you just made your dream come true for uh for a long time you dreamt about what Von could be You've talked um about what three you talked about an at T you talked about uh obviously you have been a leading voice in this space Uh And I want to talk a little bit about how was the weekend How did it go for the majority of you that don't know the context this weekend in Minnesota at us Bank Stadium where the Vikings play we had something called Bon It's a really interesting convoluted mixed answer several things One I'm very close to the will family that owns the stadium or or has the owns the Vikings They grew up in Springfield New

Jersey where my dad's wine store is So it was a good relationship Feels family I like doing business with people This one's going to be a loop but it's tying in nicely to what I've said I think America has gotten very red and very blue like very red and very blue I think a lot of people now feel they have to be 100% red and 100% blue in a world where every person sitting here has some level of purple So I'm falling in love with this concept of purple It's where I want to go with my content It's where I want to go with the friends As much as I'm excited about kind do an empathy elephant and patient panda I'm equally as excited about developing ambitious angel and tenacity you know termite and you know competitive clown that like makes kids cry when they lose like you know so I would and so because I want to make it purple competitive Clown is a character and be friends And the main story arc is I think it's good when kids cry when they lose And I think we spent the last 25 years trying to not make them cry stop them from crying not let crying happen It means they care I think being competitive is a massively attractive skill like anything in life anything out of balance is bad but we've tried to wipe it out and and so I have a very purple view on the world I think the deep red deep blue reality of what we're sitting in right now has created incredible levels of non civility lots of angst tons of anxiety and I want to march to purple and that stadium is purple So it was a very secret little thing for me and I love Prince Little Red Corvette is still top 10 songs of all time I need to work on the Jet Super Bowl Fuck the Vikings So you I mean I think let's make it valuable for this crowd Everybody in here is going to figure out how significant the consumer Blockchain is over the next 15 years This audience here is probably NFT curious because there's economics and there's money It's definitely in the air right now We're in a gold rush phase where everything is about the economics The numbers are crazy It's internet 97 just like in 97 and 98 and 99 the stocks were too valued they crashed but the internet and the macro was going to change the world 98% of the NFP projects in the space right now are going to zero They're going to be misoperated People don't know what to do with the IP It's using the short term greed economics but they're not going to navigate IP development and value and they'll go to zero But NFTS consumer nfts will impact every single person in this room for the rest of your lives because the technology is too big Every ticket to every sporting event and concert in seven years is going to be an NFT People are going to buy homes in the form of an NFT Talk about real well When you do real estate you're buying a home that sits on a ledger at the county level or at the state level Like people don't understand

that the consumer Blockchain is a ledger that proves ownership and has smart contract capability This is very very significant we spend lots of money on companies in the middle that provide no value that are just toll booths that we're not going to do that with Because there's now technology no different than people now buy things on the internet and have it delivered to them Even though in 1997 when everybody asked me Gary who's going to buy wine on the internet My answer every time was everybody and every and you know there's some ogs in here in 1997 that didn't click in 2006 When I told everybody that everybody was gonna have a social media account A Twitter They're like this is the stupidest thing I've ever heard of Who cares if you're walking the dog or having a pizza And my answer was everybody and it didn't register to people but that's what humans are We're a bunch of Yenta We want to know people's business you know And so so but more importantly it's the flip side besides our curiosity and wanting to know people need to communicate The reason social media worked is you want to show everybody your new car you wanna show everybody your family is having a great time at Disney It's what people do They used to do it by taking 100 photos coming back and having their four friends come over and look at the photos This just created technology scale The reason people buy BMW S the reason people buy Nikes Rolexes Louis Vuitton Burqa is the same reason everyone's gonna buy NFTS to show and communicate But it's also gonna have utilitarian value The 8000 people 7000 people that came to Bon this weekend in Minnesota were only able to come if they owned a VR So this is gonna change the world It's gonna eat up this conference in 10 years The concept of NFTS whether they're called NFTS or we came up with some new world is going to be the dominant infrastructure of this conference Let me make a more profound statement There's actually no logical sense no logical sense for anybody to establish a IP ever again in book form cartoon form toy form youtube form all of it Well all of it makes more sense to start as an NFT to establish the IP rights on the Blockchain and then you can develop it There is no path to IP building that doesn't start with step one minted on the Blockchain because you get a royalty component for every transaction in perpetuity So definitely going forward brands matter forever Do you know why the world is a religious place Because churches and religious institutions were the fastest mover on the printing press and the printed press changed the world Like this has always been about communication This has always been about communication Everybody here over the age of 45 grossly underestimated the internet 25 years ago every

single person sitting here right now is grossly underestimating NFTS and a lot of people here have opinions about it because of one headline they saw on Twitter or their friends said something the amount of people pam I apologize The amount of people who've spent 50 hours here actually educating themselves on what the Blockchain is What NFTS are what Ethereum is is very far and few between I've seen this rodeo three times in my short career This movie always plays out This conference is grossly grossly underestimating what the fuck is happening Yes I I love that The early pioneers who are establishing IP no different than the 19 eighties were when the storytellers were like wait a minute this cartoon mode is amazing I'm going to do a cartoon to sell these toys at Toys R US This is a moat for IP building So the same DNA that made the production companies and the IP builders understand that this moat of 8382 to 88 of IP building right on television when you think about turtles comic book But those cartoons took it to the stratosphere right And so the people that are getting it right are putting themselves in that position Me yam from World of Women the board a crew We're all getting our bats we've got a lot of work to do There's been \$100 million of vriend sold in the first year on primary There's been 250 million sold in secondary that I make between 5.5 and 10% royalties on every transaction This has happened one year The Friends has bigger and better P and L economics than 98% of this room It didn't exist a year ago but it's not that amazing It's a timing execution thing There's a you said I didn't that's why I'm saying Not amazing because a lot of it is coming from greed On the other side people think it's how they're going to become a millionaire And I'm like keep saying like don't spend money you can't afford to lose slow down Like I love the correction that's happened in pricing the last three weeks because it gets some of the riff wrap out of the system But you have to understand when you're sitting with and you issue NFTS but then you can trigger experiences Every IP in here can do a pop up museum in New York City that only can get into if you have the NFT Like there's so much more You look at the music industry You think about the wealth that Prince or Bruce Springsteen or Michael Jackson or the Beatles created people in music have made so much money because they've had royalties in perpetuity for the first time ever at scale On the consumer end we can do that with IP That's a big deal