



Dave Kustin and Wendy Lieber

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Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Dave Kustin and Wendy Lieber:

Mark Twain once said, "The difference between the almost right word and the right word is the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning". Most businesses are focused, or should be, on doing what they do best. Whether it's manufacturing hurricane shutters, selling construction equipment or providing cloud-based services, their time and energy revolves around bringing these products and services to market in a way that improves the bottom line and satisfies the interests of customers, employees and shareholders. The creation of content, especially captivating and engaging content, is not often an immediate priority. However, consistently choosing the right words in order to connect with customers and convey an authentic message should be front and center of every company's inbound marketing strategy.

Dave Kustin and Wendy Lieber founded ContentBacon in September 2014 with the idea of creating a subscription-based service that delivers exceptional content designed to drive traffic, increase conversions and help business owners tell their unique story. Kustin and Lieber shared their own unique journey from when they first met to their synergistic partnership and how they've grown ContentBacon to one of the "tastiest" content subscription services on the planet.

"We first met in 2012 while going through an Entrepreneurs' Organization (EO) Accelerator Program in South Florida," Kustin said. "We both had our own businesses at the time. I had a branding company and Wendy had a marketing agency. We had a lot in common. We both understood branding and marketing, but more importantly, we both had customers that struggled with producing high-level content on a consistent basis."

"I had gone down the partnership path before," Lieber said. "Previous ventures didn't turn out so well, but I realized that I love building something new with a partner. It's more fun to collaborate with someone else. After meeting at EO, Dave and I started collaborating on a way to combine forces and bring something new to the market. We didn't want a bigger version of what we already had. We were both clear that we wanted to play a bigger game and build something that was more focused and scalable."

At the time, Lieber was doing some content services for her own business and Dave was doing something similar in the video space.

They decided to focus on these two areas and came up with a subscription-based service model. The model was scalable and would

allow them, with the help of recurring monthly revenue, to grow their new business exponentially larger than previous businesses. The name, ContentBacon, was, according to Kustin and Lieber, selected because it's memorable, it creates levity and because bacon makes everything better.

From startup to second-stage

"When we first launched ContentBacon, we were still running our other businesses," Lieber said. "We were able to transition over some customers that were already under a content plan. It was probably around July of 2015 when we realized it was time to put everything we had into ContentBacon. For me, it was an exciting time. It was a chance to use so many lessons learned and things done wrong with Athena Marketing and other past experiences. It was nerve racking, but once we made the decision to focus exclusively on ContentBacon, it was a huge relief and gave us so much focus." Kustin added, "It was definitely exciting. I love building things. It was fun, but it wasn't without its share of pressures and stresses."

Kustin and Lieber don't necessarily wear specific hats. In general, Kustin handles more of the business development work and Lieber has been more involved in the operational aspects of the business, but collaboration and team work drives this dynamic partnership. As such, aside from creating new processes and procedures, ContentBacon has sidestepped many of the standard hurdles that challenge and, often times, derail many startups. Experience, wisdom, a strong partnership and a carefully curated team of talented individuals has allowed Kustin and Lieber to flourish by doing what they do best.

"We turn on your inbound marketing and content marketing programs in a very unique way," Kustin said. "We're not an agency. We're a content subscription service and we fill a void where there's traditionally been a wide spectrum of services and prices without many options in between. We also make everything extremely easy for our clients. All they have to do is read and approve content and our amazing team of content strategists and editors handle the rest. They plan and strategically edit customer content on a consistent basis."

"We believe that every company has a story to tell," Lieber said. "We also believe that most companies are not doing a good job telling their story. We help by telling their story in a compelling way. This adds value, it's educational, it's entertaining and it helps to create their personality online."

ContentBacon has traditionally operated in three verticals: Technology, Healthcare and Professional Services, while recently adding Cannabis to the mix. They typically work with companies that align well with content marketing, have a meaningful amount of time baked into their sales cycle and can differentiate themselves with content. When it comes to their own marketing strategy, Lieber shared that they practice what they preach.

"We blog often, distribute fresh content through lots of social media channels and utilize email campaigns," she said. "We also do workshops, speaking engagements, webinars and other events to educate our audience. That's been super effective for us. We recently became a HubSpot Agency Partner. HubSpot is a marketing automation

platform that allows businesses to manage their digital efforts, CRM, website and other marketing tools under one platform. Businesses that use HubSpot need content to fuel the platform. That's where we come in."

The strategy behind utilizing freelance writers is to have access to a large and diverse pool of writers across the country. Everyone goes through a rigorous testing and on-boarding process before they can write for ContentBacon. Kustin jokingly described the company culture as "sizzling" and "baconized". Clearly, Kustin and Lieber have a sense of humor, but they're also quick to point out that they operate a bullsh*t free zone where employees always act with integrity. The environment is curious and creative, but real and to the point. Daily huddles are the norm and weekly "sizzles" keep everyone on track.

Notable community contributions

In terms of community support and philanthropic activities, Kustin and Lieber are in the early stages of developing an initiative called BaconCares. The idea is to help communities in need. A ContentBacon team member lives in an area of North Carolina affected by Hurricane Florence. The initiative kicked off with a book drive to collect books for schools and retirement communities that were damaged in that part of the state. Through BaconCares, ContentBacon is also doing the same for communities in the Florida panhandle devastated by Hurricane Michael. The ultimate goal is to have a philanthropic effort that supports literacy and ensures that everyone has access to reading and writing. On a personal level, Kustin and Lieber are both involved with Entrepreneurs' Organization and Lieber serves on the Board of Trustees for Women in

Distress, a nationally accredited, state-certified, full service domestic violence center serving Broward County.

What it means to be a Florida Companies to Watch Honoree

"For me, it's something we should celebrate," Kustin said. "To be formally recognized is something I'm grateful for." Lieber added, "So much of what we do revolves around getting our customer's names out there. To be part of something that recognizes us is really special."

"In terms of why we were selected, I think it has to do with the fact that we're solving a problem for our clients and we're doing it in a way that's different and unique," Kustin said. Lieber added, "I think it also has to do with our approach on wanting to educate our clients and deliver real value. We want to make money, but not at the expense of being good human beings. We have a lot of love for our customers, team and the community. We wouldn't be who we are without them."

Looking ahead, ContentBacon is focused on scaling and building a business model to sustain hundreds and even thousands of customers. They want to be a leader in their industry and be known as the brand where people go to get their content.

Advice for aspiring entrepreneurs

Kustin and Lieber both offer up some great advice for aspiring entrepreneurs. "For me, it's a combination of two things," Lieber said. "Of course there's the proverbial 'just do it'. Sometimes you just need to jump in and do it. It's also important to have a community of people to support you through your journey. The EO Accelerator helped us. Don't

go it alone." Kustin added, "Have an amazing partner and have patience."

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