Society of Mentors Meeting

February 15, 2022

Theme:

This call centered on improving your communication. Guest speakers were Austin Gardner, Seth Austin, and Chris Gardner.

Seth Austin’s Testimony {1:40}

His parents were first-generation Christians, so he grew up in church, with family devotions in the home, and hearing that he needed a savior to save him from hell and someone who would love him regardless of who he was. He was always worried about going to hell when he was younger and accepted Jesus as his Savior when he was four, almost five, years old. He was also born with cerebral palsy, so his nickname is “crazy legs,” and he has difficulty walking. When he wanted to be a missionary, many people told him he was not able-bodied enough to do so.

He has been friends with Chris Gardner for ten years now. So when Chris transitioned to his secular job, Seth helped him immensely on how to tell a story, frame his story in a way that made sense to the clients, and transition to his new job. As a result, he took a career that should have taken 18 years to achieve the level he has earned, and he achieved that in two years.

Seth’s Storybrand Journey: {7:30}

It all started because his church needed a website, and they could not afford to build one, so he learned how to make the website for his church. During that process, he began to question what needed to be put on the website. So initially, he used a large church’s website as the basis, but he realized that it didn’t fit for his church. The tone, who they were, etc., didn’t match. So then he had a content problem. He works as a nurse, but due to his leg/back issues, he is always looking for other avenues to make revenue, so he doesn’t have to be so physical at work. So he started building websites to supplement his income.

Many times there is a content problem, so he had to figure out how to make content. He found and read Donald Miller’s book [Marketing Made Simple](https://www.amazon.com/Marketing-Made-Simple-Step-Step-ebook/dp/B07TBXBFHY/ref%3Dsr_1_1_sspa?crid=HX898DPMUOLH&keywords=Donald+Miller+marketing+made+simple&qid=1645736999&sprefix=donald+miller+marketing+made+simpl%2Caps%2C201&sr=8-1-spons&psc=1&spLa=ZW5jcnlwdGVkUXVhbGlmaWVyPUExT1BYWTBaNzBBOUU3JmVuY3J5cHRlZElkPUEwODY0OTc1NFczSVhCN04wTlYmZW5jcnlwdGVkQWRJZD1BMDE1NjcyNEFMMEs3UTRPT1RWTSZ3aWRnZXROYW1lPXNwX2F0ZiZhY3Rpb249Y2xpY2tSZWRpcmVjdCZkb05vdExvZ0NsaWNrPXRydWU=), which is a very condensed book of about 30 other marketing books. It is basically taking an entire marketing education and distilling it down into one small book that a layperson can pick up and run with marketing. That is how he learned to build content for websites. Afterwards he was able to build websites, develop content, and write emails much quicker. It still takes work and time, but he learned to create content and build websites out of necessity.

Seth’s missions background [11:38]

He interned with missionary Bobby Bonner, and he understands raising support, missionaries, the heart of missions, and is one of the most missions hearted men that Chris knows. But, at the same time, he understands what the norm is and has ideas on how to change that.

At 16, Seth wanted to visit the mission field and spend time with missionaries on the field. He met Bobby Bonner, a missionary in Zambia for many years.

Many told him that he was not able-bodied enough to go therefore, it was difficult for him to raise support. However, he called churches where he knew people, booked meetings, presented his burden and what he felt the Lord was leading him to do.

He raised $12,000 for a six-month internship in Zambia. After that internship, he knew he wanted to serve in ministry in some capacity. He didn’t really have the support of a mentor, so he went into nursing to fund his ministry work. He uses other jobs to fund his desire to serve in ministry.

His whole life has been to convince others that he is capable and to gain their trust quickly. In order to do that, he had to learn not to talk about himself too much but not to underplay himself. Be vulnerable, but at the time show authority. Therefore, he was implementing story brand elements into his life before he even realized or knew what he was doing or before he had read the book.

Ideas on how to write prayer letters: [17:20]

Put yourself into this framework: when you are writing copy or presenting something, the most important thing to realize is that the most important person in the room is the person whom you are serving.

The problem he has found when working with businesses or individuals is that most people have no idea whom they are serving, or they are conflicted about whom they are serving.

Most of the time, people write or talk about themselves because, ultimately, they are serving themselves.

[19:00] How to shift that mindset? How to inform others of what is going on without being me-centric? How to make Jesus the hero of the story?

Do you think Jesus thought he was the hero? He is our hero, but he didn’t position himself that way. He had balance between authority and extreme empathy.

If you are familiar with the book, you will know that the only time you get to talk about yourself is in the framework of the guide. If you are setting yourself up as the guide, there has to be a balance between empathy and authority. But it should start with empathy.

As you are writing, you have to ask yourself, ‘why does it matter to the person who is reading the letter?’ Why should they care what you have done? You have to balance discussing what you are doing/have done and how it affects the reader.

Top Mistakes in Missionary Communication: [23:48]

Every time you give me a point, you are handing me a bowling ball. However, someone can only hold a few bowling balls before they all drop, and their attention is lost completely. You need to hone down and have 1-3 points. You should never have more than three.

Christians, in general, when communicating with others Christians use their own language, and that is a problem. So you need to know who your crowd is. Are you talking to a new Christian or a mature Christian who can be a future supporter?

When you are writing your prayer letter, you need to ask who is that going to? Who is your audience? You have a vast audience, so you need to write in a way so that everyone can understand. Make a list of whom you are serving, and then you need to write on the lowest level. So you need to write on the level of someone who doesn’t understand Christian speak.

Focus on communicating so that everyone can understand.

Tone is everything. What is the main call to action? Your tone needs to match what you are trying to convey. But that starts at knowing who you are talking to and communicating on their level.
Presenting the need as a missionary: [35:30]

People support and buy the products that communicate the clearest message. Who are you serving? Are you serving yourself and talking about yourself, or are you serving the other individual? Do what Jesus did and humble yourself down to their level, and meet them where they are at.

Write down who it is you are serving. It will help shift how you talk in your tone until it becomes a little easier. Then use that framework to answer the question of how do I take my subject and put it through that filter so that I can present it that way.

One-liner: Present the problem, solution, and result in a short amount of time: [39:33]

Example:
Most missionaries struggle to connect with donors because they are telling the wrong story, and it is costing them a lot of support. I help missionaries clarify their message so they can tell the right story so they can connect with donors and grow their ministry.

Example:

We take pride in seeing our clients spending their time and their money doing the things that they love. That is why we have dedicated ourselves to taking the stress off of you by helping you develop and implement a custom investment plan that positions you for the life you want to create.

Identify the problem, provide a solution, and provide a possible result.

What is the internal problem? [42:20]

The most important question you can ask is who are you serving?
Then ask, what is their problem?

For example: External problem: the world is dying and going to hell.
Based on who you are serving, you need to think about how that external problem affects them.

What is their problem:
People are dying and going to hell, and they feel convicted that they should care, but they don’t.
They know that they should at least care about it.

Maybe they feel convicted.

Maybe they want to help, but they don’t know how to help.

Maybe they are blind to the problem because they don’t see it.
Maybe we have defined care as simply writing a check. But that is not the answer.

How to communicate your message in order to recruit young people to serve Jesus? [47:05]

Age group 15-25-year-olds.
Explain to them the problem. Reword it in a way they can understand.

They need to think about how it affects them. How does it make them feel?

They need to feel purpose.
You need to help them see their purpose.

Webpages: [56:15]

Your website needs to explain these questions clearly and concisely:

What is it that you do?
Why should I care? How does it help me?
How do I get involved?

His website pushes viewers to one centralized location to get them involved. All other materials drive them to that location.

What is the best hour to send out prayer letters via email? [1:04:35]

2-4 pm on Wednesday or Thursday.

Best time to post on Facebook is typically around the lunch hour on Wednesday.

With emails, you are competing with everything in their inbox.

The only thing you can control is the time of day your email is sent and the subject line.

If they open your email and don’t unsubscribe from your email, that is considered a success.

How much content is the limit? How much is too much to engage? Too little? [1:07:17]

As long as the content is good, there is never too much. Content for content’s sake is not good. Focus on one solid set of content at a maintainable pace.

How do we find out what people find engaging so we can provide content to fit their needs? [1:08:10]

Throw the content out there and see how it lands. The idea is to keep them reading and engaged. Correcting who you are serving and correcting your tone is very laborious and takes time.

Do we need less text and more pictures? [1:09:34]

No. Everything you do needs to support the text. Pictures need to match what you do and what your text says.

Nobody cares about you; they care about what you are doing.

How do we find the best channel of communication? [1:11:18]

Figure out who you are serving. For whom are you writing your letters? To whom are you talking? Who are you targeting? Figure out on what level you need to communicate. Figure out what problem you are helping them solve. Whoever the main person that you are looking to communicate with will determine the channel you will use, i.e., Facebook, email, tik tok, Instagram, texting, Twitter, etc.

Over 40 years old - Facebook. 15-20-year-olds - tik tok.

But you have to ask if the young people you are trying to reach, do their parents allow them to have tik tok, or are they going against their parent’s wishes to view it, which would change the time of day they are viewing it.

You have to know who the audience is, what their life is like, when do they check social media, etc. Then, ask how do you make content to engage that audience.

You can create content to address a specific problem. Then, pick one channel. Then, reproduce the content onto other avenues.

How would you apply these principles to starting a church? [1:14:07]

Know who you are serving. Find your core team to help you start the church. Do research. Figure out who you are targeting. Then serve them.

How would you identify the internal problem of the people you are trying to reach? [1:14:48]

Pin down the external problem. Then, ask the question: how does that problem make them feel? To be successful, you will spend much of your time trying to address people’s feelings towards the actual problem.

Final thoughts: [1:15:30]

Marketing and learning the principles is not easy and not accomplished overnight. It will take time. The book is a great place to start.

Look at other people’s content and learn to critique their work which will help you critique your own material.

Watch movies/books/content and pick it apart and start practicing.

Book/Podcast Recommendations: [1:20:17]

Donald Miller: [Building a Storybrand](https://www.amazon.com/Building-StoryBrand-Donald-Miller-audiobook/dp/B072J8WRND/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=2EEBLFOGIKFUS&keywords=storybrand&qid=1645757840&s=audible&sprefix=storybrand%2Caudible%2C257&sr=1-1)

Ray Edwards: [How to Write Copy That Sells](https://www.amazon.com/How-to-Write-Copy-That-Sells-audiobook/dp/B07VHRMKXX/ref%3Dsr_1_3?keywords=ray+edwards+how+to+write+copy+that+sells&qid=1645757626&sprefix=ray+Edwards+%2Caps%2C324&sr=8-3)

Ray Edwards’ Podcast: [The Ray Edwards Show](https://rayedwards.com/podcast-archives/)

Chris Smith: [The Conversion Code](https://www.amazon.com/The-Conversion-Code-Chris-Smith-audiobook/dp/B01N9Y1W7K/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=2S5HVNO2UGSUM&keywords=the+conversion+code&qid=1645653692&sprefix=the+conversion+cod%2Caps%2C219&sr=8-1)