

Achieving Success in the Outdoor Industry

*Accomplishing Your Goals of Content Creation,
Pro-Staff Sponsorships, Audience Building & Beyond*



by Dustin Vaughn Warncke

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eBook Cover Images

Upper Left: Blake Marshall with King of Eights Outfitters, Upper Right: Dustin Warncke and a Louisiana Marsh Redfish, Lower Left: Dustin and Jackson Warncke with a Texas Largemouth Bass on Lake Conroe, Lower Right: Youth Hunter Corey and a 6x6 Central Texas Bull Elk at DB Hunting Ranch

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"The glue that holds all relationships together is trust, and trust is based on integrity."

— Brian Tracy

"Well done is better than well said."

— Benjamin Franklin

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

— Maya Angelou

"Until you become completely obsessed with your mission, no one will take you seriously. Until the world understands that you're not going away —that you are 100 percent committed and have complete and utter conviction and will persist in pursuing your project —you will not get the attention you need and the support you want."

— Grant Cardone, from The 10X Rule: The Only Difference Between Success and Failure

"You were born to win, but to be a winner, you must plan to win, prepare to win, and expect to win. You can have everything in life you want, if you will just help enough other people get what they want."

— Zig Ziglar

"If you really want to do something, you'll find a way. If you don't, you'll find an excuse. Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment. "

— Jim Rohn

We are shaped by our thoughts; we become what we think.

— The Buddha

5 Tips for Getting Your Mindset Straight

- 1. Timing Will Never Be Perfect**
- 2. Get Used to Being Judged**
- 3. Embrace the Process**
- 4. Celebrate the Small Wins**
- 5. Own Your Message**

The Road to Success in a Fiercely Competitive Industry

It's been a few years since I have written an eBook but I have seen many benefits and successes for writing one since I wrote my first three eBooks in this outdoor industry space. My goal in these books I write is rather simple and humble. I am here to help! Over the past decade and then some, since I first started my work in this outdoor space, I have helped launch and market national and regional TV shows, streaming video platforms, outdoor podcasts, outdoor YouTube channels, outdoor magazines in both print and digital, outdoor blogs and more. Many people I have mentored and who have read my work have gone on to achieve even greater success than I have personally experienced or might ever experience in their niche. I applaud every one of these people and congratulate the ones I talk to on a regular basis every chance I get. You see, there is an abundance of opportunity out there and, even though this marketplace is ever expanding and the competition is sometimes very fierce, there is room for all of us at the table.

My goal when I started with all of this was that if I made any kind of headway or had any level of success, I would give back generously. That has been a "God-thing" over the years. The more people I have helped, the more successes I have realized for myself and that is what happens so many times when you give back to others.

Much of what I predicted in my first eBook, *The Outdoor TV Show's Guide to the Industry*, has come true. Smartphones have become a "second screen" for viewing outdoor TV shows, listening to podcasts, reading blogs and magazines as well as consuming other types of content. Streaming services from Roku, Google, Apple and Amazon have replaced the way we watch TV forever. Now you don't have to tune into huge TV show networks and pay for premium cable or satellite service subscriptions to enjoy your outdoor programming. For example, I watch the

Hunt Channel and Pursuit Channel on my Roku streaming stick for free when I actually take the time to watch a show since there are so many quality programs on YouTube or Carbon TV, just to name a couple of platforms. My point is, the way we consume media is dramatically changing and we must adapt if we want to find success with outdoor companies and your desired audience.

I work for several guides and outfitters and several other businesses inside and outside of the outdoor industry. Aside from all of this, my main work is with Texas Fish & Game Publishing Company which is a privately-owned print and digital magazine, blog and newsletter. I have a few to several feature articles each year in this publication but also numerous blogs written at www.FishGame.com, the magazine's website and digital content platform. I have been leading the charge in digital there for years now. I hold several pro-staff positions with product and service companies in the outdoors and know how to sell to eat as that is what I have done my **entire** adult career, both off-line and on-line. I may not be the most successful and popular outdoor personality you have encountered but I like it that way. Much of my work is done behind the scenes and I specialize in helping others realize their goals and dreams as part of my work.

All of this to say, the concept behind this book is simple: Always work hard towards your goals and keep providing value at the front of whatever you do in this outdoor space or any space you are in, for that matter. As I have written about in my past books, the competition is hardcore in this realm. Digital media access has further complicated this and made it even harder to find success. If you have a smoking hot body or pre-existing following on social media or elsewhere, your road to establishing an audience or fan base and the prospective sponsorships you desire may be easier. I did not have that. I started literally with nothing. My answer? Reach people at every level of media consumption and become an authority and expert in your niche.

If you want to find out how to shoot a compound bow or crossbow with proper fundamentals, you will find my videos on YouTube to be top ranked. If you are interested in urban/suburban bowhunting or bowfishing, I have that covered too. Most of the websites I build and do active search engine optimization work with

rank somewhere in the first page of Google search results for the keywords I specify. Most everyone I coach and mentor goes on to create a clear pathway to success on many levels. In other words, I don't play the game to lose and you shouldn't either.

I was selected for a guest interview on the *Bowhunting Freedom* podcast with host Philip Havens back in 2015 after seeing Phil on a Periscope live feed randomly one day. I listened to nearly every single episode he had and thoroughly read his career guide, [The Bowhunter's 7 Step Guide to Career Freedom](#), as well. At the time, I was realizing some success in my outdoor brand but in a day job I absolutely hated. I was "invited to leave" that job in mid-December 2015 and it was the best thing that could have happened to me in hindsight, although I was heartbroken when it first happened. You see, this turn of events "forced" me to make my dream of working in the outdoor industry full-time a reality and I have never looked back.

I started my own podcast, YouTube Channel and wrote my first three books all on my own. I only started all of this in the spring of 2011, a mere 7 years from when I wrote this eBook. How did I get started in producing media? Long story short I had won a bowfishing trip with GARQUEST Bowfishing Adventures through supporting an annual silent auction at a Hill Country Bowhunters event, a local 3D archery club just down the road from where I live. Marty McIntyre, the owner of this guide service, turned me on to the guys at Mac & Prowler's TV Show, *Hunting the Hunters* and it turned out they were looking for a new marketing guy. I started learning video editing in 2011 to help Marty gain a YouTube, website and social presence and started shooting and editing myself on camera in the spring of 2012. I developed from there and honed my skills to make my productions the best they could be, within reason.

I had great mentors along the way and still do. To be quite honest, in my effort to pass the passion on to you, I hope to be your coach in this journey and that you would consider hiring me to help you after you have read this eBook. More on that later. Thank you for watching, reading and listening to my content and I look

forward to embarking on this journey with you, wherever you are in your walk in the great outdoors realm.

Direction is Always More Important than Speed

It is a simple universal truth: How fast you go matters not if your direction is wrong. Over the years of my work in the outdoors space, I have encountered many people who have good intentions but no action to back them up. They mean well but they go nowhere near accomplishing what they initially set out to do. That all being said, I also see many people pounding the pavement, working for something, but they don't know what they want. To be successful, especially in this industry, you must be crystal clear on your goals and take massive action to get there. You probably already knew this simple fact but might have needed a reminder or a gentle nudge in the right direction. After all, always remember that the road to hell is paved with good intentions and, also, good intentions alone don't put money in the bank or success in your portfolio.

It is a sad state of affairs to see so many folks try and fail at something once or twice and then give up for good, thinking they can't do it. This industry has seen more than a few commercial failures. What is interesting is the study of the people who are successful in what they do in the outdoors.

When I started this journey, it wasn't about being rich or super famous. I wanted one thing many people don't have in the work they do with and for others – I wanted freedom. I wanted to do something I loved but I wanted my freedom at the same time. I began to realize that multiple roles in this industry were my calling. I could take the whole host of skills I had learned during my journey and put them into action and help many businesses and brands succeed.

What do YOU want? Why do YOU want it so bad? Be crystal clear in this definition. See yourself having success in the future. Write down your goals and look at them every day. Remember, it's not the finish line you are looking for in

this walk. It's all about the journey in realizing your goals and dreams. Success leaves clues along the way.

Life will always have its challenges and obstacles to overcome. Your choice is simple. Either find a way to make something happen or simply find an excuse not to do it. You can easily find an excuse. The rubber meets the road when you stand up for what you want and work hard, over time, to get there.

Stand Out! Creating Content in a Loud Marketplace

This will probably be the largest chapter in this eBook. Fear not though, the content is solid and worth the read. No matter what you do in the outdoor realm, you have to have some sort of content creation thread to get yourself and your brand noticed and become a subject matter expert in your field or niche for your product or service. Always put your best foot forward in front of others. While some like to complain about all of their problems and air their proverbial dirty laundry for all to see on social and other channels, your goal should always be to provide value to others and help educate and inspire those that follow you in whatever you do. Remember, someone important to your future success may be watching what you do if you are publicly putting it out there for the world to see.

Our thoughts and actions, whether they be good or bad, usually have an impact somewhere in the future. Think of a pond and a drop of water falling in the middle of it. What you think and how you act ripple like that drop's effect on the pond. In the long run, however you play your cards, people will be effected. It might not be noticeable right away but this law is nevertheless true.

What is your intent for what you produce? Who is your audience and what do you want them to learn? Who is your message going to impact and why will it impact them? These are all good questions to keep in mind as you produce posts, videos, podcasts or a number of other content creations.

When I first learned how to create quality content and put so much of it out for the world to see, people couldn't help but notice me. Further down the road, I learned how to create content in nearly every medium and, eventually, you should as well. The goal here is to grow your audience and make yourself known.

There really are only two groups that are in media today: those who use media to market and get themselves well-known in a niche and spectators that just read,

watch or listen for education or entertainment. How do you know you are making an impact is usually defined by how much engagement (think Likes, Shares and Comments) you have and how many haters and critics jump on your case. I have more than a few haters and I am glad to have them along with fans and supporters as they are a litmus test to show that I am making a difference in the world.

One thing I try to do with individuals and companies that come to me looking for purpose is to ask them what the significance is in what they are doing. If you follow my work, you will notice four non-profits I work with: Camp Agape Texas (a Christian bereavement camp for kids and families), Crosswater Outfitters (a Christian fishing ministry focusing on wounded military soldiers and their families as well as international students), Hill Country Bowhunters (a 3D archery shooting club dedicated to getting youth and families participating in the archery sports) and Lone Star Bowhunters (an organization of bowhunters dedicated to see archery sports grow in numbers through events). I work with all of these organizations in many ways and serve different roles in each one. The main point of this is not to brag but to show that all of these non-profits bring my life significance in many ways and, by serving them; I help in some way to make the world a better place to live. What you create in social or other media channels has to have significance and purpose for you. That way you will be able to stay engaged and not rush through and burn out. We are running a full marathon here, after all, not a quick race.

I try to produce content for all of the non-profits I work with and provide solid value for them as a result. Over the years, this has given me practice on what I do elsewhere. I now connect with people in every realm: social media, podcasts, video and written word (articles and blogs). You don't have to be good at all of these to get started or grow but it does help to strive towards reaching professional levels in all of them as a goal. Here is a breakdown of each one in detail:

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Video: It is a well-known fact that people are reading less and watching more videos in our current culture. I have been creating videos for a variety of platforms for many years now. For example, I have been to Industry Day at the Range with SHOT Show coverage for a couple of years now. This is where I produce content exclusively for Texas Fish & Game's blog, YouTube channel and website.

As I have written in my previous eBook, *The Outdoor TV Show's Guide to the Industry*, just about anyone can get started in producing videos. If you don't have one yet, invest in a good HD or 4K video camera with audio inputs. I bought my camera used and still use it to this very day for certain projects. It didn't cost much and it makes good HD quality videos. Also consider investing in a wireless mic set up and a good solid tripod for your camera. These are all things you can invest in now and upgrade later as you grow your reach.

Create videos that educate, entertain, tell a story and show how and why you use the products and services you recommend. That is the basic message I try to get across in every video I create. Don't make videos just for you or a sponsor but always keep your audience in mind. How can you help them?

I started filming, editing and producing my own video content for several platforms in 2011 and you can see most all of it on my [YouTube channel](#). Now I may not have a million subscribers but I do have a dedicated audience and numerous videos with tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of views on my channel. And there are other places my videos are streamed on as well. Many of my videos have also been featured in web TV platforms that I have helped launch or contributed content to over the years, as well as Vimeo, another social video hosting platform. You want to be in as many places as possible but, remember, what you are looking for here is engagement and a dedicated audience that comes back to you over and over for more content. That is what sponsors and other small and large players in our industry like to see.

Platforms like YouTube, Carbon TV and so many others are replacing traditional TV with on-demand, watch-when-you-want-to, style of programming. Roku is the platform I currently use to consume outdoor TV shows on my television. You can

live stream a wide variety of TV shows and films on their OWN respective Roku channels as well as watch popular networks' live stream and most all of this is FREE to the public. In working in the media sales business, I have found that many very prominent sponsors in our industry have stopped writing \$50,000 and \$100,000 or more checks as title sponsors of traditional TV shows. In many cases, they have reallocated that money to sponsored digital programs or other digital platforms as engagement and return on investment is more measurable and the reach can even be larger than traditional TV networks. It is no secret that people are consuming content on their own terms in today's world with the advent of DVR's (digital video recorders), on-demand programming with Smart TV's, Roku, Amazon Fire TV and Apple TV along with streaming services such as Amazon Prime Video, Netflix and Hulu. These are just some of the major players. Just think of the way you watch video programming these days compared to just 5-7 years ago. The marketplace has changed and we must change with it.

Articles/Blogs: I have a lot of written content in both print and digital forms that I produce on a regular basis. Like with video, the more content you have out there in the world, the better chances people will find you and come back for more content later. Consider starting a blog if you don't have one yet and posting on it on a regular basis. You can also approach existing blogs that have experienced some successes and ask about being a contributor or guest blogger for them. This is how good relationships are formed. Give content abundantly if you are just starting out. Paychecks come later after you have a proven track record of engagement and overall success with your writing. Many full-time writers will tell you that there is not a lot of money in the writing realm. That is why I am highly diversified in my income streams and broadcast channels for any given media content.

If you want an example of how I run my blog, [check it out here](#). For examples of some feature articles I have written, check those out on [my website](#) and the [Mac & Prowler TV Show](#). For my contributing blog work at [FishGame.com](#), you can [check that out here](#). I write several features each year for *Texas Fish & Game Magazine* which is available in print and digital versions and has an audited paid circulation of over 100,000 at the time of this writing. TF&G even has their own

mobile app that downloads the digital version of the monthly magazine for subscribers as well as news on their blog (The National News of Texas) for readers every day! How cool! My written work can also be found in non-profit organization magazines which come out annually such as *Lone Star Bowhunters* and *Legacy Outfitters*. Don't feel like you must come up with brand new content for every publication, whether in print, digital, or for the blog you write for. Many of us seasoned outdoor writers recycle and repurpose content for different audiences and programs. This is perfectly fine so long as you retain the rights to your content and I do that in most every realm I write in throughout this industry.

Podcasts: I started my very own podcast, which I call ***The Best of the Outdoors*** podcast, in 2015 to reach a different market that likes radio, audiobooks and other audio-only content. ***The Best of The Outdoors*** podcast started as my own creation and, in 2016, I merged it with Texas Fish & Game and FishGame.com's audience which you can [check out here](#). I love podcasting. Aside from doing my own show, which I thought was a good idea when I wrote my TV show book, I love listening to several shows in "podcast land" and have been a guest on many other shows. I have also helped launch quite a few outdoor podcasts as I have all of the skills and equipment to help others do so. Live radio, in its current form, is so limited compared to what a podcast offers. Think about it for a moment. You can download any show you desire, for free in most cases, and listen to it on your own time on-demand. It's like having a DVR for audio instead of TV and, with a majority of shows out there, it doesn't cost anything to listen.

At the time of this eBook release, I do a new show on my podcast every two weeks. My audience has come to expect this and my reach continues to grow. I usually get subscribers and other listeners seeking me out and following me in social media with each show I release. I also turn each podcast I produce these days into a video for my YouTube audience and embed the podcast player in a blog post at FishGame.com as well as sending it out on my feed for subscribers to download. My show is free to download or stream and I sell sponsorships to cover my time in producing each episode. Sponsors can choose an ad spot, live read style, or can take over the whole show exclusively and have me interview one of their pro-staff members or other folks representing them as guests.

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The challenge for us as content creators is to build our audience and keep people coming back for more as there is more competition these days than ever before. What you are really leveraging in any space you create content in is people's attention and engagement. You want them to like and share your content with their circle of influence. You want them to interact with you. I make it a point to respond to just about every comment I get on my YouTube channel and my audience appreciates that. The one exclusion for comments I make is for "haters" and, as I have mentioned before, haters are a good base to have around as you know you are making a difference in the world when they come out at you!

Speaking of haters, I have a good story to write here. Back in 2014, I had been filming my urban whitetail crossbow hunts for a couple of years on a private property in Brushy Creek, near Round Rock, here in Central Texas close to where I live. I had one local guy that came across a friend of mine at a local drug store ask if he knew me. He confirmed that he did know me and the guy proceeded to tell my friend how much he hated my guts and that all I shot were inferior deer, some of which he thought were illegally harvested.

Fast forward to a couple of weeks later when our local game warden came to visit me at home to measure one of the bucks from one of my video hunts. I gladly invited him in and we measured the buck's now European mount together. You see, we have a 13-inch inside spread rule in Williamson County. Basically, your buck must have an inside spread of 13-inches or greater in this and other counties to be legal. This one measured at 17-inches. The game warden shook my hand, complimented me on my video work and went on his way. Before he left, he tipped off who turned me in. I was bitter for a while but you either stay bitter or get better in the long run so I decided to reach out to him personally and confront him on what happened. As I later found out, the guy who turned me in was put up to it by the guy my friend met at the local drug store one evening. He had it in for me big time. Long story short, the hunter that turned me in also had an outdoor TV show and we eventually made up, settling our differences. It turns out he was manipulated into calling the law on me by this guy that hated me so much. That

hater is still out there and I imagine that he is one of my “thumbs down” contributors on YouTube with most of the hunting videos I post these days.

Did this situation stop me? Not in the least! It made me grow bigger than my problems and motivated me to keep hunting and fishing hard and documenting every bit of it in video, podcast and written form. I often wonder how many kids this particular hater has introduced to hunting, fishing, archery or other outdoor pursuits and how many non-profits he serves every month. Probably not a lot, as you have to be pretty selfish and miserable to try to do harm to someone like he did to me. I write all this to say that you shouldn't let haters stop you.

Concentrate on the 100 good comments and other feedback you receive, not the one jealous sorry excuse for a deadbeat that tries to pull you down from your level of success.

Content is indeed king and that is what most of the advertisers I work with are looking for these days. Sure, you can buy a magazine ad, a podcast spot, a billboard ad or a website banner position but sponsored content is more engaging and powerful as a way to compel people to take action and purchase a product or service. That, my friends, is the secret sauce of how all of this comes together.

Be great in your content creation. After all, there is greatness inside of you and an infinite creative power inside all of us to create original content, in whatever form, every day of our lives. God has given you a gift. Find that gift and run with it. Give it all you have. Do this with commitment and conviction and great things are sure to follow.

Another thing to note here is that we are wired by God to create. God, in God's infinite totality, is an endless creator and we are a part of God's creation, as a creation of God ourselves. Notice how at this moment of time, every single person looks unique in the world and there are around 7 billion people on the planet right now. There will never be another person like you in the existence of mankind. Yes, I'm getting deep and philosophical here. It's just my nature. In other words, God experiences life through you and other living creatures. You are an expression of God. Over the years of reading and listening, to countless hours of personal development, I have learned that it is always better to create

something new than maintain what you have already created or that others have created with or for you. I used to think that my creativity was limited until I realized that I had unlimited creative ability and could create something new, noteworthy and engaging every day. You have this power too. **USE IT!** Run with it. Shout it from the rooftops, you rock star! You got this!

Branding Yourself for the Outdoor World

It is vital today to be as proficient in as many different skills and in as many realms as possible. The most diverse win the race in this game. Are you well known in your circle of influence? Do people see you as an expert? What do people see when they “Google” your name? If you aren’t finding much, chances are you could use some improvement in the branding department. My goal is to be an authority in the circles I run in and, as a result, people come to me for help starting things like outdoor podcasts, video channels, writing articles and blogs, and more. I try to reach people at every level they consume media and you should too. Not good at something? There is always room for improvement for all of us in this space and everyone can always get better at what they do.

The reason you want to brand yourself is that you want people to seek you out as a person of influence and, hopefully, express a desire to work with you or follow your personal brand in the future. Branding yourself involves reaching people in an audience on their own level, wherever they are in social media or other circles of influence. When I wrote my first three outdoor eBooks, social media wasn’t as hot as it is now. But trends come and go and we must be adaptable to them and not go too far into one single channel, thinking trends will never change and it will always be the most popular one. Trust me when I say that the only things that stay the same is our eternal God and change.

As I mentioned in an earlier chapter of this eBook, I play the game to win every day. I am known for working every day to help as many people as possible through as many channels and niche area as possible. I regularly write feature articles and blogs and produce podcasts and videos seeking to educate and inspire and I try to do something every single day of my life to achieve that goal. My intentions are never selfish and yours should be likewise. As I learned in sales training many years ago, “It’s hard to be nervous when your heart is on service.” I try to provide value at every turn, whether that be to a single person or a wide audience. If you do this enough and impact enough people in a positive way through your work, the rest will take care of itself. I started with nothing and grew

a brand in a fiercely competitive niche. If what you put out is of good quality and using solid communication skills, people will follow you on whatever platform you are on.

Think of it this way. Companies need product reviews and your audience needs an education. Why do you consume media in the first place? Why watch, read or listen to begin with? To learn something new? To grow in new ways? To be entertained? There are many reasons. Keep these in mind when you create your content. Always aim to provide value in return for your audiences' time investment in your hunting, fishing or other outdoor work.

The problem I see with many outdoor enthusiast players in the industry today is that they concentrate more on selling than on the process of branding themselves or the products or services they represent. I have always been low-key in my approach to marketing a product or service for a company that I represent because I have learned over the years that people don't want to be proverbially beaten over the head with your message.

The USA today is by far the most "marketed to" culture than in any other time in history. Think about it. You go online to shop for a pair of hunting boots. You may or may not buy a pair right away but what happens next? You see ad after ad in your web browser banners pestering you to death until you finally give in and buy something. In another case scenario, you ask for recommendations on what broadheads everyone likes on social media and pro-staff after pro-staff starts a war on your post about why the product they represent is superior. Enough already!

Present what you have with enthusiasm but don't make it so hardcore and over the top that you turn off your audience in the process. This is a lesson in brand awareness, not selling for selling's sake. People don't like to be sold to or marketed to death but one thing is for sure in human nature: people love to buy. Not only that, they like to buy with the best information available from the most trusted sources in the industry. No one wants to overpay but, even more important, no one wants to be the guy who makes a foolish decision in a purchase. Be that source of knowledge and education and, furthermore, be a

shining beacon of integrity that people know, love, and most of all, trust. Brand and market yourself and what you represent like this. The marketplace will eventually notice the steady runner in the race of sprinters and show-offs out there in cyberspace and elsewhere.

Create Multiple Streams of Everything!

As you have probably figured out I am all about diversification. I multiply while I watch others add and subtract in life. If you want to make a living or gain notoriety in the outdoors world, you must be versatile. I have many streams of income such as selling media, building websites, marketing businesses, producing videos, designing and printing marketing materials, consulting, doing voice over work, and doing a wide variety of other services for a vast array of different clients. Because I live with an attitude of abundance, the money and other perks in life flow easily to me. The key to this plan is to always have an ace in the hole. To create multiple streams of income, you have to create opportunities and, yes, you can create your own opportunities by providing value to the people and businesses you want to work with. It might not always be money and keep in mind, this is a very (and I mean VERY) competitive industry to be wildly successful in financially. That doesn't mean it's not possible by any means. It just means that you need to be able to define success in a number of ways.

Why so many streams and so much massive action? It's simple. If one stream dries up, another one will most likely come through when you need it the most. Merchandising your brand, creating an online e-commerce drop shipping store and using affiliate links in your social channels are just a few ways you can monetize your passion for the outdoors.

When I started my work in the outdoor industry around 12 years ago, I proverbially drew a line in the sand and decided I was going to make my own success. I started a website for [DB Hunting Ranch](#) (located in Central Texas) in the summer of 2006. Now I had limited website editing skills back then but learned as I went and with platforms like Wordpress these days, we have a whole host of better options for that sort of thing than we had back then. The main point I was trying to get across to the owners of DBHR, some of my best friends now, was

that they needed a web presence. It goes without saying in today's world but wasn't as big of a deal back then. Today that website, which I re-built in 2011 and again in 2017, ranks on the first page of Google for popular keywords like "Texas Hunting Ranch" and "Central Texas Hog Hunting." Due to the surge of business over the years, which I played a part in creating, the owners have opened three other businesses that spun off from the hunting ranch: an exotic game animal live sale/capture service, a wild game processing facility and a taxidermy studio. I am helping them open a drop shipping e-commerce online store next to go with their retail store at the processing facility. At the time I wrote this section, I just closed on the largest live sale deal I have ever done and I did it within about 24 hours in two sales to the same client. Now I don't say this to brag but I have learned a lot through this journey with DBHR. I have designed all of their brochures, order forms, business cards, and even still currently handle most all of their outside sales and marketing for all of their businesses. This has opened many other doors in the process. I write all this simply to make the point that you should learn to create your own opportunities. Hard work makes luck. Even if you have to learn along the way, show your value and dedication for those you serve.

I have met many aspiring writers, videographers, photographers, podcasters and others who don't understand that opportunity comes in the form of hard work and dedication. Envision a pair of walking shoes for a moment. Part of this walk is a mental game mixed with hard work in the right direction. I borrowed the phrase from a wise man one time: I don't play checkers, I play chess in this space. There is a big difference between those two games when it comes to mindset and strategy.

When I was just starting out many years ago in all this outdoor media work I do now, Chester Moore Jr., our now *Texas Fish & Game* magazine editor-in-chief, gave me the best advice of my outdoor career when I first met him at SHOT Show in 2013. If you want to be successful in media, or anything else for that matter, do the work you are given first. Do the grunt work for little to no money at first and see where it leads. This might seem like I am saying "embrace the suck" but it's true. Sometimes opportunities are disguised in the form of hard, sometimes grueling, work that no one else wants to do but they can be stepping stones to

your goals and dreams. Suck it up buttercup! You are in this for the long haul and for lasting results.

By the way, I still do that job *Texas Fish & Game* hired me to do all those years ago that no one else wanted. I am the fishing hotspots contributing editor for most of the freshwater lakes in Texas. That one leap of faith into this role led to much of the media success I have in working with the magazine today. In fact my name probably appears more in every issue than any other one writer. It can be hard work at times but was it worth it? You bet! I embraced the challenge and am now on the inside looking out. I am a part of the largest and most popular hunting and fishing magazines in the state of Texas and the largest independently owned regional magazine in the USA. It also serves as an extra income stream to my media sales revenue from the magazine. Now that's playing the game to win.

Don't know how to edit video, write, sell, podcast, etc.? I am here to help you if you need it. But most everything I do for the clients I serve is done by learning a skill, then implementing it, then just rinsing and repeating. When you work for yourself independently like I do, there is no IT department many times. Most everything I know about computers, both hardware and software, I have learned by doing and watching others do it. I have Christy King, an outdoor industry legend in my eyes, to thank for forcing me to learn WordPress because, when I did, most of my clients wanted and needed websites in a mobile responsive format that it provided. Christy also encouraged me to write my first two eBooks when we worked together on a marketing and brokering company project. I have "Prowler Bill" Henson from the Mac & Prowler TV show to thank for being my outdoor industry mentor and introducing me to the world of video production and everything that went with it. Prowler Bill and Randy "Mac" McMillian gave me my first start in media back in 2011 when they asked me to be their "marketing guy" since I had a sales background and some outdoor industry experience. God has people like this in your path as well. You just have to look for them and ask them for help.

YouTube is a great place for learning new skills but never be afraid to invest in yourself and pay for online courses or coaching, like what I offer, as it is an

investment in your most important asset in this game - **YOU!** Remember this phrase: **Repetition Decreases Resistance**. The more you do something that is out of your comfort zone repeatedly, the more comfortable you will be with it long-term. I stretch out of my comfort zone a lot and over the years I have learned that there is truly nothing to fear and plenty of help and support available through folks like me who have been there and done that which you want to accomplish.

Remember, diversification is key in whatever you do. Have multiple streams of income and multiple ways to reach people with different platforms. No matter what you are trying to do in this space remember that there are many others that want that too. Will you stick to it and **go harder** than they will? Time will tell. What I can offer you in the meantime is this – most everyone who has realized success and maximized their potential in this space have **stayed in the game long-term**. Please don't forget this. It is vital for your success. Also, don't think you have to go this road alone. You need to partner with others that can help you grow and that you can help grow. At every stage of my adult life I have had people who have mentored me and people I have mentored in my own journey as well as peers at the same level of success with which I could collaborate. This has been crucial to my long-term success in a fast paced, noisy and massively competitive industry and marketplace.

Pro-Staff Positions and Sponsorships

I originally wrote an article on how to approach companies to be a pro-staff member or gain other sponsorships [here on my blog](#). I guess you could say that article was one of the catalysts for writing this particular eBook. I am approached by numerous people each year wanting to know how to get sponsorships and I can tell you first hand, the road to success in this can be a long and winding one. I have been on the pro-staff of Grim Reaper Broadheads for going on 8 years now. It's how I officially got my start in being sponsored by outdoor companies. I started my journey with them about the same time they were looking to trim their pro-staff members down. Remember what we have been talking about here – be expanding when others contract. Multiply opportunity and you will see great results.

One thing that is a solid fact in any sponsorship you pursue is that they don't just fall at your front door. You have to prove to them, just like you do when you go to work for anyone, that you are going to make the company you are approaching more than you will cost them. This equation is simple. You have to do this by adding a tremendous amount of value and, by doing so, you have to learn to package your own "brand" as one that will soar head and shoulders above what everyone else is doing. Now I'm not saying you need to be a show-off. Nobody likes that guy. Be humble but **be bold**. What I am saying here is that you must "bring the heat." Show what you have to offer in the best light possible. In other words, **bring your A-game** to the table.

As you know, I sell media (mostly in print and digital forms) for one of my main sources of income. I made a presentation to a marketing agency this past year at SHOT Show and the owner of that agency I presented to said it was the best presentation he had seen at the **ENTIRE** trade show. You see, so many people like to proverbially "puff up their chest" and show how important they are or how big their brand is in the industry. This is a HUGE mistake. For example, many people

who sell print media advertising for a living don't believe it is quickly being outpaced by digital content of various forms. News flash! The marketplace is changing. You have to be adaptable if you want to survive. I certainly sell plenty of print ads these days but digital advertising offers better metrics and measurable ROI (Return On Investment) to the sponsor. This company didn't want to hear a pitch on print, so I shifted gears quickly and concentrated all on digital forms of media buys. What I did was show the potential value rendered for dollars spent and that keyword we've been talking about: **engagement**.

The late great author and speaker Zig Ziglar once said, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." It is also said that "Those convinced against their will are of the same opinion still." Keep these two concepts in mind when you get in front of potential sponsors. Be able to be adaptable and be humble while showcasing a solid amount of value.

While you don't want to be a "media whore" and just give away free promotion in your social channels to companies you desire to work with, producing some no-cost, no-obligation content to get their attention and show what you are capable of doing in your circle of influence is a viable way I have used to garner attention to my personal brand. For example, I wrote a feature article in *Texas Fish & Game* early last year which paved the way in them running a digital ad campaign with us. Once again, sometimes you have to create the pathways to your own success.

If you are successful in branding yourself in front of your audience and your media reach grows and grows, you will attract companies that will seek you out instead of you hunting for them. I have lost count of how many opportunities have come from the YouTube video I made back in 2012 on how to shoot a compound bow and the practical fundamentals of shooting a crossbow. These two videos both have well over 250,000 views and are some of the top search results for short keyword searches for beginning archers. I have had this same kind of reach and response from other niches I have branded myself in over the years such as bowfishing and urban deer hunting.

Take good high resolution photos, shoot high quality video and make sure your audio is good too, write good content and present your best work possible in social

media and other channels. Show this content to prove you are worthy of the brand's affiliation and don't assume anything. This industry is huge and you can never figure on being known by everyone unless you are a name like Jim Shockey or Michael Waddell. Start with one company's brand and grow from there. Remember, you are taking a chance on working with them but they are also taking a chance on working with you.

I have seen more than a few cases of sponsorship disasters from careless work in social channels and elsewhere by people representing big brands. On one story I was asked to do for a magazine a few years ago, the pro-staff/sponsored members did nothing but drink, smoke, vape and cuss on camera during our interview. To top it off, these sponsored pro-staff members became upset at me after I vowed not to air the footage of them partying during our interview in my social channels because I didn't think it was an appropriate example to show the world. Remember, someone is always watching. Needless to say, these guys did not keep their sponsorships for long and they were sponsored by some HUGE names in our industry that everyone has heard of, even if you have been living under a rock.

Get to know the marketing people at the companies you are after on a first name basis. You may not be able to travel to a SHOT Show or an ICAST tradeshow but you can do wonders with technology today and phone and email contact still does a good job in your effort to stay in front of the people that count.

What many people fail to understand is that a majority of people on pro-staffs are compensated by products from the company, which you are expected to use exclusively, and not necessarily with money. I don't think many people coming in to this space realize that media (in whatever form), for the most part, is a pay to play game. That is where most of the money goes to in these companies. Traditional TV shows, podcasts, blogs, YouTube channels, magazines and other media channels all require some kind of funding to be able to grow and continue to exist. Trust me - the competition for those dollars is fierce and everyone that competes has a dog in the hunt somewhere. Most importantly, don't let your pride get in the way of a partnership. Always leave a way out for the sponsor in any deal you are doing with a company. Keep things light and keep things moving and

remember, there are very few people who aren't expendable or replaceable in this realm.

This all being said, it comes down to one word: **VALUE**. The question to continually ask yourself is what are you doing to create value and engagement for the sponsor. Are you approaching this pursuit with multiple forms of media? You should be. If you don't know how to produce well communicated content in written, spoken or video forms, be prepared to lose to someone who is performing at that level. That may sound harsh but I'm laying all the cards on the table here. You have to grow bigger than your problems and rise to the occasion to gain the attention of the companies with which you desire to work. You also have to keep your audience's attention when you do gain one or more sponsorships and promote their products or services in as many ways possible through your reach. Remember, I play chess, not checkers and I eat adversity for breakfast. Live with that kind of mindset and people will eventually not be able to ignore or forget who you are in whatever space you occupy and excel in through your niche.

Rise and Grind, Sunshine... Out Hustling the Competition

This chapter was inspired by the book, *Rise & Grind: How to Out-Perform, Out-Work and Out- Hustle the Competition* by Daymond John. If you aren't reading blogs and eBooks like this, listening to motivational podcasts and other audio content and watching inspiring YouTube videos, you should be feeding your brain better. After all, your competition is most likely "winging it" out there anyway. Don't wing it. Be great.

I probably could have written this section in a general motivational book, like I did with one of my books titled, *There is Power in Living*, which I self-published back in my college days and shortly after, but you are getting this content as a part of a niche driven book for the outdoor industry. Feel free to share this if it means something to you. My goal here is to tell you that you have all the tools at your disposal to create success in your life, no matter your current situation or background. I consistently read eBooks and digital magazines on my iPhone and iPad in sales, marketing, hunting, fishing, and the outdoor lifestyle. I feed my brain positive messages so when a crap-tastic day happens, and they often do, I have the arsenal ready to weather the storm. This is part of playing the game to win. Don't let your spouse, day job or other occurrences in your life weigh you down. Overcome adversity. Grow bigger than your problems.

When I started my journey in sales and media initially, I had no idea where I would end up or how I could make a living in the outdoor realm full time. I made my goal of exceeding and excelling in this industry paramount and worked at it every day. With the feeling of success and vision of your success in mind, you in turn can attract the success which you desire. Don't get frustrated if it doesn't happen overnight. We're in a marathon here, not a sprint. What we are after is lasting, long-term success, not a flash in the pan.

Let's get deep for just a moment. What is your purpose for embarking in the outdoor industry space? What are your motivations? What is your "why"? I am rather philosophical but don't consider myself "religious" as there are plenty of zealots that can keep that title. Am I spiritually anchored in deep universal truth? Yes. What I have found is that the purpose of your life is to learn how to love deeply and prolifically as well as acquire knowledge during your earthly time. That may sound quite simple but it is the basic chord that is woven through our existence as mankind. Pretty profound thought for an eBook like this, right? Stay with me on this.

The truth is, one of the reasons I am so prolific and successful in what I do in the outdoor space is that I work circles around most of the competition. Most people can't keep up with my pace. I attract success for the simple law of attraction – like attracts like. I am up earlier and stay up later working on projects like this eBook than most anyone else I know. With mobile devices and modern technologies in today's world, I have learned to multiply my time and resources and I do so in many ways.

Although I put my family and relationships first (remember, loving deeply is one of your life's purposes), you will most likely find me working on weekends and holidays. I've never been afraid of hard work and dedication. Most folks in this space say that they are dedicated but what they do in their actions is another story. Loving what you do deeply is also very important. People who have a true deep-rooted passion for what they do will find a way. I grind harder and with more intensity than most of my competition and opportunities have literally fallen in my lap and at my doorstep once I started to rise to this level of accomplishment. What's more is that I am in the process of leaving a legacy with future generations through the work I do with the next generation. Legacies last long after you're gone, in the hearts that you reach with your message. With a legacy in mind, you might be touching the hearts and minds of generations that aren't even born yet. Pretty crazy, huh?

How do I avoid burning out with a crazy busy schedule like mine? I simply don't burn out because I do what I love and follow my passion in life. The lesson I

learned many years ago when I was still working outside of the industry full-time was the knowledge on how to monetize and multiply myself. I go hard in the paint. I refuse to do less than my best work possible and I expand when others contract.

Another point I wanted to bring up here is that I take massive action and play offense in life. It's the only way I roll. If all you do is maintain and play defensively in this industry, you will quickly be outpaced by someone else who can out-sell, out-serve, out-promote and generally out-hustle your game. Again, it's checkers versus chess. Life is a strategy game and if you don't go after your goals and dreams with passion and determination, be prepared to lose to someone who does. Your game must be solid and you have to know you can crush it at something every day.

Recently, after the election of Donald Trump as our president, my media sales started to slump due to the "gun grabber" scare being over or, what some have called the "Trump Slump." The whole hunting and shooting sports industry took a sort of a nose dive in their advertising budgets with some being more affected than others. I learned from sales legend Grant Cardone that you must expand when a market shrinks, and it will shrink, at times. Part of this plan is to take massive action and dominate your space. Grant's eBook, *The 10X Rule*, explains this in more detail. The main point here is that you have to work both smarter and harder than the rest of the crowd if you want to realize your dreams in this outdoors space. Think bigger, go harder and never give up your mission to realize your goals and dreams. Do this well and you might even consider taking on the fires of hell with a squirt gun, as a metaphor of course!

Remember, It's a Journey...

Enjoy the Process and

Celebrate the Small Wins!

Many people have looked at me and what I have done and said, "It must be nice!" It may look that way on the front end but behind the scenes, there are a lot of failures that I have learned from over the years – big failures too. I helped with the launch of two streaming media web TV networks and spent countless hours of sweat equity on the shows. I was also recruiting other shows at the time, only for both of those platforms to become commercial failures. What I learned during the process of those failures is the secret sauce to success. Fail forward and fail frequently. If you don't try and fail sometimes, you're not out there taking chances and risking success. Whatever you do, don't "go with the flow" and play safe. Always remember, dead fish go with the flow! The hard fighting salmon swims upstream against the current. Be the lively salmon that presses on in the face of adversity.

It is easier to realize success in a lot of ways these days but, on the other hand, as we've talked about, it's also a lot harder in today's world than it's ever been. If I have taught you anything in this eBook, it's this message: Don't let things happen to you, happen to things. Be proactive and get out there and make something happen. The main issue with success of any kind in today's culture and world is that there are so many consumption options and niches segmenting the market. There are also so many people competing for the same pro-staff positions, media roles, sponsorships, advertising buys, and, well... you name it. Specialize in a niche or a few niches and become an expert in those fields. Then, as we have discussed, brand yourself as an authority in one or more of them. Make your own success and don't waste your time watching and waiting for others to do it for you. No

matter how things seem, you are still ultimately responsible for your own successes.

One of the things I mistakenly did when I first started all of my outdoor work was just hit it hard every day without enjoying the process and realizing that the reward **IS** the process. You know I want you to play the game to win and play hard, but at the same time, realize it's a journey as well. Celebrate your small victories and accomplishments on a regular basis. If you do this, you won't burn out like I see so many people do when they leave their day job and "go for it" or try to realize success in a number of other ways.

Also remember that, especially in the outdoor industry, the bullets are real and they will come flying at you fast. If you don't have a group of haters that give thumbs down on every one of your YouTube videos or negatively comment on your social media channels, you're probably not trying hard enough. The bullets may be real and they do sting but remember, most haters are jealous of you and, if you are proactive and taking a stand for what you believe in, they are part of the package that comes with your success. Haters will fall to waste and if you do your part, God will grant you grace. And I will grant you the hope and belief that you too can make your goals and dreams, whatever they are, a long-term success story.

It may not happen the way you imagined it would. For me, I knew I wanted to work in the industry full time, doing what I loved the most. And it turned out God had a plan for me and a place for me to grow and expand my knowledge and passion of sales with my knowledge and love of the outdoors and the people in the outdoor industry space. It turned out differently than I imagined and it's still evolving and unfolding. The funny thing was that the opportunity for the work I do now was always there, right in front of me. I just never realized it until it was time to grow into it. Know that God has a plan for your life and God experiences the world through your worldly experience. Trust God first.

While both of the media players I started out with may be regional, I have a national and international audience that I have branded myself with in the

process. The one thing I have learned through it all is relational efforts are far more powerful than transactional efforts. Think about it.

The issue I see with the way things are marketed to us now in cyberspace and even off line is that it is all about the sale, getting that cold hard cash. The truth is that building relationships that will last long-term and be remembered with reverence is the secret sauce and I see so many people miss that in the world today. Be a resource. Be great at what you do and a beacon of hope for others. Leave a legacy behind you that will last far longer than your lifetime and touch generations beyond your years on this planet. That is my wish for you. Thank you again for watching, reading and listening to my content. May God bless you in all the work you do, in your personal life and everywhere you seek adventure.



Two Dustins, One Photo!

***Dustin Ellermann (Winner of History Channel's TV Show
TOP SHOT, Season 3, Outdoor Writer and YouTuber)
and Dustin Warncke at SHOT Show in Las Vegas***

About the Author



Dustin Vaughn Warncke is an avid outdoorsman and an authority in sales and marketing with a specialization in the outdoor industry. He started building websites in the late 1990's. During his college years and shortly after, he authored and self-published three paperback books both in fiction and non-fiction. Additionally, Warncke has served as a motivational speaker and master teacher and worked with numerous small businesses in sales, marketing, website development, desktop publishing and business consulting with his company, Warncke Enterprises. He earned a bachelor's degree from Texas Lutheran University in 2002. Go Bulldogs!

In 2013 and 2014, Dustin authored and published three outdoor industry eBooks through Warncke Enterprises on various topics. Educating young outdoorsmen and women as well as adults who are new to the sport of hunting, fishing, bowfishing, and other outdoor adventures is Warncke's passion. He has hosted hundreds of YouTube videos, as well as bi-weekly podcasts for numerous years.

In addition, Dustin also has served as the marketing director and co-host for Mac & Prowler's Coyote Tales TV Show for nearly 9 years and has filmed and been featured in several TV shows featuring product reviews as well as rifle, shotgun, and archery tech tip segments.

He also films, edits, and produces his own hunting, fishing, and other outdoor adventures which can be seen on his YouTube Channel. Many of his video productions have been featured on regional and national television networks in the USA including the newest network he is pro-staff for, [Pride Outdoor Network](#).

He served as the Associate Publisher for *Texas Fish & Game Magazine* in 2019 and has authored several feature articles in this publication over the past 7 years. He also served as contributing editor for *Texas Lakes & Bays*, a best-selling fishing atlas, published by Texas Fish & Game, which is currently the largest independently owned outdoor magazine in the nation and the largest and most popular outdoor publication in the state of Texas.

Dustin hosted *The Best of the Outdoors* podcast from 2015 until the end of 2019, most of those years under the TF&G umbrella of media platforms. Two of Dustin's feature articles were also featured in the first edition of Big Game Illustrated's digital magazine, *Big Game Online*. In addition, Dustin also has articles featured in the Lone Star Bowhunters Association magazine as well as Legacy Outfitters magazine.

Dustin's goal in all he does is to inspire others to do great things in the outdoors and to live with love, joy, purpose, meaning and significance.

Learn more at www.dustinsprojects.com