

Tom Sharman

The Content Operators Playbook

Formats. 7 principles.

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6. Formats

Selfie and yap videos



The spine of the whole thing. This is the format that is allowed to have a temperature.

5	General audience, wannabe creators				
A WEEK	WHO IT REACHES				
The newsletter, then Creator Hotline Pro			Free to one pound sign		
THE OFFER ADDRESSED TO			TIPS		
Person	Problem	Turn	Who	Solution	Land
8 to 2s	one breath	2 to 4s	one line	the middle	last 2s
Person	Calls out one person by situation. A size, a niche, a number. [REDACTED] Would the right viewer say "that's me"?				
Problem	One problem, in their words. [REDACTED] Is there a number in it?				
Turn	What they believe, then the but. [REDACTED] Does the second line contradict the first?				
Who	Why listen to this person. [REDACTED] Could a stranger tell who is talking?				
Solution	One move, as a list, steps or a story. One piece of proof. [REDACTED] Could they do it today?				
Land	A hard line. Then cut. [REDACTED] Is anything after the payoff? Cut it.				

THE CONTENT OPERATORS

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Formats, 1 of 7

Selfie and yap videos

Phone, front camera, one argument. The spine of the content engine, five a week.

The spine of the whole thing. Phone, front camera, whatever is in my head that day. Strategy, a read on the industry, an event, a piece of news, or a topic I am properly annoyed about. This is the format that is allowed to have a temperature.

Five a week, on Instagram and TikTok, turned around the next day.

What goes in it?

The arguments creators are already having with themselves. The algorithm. Whether to find a niche. Why the views dropped. Whether to go full time. And the one I care about most: a personal brand is only worth building if it turns into a media business.

What are the rules?

1. Say what the viewer gets in the first four seconds, because people online are selfish.
2. One argument per video.
3. Land on a hard line.
4. No intro.

What does it feed?

The winners become carousels. The best arguments become Creator Therapy episodes.

Questions

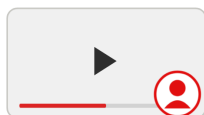
What is a selfie and yap video? Phone, front camera, whatever is in your head that day: strategy, a read on the industry, an event, a piece of news or a topic you are properly annoyed about.

What are the rules? Say what the viewer gets in the first four seconds. One argument per video. Land on a hard line. No intro.

Why does it never stop? It needs no studio, no editor availability and no second person. When a week falls apart this is the format still standing.

tomsharman.com/playbooks/formats/selfie-and-yap-videos/

Reaction and story time



2 A WEEK	General audience, and buyers watching quietly AND 24 REACHES
Nothing sold directly. It is the proof format THE OFFER AVOIDS IT	Three pound signs, indirect EVEN
01 The claim goes in the first three seconds.	
02 The screen behind has to be readable at thumbnail size.	
03 Disagreement is fine, the personal attack is not.	

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Formats, 2 of 7

Reaction and story time

A screenshot or a video plays behind, you talk over it from the corner. React only to what you have standing to react to.

A screenshot or a video plays behind me, and I am in the corner talking over it. Work I have actually done, something I agree with, or something I think is wrong.

The first one is my own record, which sets the standard: react to things you have standing to react to.

Two a week, on Instagram and TikTok.

Where do the backgrounds come from?

My own catalogue of 720 videos, campaigns I ran, other people's videos I have a real opinion on, and news in the creator economy. One example is Niko Omilana's [I Pranked America's Most Racist Man](#), at 47,563,094 views.

What are the rules?

1. The claim goes in the first three seconds.
2. The screen behind has to be readable at thumbnail size.
3. Disagreement is fine. The personal attack is not.

Why does it matter commercially?

It sells nothing directly and does the most commercial work. It is where the record gets shown.

Questions

What is a reaction and story time video? A screenshot or a video plays behind, and you are in the corner talking over it: work you have actually done, something you agree with, or something you think is wrong.

What are the rules? The claim goes in the first three seconds. The screen behind has to be readable at thumbnail size. Disagreement is fine, the personal attack is not.

Why only two a week? It shares the daily slot with the selfie video, and the selfie video is easier to make. Two a week is the honest number for a format that needs a background asset found and cleared.

tomsharman.com/playbooks/formats/reaction-and-story-time/

Podcast clips, the fake pods



It is a podcast in every way except that it is built for the clip rather than the episode.

7	Growing and working creators, founders		
4 WEEK	99% 11% REACHED		
The 90 minute deep dive	Three pound signs		
THE OFFER SUBSCRIBER 2%	12%		
Question	Turn	Answer	Land
0 to 3s	2 to 3s	0 to 45s	Last 2s
Question	The asker's question, burned on screen as text, with their numbers.		
0 to 3s	HINT: Is the question specific? If it is vague, open on the answer's best line and keep the question as text.		
Turn	The answer restates or corrects the premise.		
0 to 3s	HINT: Does the asker turn out to have the wrong problem?		
Answer	One idea, as a list, steps or a story.		
0 to 45s	HINT: One idea only. Two ideas are two clips.		
Land	The maxim.		
Last 2s	HINT: Cut straight after it.		

THE CONTENT OPERATORS

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Formats, 3 of 7

Podcast clips, the fake pods

A booked studio, a guest who asks, a question list written in advance. A podcast built for the clip, seven a week.

A booked studio, a rotating guest opposite, and a question list I have prepped in advance. The guest is there to ask. I am there to answer. It is a podcast built for the clip.

Seven a week, on Instagram and TikTok, edited in a batch.

How is it made?

1. Write the question bank before the studio day, drawn from the topic bank.
2. Book one studio day.
3. Film fourteen answers. That banks two weeks.
4. Refresh the guests. The guest is not the draw. The guest is the reason the question gets asked out loud.

Why is it worth the money?

It is the only format where the quality signal does the work. A well lit two camera set makes an ordinary answer read as authority. And seven a week means one studio day pays for itself across the whole week.

Questions

What is a fake pod? A booked studio, a rotating guest opposite, and a question list prepped in advance. The guest is there to ask, Tom is there to answer. It is a podcast in every way except that it is built for the clip.

How many clips does one studio day give? Fourteen answers filmed in one studio day, which banks two weeks at seven a week.

Why is it worth the studio money? It is the only format where the quality signal does the work. A well lit two camera set makes an ordinary answer read as authority, and seven a week means the studio day pays for itself across the whole week.

tomsharman.com/playbooks/formats/podcast-clips-the-fake-pods/

Creator Hotline



A creator sends a voice note with a question. Studio environment, lit, filmed on proper cameras, because the format's whole claim is that this is a real service rather than a comment reply.

4 to 5

6 mins

Creator Hotline Pro

100 OFFER ALLOCATED LT

Wannabe and growing creators

600 27 HOURS

One pound sign

1128

Question	Turn	Answer	Land
9 to 2s	5 to 2s	9 to 45s	1s to 2s
Question 9 to 2s	The asker's question, burned on screen as text, with their numbers. NOTE: Is the question specific? If it is vague, open on the answer's best line and keep the question as text.		
Turn 9 to 2s	The answer restates or corrects the premise. NOTE: Does the asker turn out to have the wrong problem?		
Answer 9 to 45s	One idea, as a list, steps or a story. NOTE: One idea only. Two ideas are two clips.		
Land 1s to 2s	The maxim. NOTE: Cut straight after it.		

Creator hotline

A creator sends a voice note with a question. Tom answers it properly, in a studio, on proper cameras.

A creator sends a voice note with a question. I answer it properly. Studio, lit, proper cameras, because the format's whole claim is that this is a real service.

Four to five a week, on Instagram and TikTok, filmed on the same studio day as the fake pods.

How does it start?

The first questions are written by me and recorded as voice notes by friends, so the format is proven before it is opened up. Then real creators dial in with real questions. At that point the format is also the top of the funnel for a paid tier.

What are the rules?

1. Answer the question that was asked.
2. Give one thing they can do this week.
3. Name the tradeoff.

Questions

What is the Creator Hotline? A creator sends a voice note with a question and Tom answers it properly, lit and filmed on proper cameras, because the format's whole claim is that this is a real service.

How does it start before anyone calls in? The first questions are written by Tom and recorded as voice notes by friends, so the format is proven before it is opened up to real callers.

What are the rules for an answer? Answer the question that was asked. Give one thing they can do this week. Name the tradeoff.

tomsharman.com/playbooks/formats/creator-hotline/

Carousels



Image based, text based, swipeable. Made from the selfie videos that already won, so the format costs an argument that has been tested rather than an idea that has not.

2 A WEEK	Founders, brands, entrepreneurs 990 27 REACHES
The retainer, then the agency THE OFFER ALONGSIDE IT	Four to five pound signs TIER

Why they matter more than they look
They are the only format that works properly on LinkedIn, and LinkedIn is where the buyers are. This is the format that turns audience into pipeline.

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Formats, 5 of 7

Carousels

Swipeable slides made only from selfie videos that already won. The format that works on LinkedIn, where the buyers are.

Image based, text based, swipeable. Made from the selfie videos that already won, so every carousel starts from an argument that has already been tested.

Two a week, on Instagram and LinkedIn.

What is the selection rule?

A selfie video is eligible for a carousel when it beats the trailing 30 day median. Nothing gets made from an untested script.

Why do they matter more than they look?

They are the only format that works properly on LinkedIn, and LinkedIn is where the buyers are. This is the format that turns an audience into a pipeline.

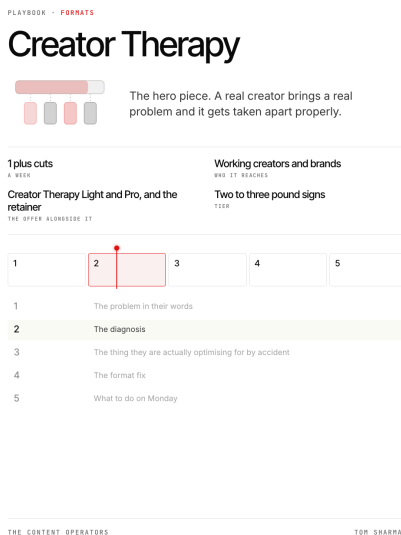
Questions

When does a video become a carousel? When it beats the trailing 30 day median. Nothing gets made from an untested script.

Where do carousels go? Instagram and LinkedIn, two a week.

Why do they matter more than they look? They are the only format that works properly on LinkedIn, and LinkedIn is where the buyers are. This is the format that turns audience into pipeline.

tomsharman.com/playbooks/formats/carousels/



Creator therapy

A real creator brings a real problem and it gets taken apart properly. The hero piece, one long form a week.

The hero piece. A real creator brings a real problem and it gets taken apart properly. Closer to a diagnosis than a chat show: what is actually broken, why, and what the fix is.

One long form a week on YouTube, plus three to four short cuts.

What is the reference?

Colin and Samir's second channel, where the creator focused episodes went deep on creative problems. That depth is the thing to copy.

What is the spine of an episode?

1. The problem, in their words.
2. The diagnosis.
3. The thing they are actually optimising for by accident.
4. The format fix.
5. What to do on Monday.

Why is it the hero?

Every other format is me asserting. This one is me being right in front of a witness, which is a different kind of proof. It is also the only format a brand buyer will watch to the end. The three to four short cuts add to the weekly count without adding a filming day.

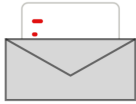
Questions

What is Creator Therapy? A real creator brings a real problem and it gets taken apart properly. Closer to a diagnosis than a chat show: what is actually broken, why, and what the fix is.

What is the format spine? The problem in their words. The diagnosis. The thing they are actually optimising for by accident. The format fix. What to do on Monday.

Why is it the hero piece? Every other format is Tom asserting. This one is Tom being right in front of a witness, which is a different kind of proof. It is also the only format a brand buyer will watch to the end.

The newsletter



The week's argument, written rather than said, plus what actually performed and what that says. The website's job is to push people into it, so the signup has to be the main event on the page rather than a footer.

1
A WEEK

All of them. It is the launch list
THE OFFER ALONGSIDE IT

Everyone who opted in
WHO IT REACHES

Free to five pound signs
TIER

THE CONTENT OPERATORS

TOM SHARMAN

Formats, 7 of 7

The newsletter

One a week, written by Tom. The only audience he owns outright, and the list every paid tier launches to.

One a week, by email. I write it.

The week's argument, written down, plus what actually performed and what that says.

Why does it exist?

It is the only audience I own outright, and it is the list every paid tier launches to. The website's job is to push people into it, so the signup is the main event on the page.

[Sign up to the newsletter.](#)

Questions

What goes in the newsletter? The week's argument, written down, plus what actually performed and what that says.

Why does it exist? It is the only audience Tom owns outright, and it is the list every paid tier launches to.

Where do people sign up? On the website. The site's job is to push people into it, so the signup is the main event on the page.

tomsharman.com/playbooks/formats/the-newsletter/