



## **Continuing Education in Your Industry**

Thank you for joining me for this week's episode on The Chill Business Journey. Today I want to discuss something that is pretty critical no matter what industry you work in, and that is Continuing Education. Many times, we as small business owners, have our nose to the grind so much, that we end up missing out on staying abreast to the latest trends in our industries.

Some industries require continuing education credits to renew licensing, like for CPAs, doctors and cosmetologists. But for other career paths that do not require these credits to renew a license, it depends on the individual to stay current on their industry's latest trends, tools, advancements and more. When things change, you want to make sure you know about those changes.

I can tell you, in marketing – and especially social media marketing, things change at breakneck speed. As we say in the industry “The only constant in social media is change”. That's why it's crucial that I stay on top of the best ways to learn. Whether that's conferences, masterminds, courses and more.

I have taken several online courses over the years. I would say I average 1-2 per year depending on the content and what I'm currently doing in my business. For instance, this past January I took Amy Porterfield's Digital Course Academy. And let me tell you, WOW! If you are at all interested in learning how to not only create an online course, but to also build your audience so you have warm leads to launch the course to....then DCA is the course you want to take.

Amy is only going to launch it a couple of times a year, but you can get on the waitlist for her fall launch. I'll be sure to include a link for this course on the show notes page for this episode. Which happens to be [chilldigitalmarketing.com/16](http://chilldigitalmarketing.com/16). I'm not even an affiliate for her program, I just believe in this course so much that I think anyone contemplating creating an online course should take DCA. And it doesn't matter what industry you are in. Her students are healers, therapists, dog trainers, school teachers, photographers, and more!

I had actually started her Courses that Convert course last November. But then with the launch of DCA (which has courses that convert rolled up into it), I sort-of quit going through that course. Either way, my biggest point is that Amy Porterfield teaches in a way that makes it very easy for her students to not only understand the material, but to also be quite successful when implementing what they learn.

You may be wondering, with me talking about taking a course on how to create an online course, if that's something I'm working on. I can emphatically say yes. I am in the process of creating an online course, but you will just have to stay tuned to learn about the topic of the course. I can't divulge all my secrets in one episode! But I can say that I plan to launch this fall, so you will definitely start hearing more about the course as we go through the summer.

Being in the throes of creating an online course, I realized there is another offering I want to add to my services. And that drew me to sign up for ANOTHER course this year that just started last week. And that is Stu McClaren's TRIBE Membership Course. With this one, I am learning the ins and outs of creating a membership site as well. And this will go hand in hand with my course launch in the fall. See how these two can complement each other?

All of these "new to me" developments get me excited, nervous, elated, scared all at the same time. At my core, I've really settled into my educator role quite well. So, taking my skills that I use during my in-person workshops will translate really well to online applications.

Now that we've talked about courses as a form of continuing education, let's discuss another way we can grow as business owners – and that would be industry conferences. No matter what type of work you do, I'm pretty sure there is a conference out there for it.

Conferences are a great way to network with people in your industry as well as listen to sessions that leaders in your industry may be conducting. Because there are so many areas that make up marketing, there are a TON of them out there for me to consider. Whether you work for a large company or you are a solopreneur, you can definitely find something that will benefit you and your business by attending.

However, that is a key point you need to keep in mind when determining which conference to go to – will it benefit you? One marketing conference I've been to a few times is the one put on by Social Media Examiner called Social Media Marketing World. I tend to go every other year for a couple of reasons. 1 being every other year they have it during our kids' spring break, so that's a no go. Ironically the alternate years they have it at different times during the spring. The other reason is because you are bound to learn something new and fresh if you go every other year. I feel like if I went every year, there would be some redundancy. Plus, I follow a lot of the speakers they have, so I'm getting their messaging throughout the year anyway.

Another new conference I went to last year was Social Fresh. I thought it was ok. It seemed more for marketing professionals that work for big companies (like Nike and Coke). So, the presenters they had were speaking as if they were speaking to marketing teams with big budgets. While I think it's good for the little guys to know and learn some of the strategies that the big guys are doing, I just felt like I probably won't be going to that one again for several years.

Another conference I'd like to check out is VidCon. Probably not going to make it this year as it's in a few weeks, but I think it would also be fun for my son who is getting into video production work (he's only 12 about to be 13 right now, so maybe next year). I too want to step up my video game. I've been doing weekly live videos every Monday, so I know I can do more. Plus, when I get into production for my online course videos, I'll want to improve that skill as well.

Another way that we can have both personal and professional growth is to attend mastermind retreats. I know I mention Social Media Manager School a lot (which was an online school I joined in 2014). Back in 2016 they introduced an add on feature of in person mastermind retreats. And let me tell you, these retreats have done WONDERS for my business. They are intimate business development situations that I have personally and professionally grown from.

The biggest ah-ha moment I had at the first mastermind retreat was learning that all the self-doubt like "Who am I to be telling people how to do their marketing?", and the "I'm not qualified to do this" and the overall imposter mentality were not just in my head alone. Most of the people there felt like they weren't good enough to be doing what they were doing. And let me tell you...there were some serious marketing geniuses at this retreat!

As small business owners, it is really easy to get trapped in our own head and swirl around in all that self-doubt. It still boggles my mind how easy it is to go to that place. I know! Because I'm constantly fighting that battle.

The second year I went to the retreat, I had another substantial ah-ha moment. See, I had niched into a particular industry for about 2 ½ years, and I was not successful at all. For whatever reason, I wasn't landing the number of clients I needed to pay the bills. And remember, that evil self-doubt would constantly creep back in. So Andrea (one of the facilitators) was chatting with me at lunch one day and she said "You know, maybe you need to leave that niche behind and not focus on it anymore."

While you may be thinking "Well, yeah...that's obvious", the thought didn't come to me because I think, subconsciously, I would view it as yet another "failure". When how I should've viewed it was that niche didn't hold any passion for me and to take it as a learning lesson, not a failure. So, I was probably self-sabotaging getting clients in it.

By my third year of this retreat, I went in with zero preconceived expectations, as I had no idea how I would evolve this time. And I would say the big stand out moment for me that year was being asked by Phyllis (the other facilitator and now sole owner of Social Media Manager School) to do a session on my method for podcasting. I mean, what?!?!? I'm knowledgeable about something at a level that I should be teaching it?!?!? I'm still in awe that she asked me to do that. But guess what? My teaching skills are so much more advanced than they were at that retreat

(since I do 5-6 monthly in-person workshops now), that I'd be more than willing to do it again at the next retreat.

If you are able to find a mastermind like this for your industry, then you should seriously look into it. Connecting with your peers can benefit you in so many ways. I know I speak often of the small business owner, and frankly that's because I am one. But when you are pretty much a solopreneur, it can get very lonely and isolating. When you don't have an office full of co-workers to bounce ideas off of, or help you troubleshoot a problem, you can feel lost on what steps to take next.

The friendships I have formed from attending these Social Media Manager School mastermind retreats have done wonders for my business and me personally. When I have a situation I need advice on, I can message any one of the past attendees and get some great direction. Not to mention, we have a Facebook Group of past attendees that I can pop into for advice or to share wins or anything like that.

The other great thing about a mastermind retreat is you get time to do some serious work ON your business. Many times, we are so busy working IN our business, that we don't get many opportunities to work ON it. Meaning you can work on roadmaps of where you want your business to go. Working on your marketing plan and content creation. If you need to start niching, or whatever it is you need to be doing for your business, you can get these things done in a mastermind retreat. And they keep your mind in the positive lane...not that self-doubt ditch.

Another way that you can stay current is by joining a membership site that has continuing education in the field you want to stay current on. There are 3 I'm a member of (that I can think of right now), and they help me keep my finger on the pulse of what's going on in the digital marketing world. The first is Social Media Manager School. Their current structure is you buy the course, and then have a nominal annual fee to stay connected in the Facebook Group. And trust me, once you get in and see all the value in the Facebook Group, you want to keep up your membership.

The other is Social Media Marketing Society that is run by Social Media Examiner. They have monthly live training sessions, and then archive those recordings so you can access them at any time. This is a great way for me to know what the latest strategies, tools, and more that have to pertain to social media.

The third is Mari Smith's Inner Circle. I really like her Inner Circle, because she knows her stuff. She goes live 2 times per month. She is a big tech person, so she is always sharing her latest tool discoveries in her sessions. I would say about half the months of the year, the second session of the month she brings on another marketing professional. With her clout, that's pretty easy for her to do. While I may not get to watch EVERY session EVERY month, the ones I do watch, I end up learning something new. Literally, I've never watched a replay and thought "Ah well, I know all that already".

Because I hold such value in my memberships, and I'm working on this new online course, that was the driving force behind signing up for Stu's TRIBE course. I want to learn the do's and don'ts of creating and running a membership site. I want to be able to share what I know in an ongoing basis to other small business owners out there that may be lost on the things they can do digitally for their business. But as I mentioned earlier...you will just have to wait to learn more about my newest offerings a bit later.

Another way to stay current in your industry is to go to workshops. These can be a single class that may be 2-3 hours, or a whole day or multiple days. As I mentioned before, I teach in-person workshops on digital marketing content. From how businesses use the various social platforms to email marketing, podcasting, blogging and more. While these courses are typically for non-marketers to learn the basics of what they should be doing (and it isn't in their industry), they can be considered business development education for them.

In general, every business owner should devote some portion of funds in their budget to continuing education. Once they know how much they can realistically spend, then they can determine which category of education will serve them best. While conferences and mastermind retreats tend to be on the more expensive side (due to travel and hotel accommodations) an online course, workshop or membership site could be a great alternative. And with a membership site, you can usually spread that payment across 12 months to help with your cashflow.

While this is not an exhaustive list of ways you can stay educated in your industry, I think looking at online courses, conferences, mastermind retreats, membership sites, and workshops is a great start. And hey...subscribing to podcasts, like this one, is another great way to get information throughout the year. So if there are any topics you would like to learn more about, head over to our contact page on our website to let us know! You can find that at [chilldigitalmarketing.com/contactus](http://chilldigitalmarketing.com/contactus).

I'm also going to list links to all the different things I've mentioned in this episode as well on our show notes page. Just in case you are interested in learning more about them. You can get all that information at [chilldigitalmarketing.com/16](http://chilldigitalmarketing.com/16).

Thank you again for joining us this week on The Chill Business Journey. We know you could spend your time doing something else, so we really appreciate you sharing it with us. See you next week.