

by John McIntyre, The Autoresponder Guy -

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EP#42 - Michael Silk on Writing F.U.N. Emails that Net 8-Figures

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John: It's John McIntyre here the auto-responder guy. I'm here with Michael Silk on how to write emails that grow an eight figure a year Internet business. Now, I just, before we get started, I just want to clarify that it's possibly a low eight figure or high seven figure Internet business, so it's somewhere around that vicinity depending on who you ask related into this. Now, Michael came to me via the podcast. He sent me an email just a few days ago and said he had listened to a few episodes and he started telling me a bit about what he did. And it turns out that Michael writes emails for a very big client in the info-marketing and kind of seminar area, classic Internet marketing business, but not doing make money online stuff, it's a different niche. He writes a lot of the emails, so he has to write on very short notice. He's got some other clients, as far as I know, as well. He needs to come up with emails with very short notice and he needs really creative ways of coming up with entertaining stuff.

Which is really what happens when you are a consultant and you're writing for clients, it can be very hard to come up with ideas without drawing on your own experience. Say you're a guy and you're writing emails about, it could be make-up, I'm sure we'll get some specific examples in a minute, but you've got to get good at creating ideas out of thin air, sometimes it's not going to be something that you're going to be able to draw from your personal experience.

What Michael has to share today is something very interesting, he sent me a PDF and the top of the PDF says FUN Emails That Help Grow An Eight Figure A Year Internet Business. We've got FUN, that's an acronym for Fun, I think we'll get into this, throw out the acronym, I'll let Michael tell you what the acronym is. This is just a really simple framework for coming up with great emails, really, really fast. This is going to be a great episode with some really actionable information you can use and take away and apply to your business today, so we'll get into that.

How are you doing today, Michael?

Michael: Yeah very good thanks, John. Thank you.

John: It's great to have you here, man. Before we get into the FUN emails specifically, tell the listener a bit about who you are and what do you do.

Michael: I've been freelance copywriting for nine years, just shy of 10 years. My income all comes from freelance client, I do the freelance thing, I have clients in different

niches, different industries. That's pretty much, everyday I'm writing copy whether it's for email, for sales letters, could be for video sales letters. A big part of online business now, as you know and probably what your listeners are all interested in, is the email marketing.

I'm pretty much doing that every day, writing multiple emails every day for the different clients and I have to be quite inventive in coming up with the content and that's where my acronym comes in.

John: Okay, so I'm curious, how many emails are you writing a day? How long on average, I don't know if there is an average, how long on average do you write an email?

Michael: It depends, day-to-day. We're talking now it's just about one o'clock in the afternoon here, I'm based in the UK. This morning I've written four emails, three for a client, and one for my own list. The writing of the emails to my mind, is the easy bit, the hard bit is coming up with the ideas. If you already have an idea slotted away in your mind, for me writing the email is fairly straight forward. Yes, there is a time component to it, but I can, if I'm doing client emails and I already have some ideas lodged away in my brain of particular themes, then I can do the emails sort of in 20, 25 minutes.

Sometimes I haven't got the ideas and it's a little bit more challenging and sometimes I do have an idea, but it's kind of, I'm not quite sure about it, could take an hour to write emails. If that answers your question, it's varied but the challenge to me is not so much writing them, it's coming up with the ideas.

John: That's a great point. I think a lot of people would sit down, I've certainly had this problem before, I sit down and I want to write an email, but I just don't know where to start. I'm tongue tied because I've got no idea how to start the email, I've got no concept for it. I have my own ways of overcoming that but, today we're going to talk about these FUN emails. Tell us, what in the world are these FUN emails?

Michael: Well, that was just kind of an acronym I've come up with. I think it sits pretty well with a lot of the emails I write. FUN, F-U-N, is an acronym for, F stands for fun, kind of a clue in the title right. The emails I write, I try to make them fun. The U stands for unusual, I try and make them kind of a little bit quirky, a little bit, sort of a novelty value to them, entertainment value, interesting. There not just dry and boring, I want people to get something out of them and a little bit of an enjoyment spark just for the reading of them.

N stands for noticeable. That really relates to the subject line of the email. I want the email subject line, if someone's opening up their email in-box and they've got 10, 15 emails or even 5 emails sitting in their in-box ready to be opened, I actually want my emails to be opened last in the list, and I can come on to the reason for

that in a minute. I certainly want it to be noticeable.

John: Okay, interesting. An interesting way of diving into this is, really framing up. If you were sitting, you wake up in the morning and you've done your morning routine and you're sitting down at your desk at your office and you're ready to write an email for a client. What do you do? How are you coming up with these ideas? Do you start with F and then do U and then do N? What pops into your head right when you begin writing an email?

Michael: That's a good question, actually. I don't have a particular framework or protocol or process I go through as such. It's not like I'm doing it paint-by-number style. A lot of my ideas come from reading, I read a lot, related to marketing and fiction books. I'm just [inaudible 00:06:40] by my personal development but I'm interested in a lot of subjects, I think by nature I've got a very curious mind. When I'm reading books they could be completely off the topic of what I would be writing for the client, their particular business, their niche. As I'm reading the book, my antenna is up all the time. I'm always looking for an interesting story somewhere or an interesting idea or insight or the way that somebody... Sometimes it's just an interest in the way someone's written something else, somewhere else. My antenna is up always when I'm reading.

Another place that I, because I do write these kind of quirky emails, and by the way, I just want to say this, not all the emails I write are this quirky style, this is just a particular style that I write for a client. I do write more obvious promotional ones, sometimes they're a little bit more direct in promoting a particular product or seminar. These fun emails are, they're like, I call them, in-between emails. They go out to the list, the clients send in emails every single day to the list.

On some of those days, the client actually calls them Connection Emails, they're just going out and they're keeping the clients in their business top of mind awareness to the list. These FUN emails are generally, that's the goal of them, get opened, get read, and leave the reader with an uplifted, feel-good feeling, that ultimately ties in with the client's business and potentially makes them want to go and buy a product. But I think these FUN emails they have an overall uplifting effect on all of the other emails.

John: Now would be a good time for an example. Give me an example of one of these emails.

Michael: Alright, I've given you 27 in a document, let's pick one, shall we?

John: Let's pick one. I'll go through the list. Let's start with email one, Goat Arrested For Armed Robbery. What is that about?

Michael: That particular one, from memory I think, the other place I also go for ideas is I

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go and I type into Google like funny story or odd story, and it comes up with stories from newspapers around the world. There are these kind of quirky, weird stories and I think that's where I got this one from. This one was, the subject line was Goat Arrested For Armed Robbery. I could read the email if you want, should I read the email?

John: Go for it. Yeah, let's read the whole email.

Michael: Subject line, Goat Arrested For Armed Robbery.

This is the content of the email.

Sometimes things get weird, very weird. Take for example the goat that got arrested for armed robbery. It happened in Nigeria. According to news reports, vigilantes were on patrol in Nigeria when they came across two armed men attempting to break in and steal a Mazda 323. The vigilantes chased down the armed robbers, what happened then? One escaped, the other apparently by doing some weird witchcraft thingamajig, he turned himself into a goat. The vigilantes captured the goat and took it to the police station where upon the goat was held in custody until it was scientifically proven, [I kid you not], that a human being turned into a goat. That's a true story.

Anyway, the point, this. Although you won't be able to turn a person into a goat, you will be able to do some very exciting, can't look away hypnosis stuff with strangers on the street, when you follow what's on this page.

Then there's a link to the, this particular thing whatever the web site, whatever the page or the product was. I'm using a very quirky, off topic story and I call it the Twist. I'm twisting it into leading to ... I'm using a lot of curiosity in the email as well. At the end of it, the transition phase is anyway what's the point of this or sometimes the transition phase, oh this reminds me of, blah, blah, blah.

John: I know exactly what you mean. There's so many ways of framing this up, but you're basically telling a story and getting someone's attention, and then doing a slide or a twist, or whatever word you want to use, into some sort of pitch.

Michael: That's right, in this case it's a very soft sale. It's almost like completely blind.

John: That link, did that go to a sales page, a long form sales letter?

Michael: I believe it did at the time, yes.

John: This is a very soft email and then you say you've got the more aggressive email. Would they all go to ... Do they all go to a sales page or do you sometimes take them to, say, a content page with a video or article?

Michael: It could be. In some of these you'll notice in the document that they, I don't

think, some of them haven't got a link at all. I think some of them will just be, the value is in the email itself. When I say the value, the value is in the entertainment value of the email itself. They generally all tie back to a subject of hypnosis, sometimes it's just a reminder for the email recipient to ... Sometimes it's kind of like a pat on the back email. Do you get what I'm saying? It's not necessarily selling them something; it's just keeping their mind set on hypnosis, and all the reasons why it's good to keep learning it.

John: Right. I've had people, I actually find this really hard to explain to people unless they've been on my list and have seen. I don't know if you signed up to my list, but it's a similar..

Michael: Yes, I have.

John: Oh you have. I'm doing the same thing, tell some sort of story and get their attention for something. I've going to try this goat story or some weird story, that's great. Basically telling a story and then sliding into a pitch of some kind. When you explain it like that, it doesn't really make much sense if you've never seen it before. But when you give someone an example, like we just did, it illustrates, you can get how it works. Professional speakers do this all the time. I was at a conference in Bangkok, about a month or two ago, and I was trying to pay attention to what made the difference between the great speakers and the average, boring, whatever speakers. I just noticed that it always comes down to the same thing, stories.

The good speakers will get up there with a slide show, which is basically 10 different pictures on 10 different slides, each slide correlates to a story. They tell a story with a funny or humorous or helpful punch line, which then leads to the next story. There's an overall story arc for the presentation, and that's it. The average speakers, they throw out numbers and facts and so many words on the screen, you just tune out. These stories, with this goat story, I could easily see myself or someone who was interested in hypnosis receiving that, and going, that was just really cool. I'm never going to unsubscribe on an email like that because it's, the pitch is so subtle, yet it's so good as well, it's so subtle but it's so, like it gets under your skin.

Michael: By the way, it probably looks better in print than I did the job of reading it out there.

John: You did a great job. When it comes to, let's say the listener is sitting down to write an email and their mind is blank, they've got no idea? Is your suggestion to go out to Google and, say, type in weird stories, or funny stories or to pay attention to the books they've read? Is it to do that or is there some way, something they can do when they're sitting there?

Michael: That question is aimed at somebody that's obviously not writing emails. In a way,

the answer will reveal itself when they actually sit down and start writing emails and they get a few under their belt. It depends on the purpose of the email. If it's a more direct promotional email, then perhaps this, you've got to use a bit of your own judgment and common sense. Perhaps this kind of email that we've just discussed would not be the most appropriate. Perhaps you want to get into the benefits of what's being promoted sooner.

The thing is, I love reading so I get a lot of my ideas from reading. If people like watching films or going to the cinema, then perhaps that's their idea breeding ground. You've got to get them, if somebody said to me, Michael you've got to go and all your ideas are going to come from watching DVDs, then I'm going to be out of luck, because I don't generally watch too many. That's not my preferred method, as it were.

A good idea, and this is something I don't do all the time, but I have done in the past, the thing is I get an email through from the client saying, "Michael can you write three emails on this or can you write six emails on this?" In one gulp it's a lot to do, it's not like doing one email per day. Sometimes I'm writing, as I said at the front of this call, three emails this morning for a client, one for myself, some days I'm writing six or more emails a day. It's kind of like a conveyor belt process if ...

One thing I would recommend, I know a lot of people listening to this are kind of computer, techno savvy, just put a piece of paper in your back pocket and carry a pen with you. I've got ideas before when I've been at the gym, and I've been on a treadmill and one particular thing springs to mind. Where I'm running on the treadmill there's a glass wall in front of me and then you can see down into the basketball arena. On the wall, they've got one of these rock climbing walls. So the students are there ... You know what I mean, the indoor rock climbing thing? There's a teacher there and they're climbing the wall, and that became the idea of one of my emails.

To get from the bottom of the wall to the top of the wall, you've got to go from one stepping stone to the next; you can't go from the bottom to the top. It doesn't matter how good a climber you are, doesn't matter how much experience you have, you've still got to go step-by-step, hand grip-by-hand grip. That became the theme of one of my emails.

If you want to get really good at X, you're going to have to go through step-by-step process. I know that you're probably getting really frustrated that it's not happening sooner for you, and faster for you, but no matter who you are, no matter, look around at all the top people, they've all had to go through this process, one step at a time, one hand grip at a time. That's the way it works. That's just off the top of my head, an example of ideas coming just from day-to-day living.

Of course, if you're writing for yourself, it's a lot easier because you can put yourself into the email as first person. Writing for clients, I'm not able to do that because I can't use my own ... I couldn't say today I was running on the treadmill at the gym and I noticed... I can't put somebody else's name on that; I can't put the clients name on that because it's not right.

John: Okay. I've tried to show this to people before when I've been out to dinner with them, where when I try to explain how to do this type of storytelling, you can pick anything. In that story you just told then, you could have told a story about the treadmill and how you can be running on a treadmill and you're not getting anywhere. Anytime you like, you can press that stop button and you can step off the treadmill and you can go somewhere.

If you're doing email the way most people do it, you're just running on that treadmill, you're not getting anywhere. Once you get this skill ... The listener can probably see where I'm going with this, once you get this skill, you can pick anything. You can see a glass on a table and talk about the craftsmanship and then talk about how your product is going to somehow help them become a craftsman of some kind. You can, it's crazy and it's so much fun, actually. I find writing sales letters very stressful, it takes a lot out of you, but email is just, you just talk about whatever is on your mind at that time of day. It's so fun.

Michael: I call it the twist, it's twisting whatever observation or idea, and it's twisting it toward your product or your idea or your philosophy or whatever it is that people are "buying in with" with you.

John: One thing I want to know, let's say the listeners developed their skill, they're able to write these emails, all right great. Now it's like, how do they arrange this into a sequence? Should they be sending this daily or every three days, what order should the emails go in? When should they do a pitch versus doing these more softer emails? Do you have a framework or a way of doing things on that side of things?

Michael: I don't have a framework, as such, but I do have a viewpoint on it. Again with the emails, I'm writing for clients, they determine what emails go out when so they make that decision. The kind of emails I shared with you and the kind of ones we're talking mostly about today, we're calling them FUN emails, that's the acronym I've come up with. I don't think that you should send one of those every single day. Let me re-frame that. I think you should try and send an email every single day, but I think you want to mix them up.

Otherwise, even though these novelty, quirky emails, if you just send one of those every single day, after a while they become, people get a bit too used to those. I think you send more content. I think you should send some more promotion, direct promotion. I think you should send some with a little bit more

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of a teaching angle on them. I think sometimes you should send emails that could be just, if you're writing the emails for yourself, it could be just, "You know what, I'm feeling a bit zonked out and down today, anyone got any good ideas for a DVD I could watch tonight? Thanks, Michael." It's just, vary them up.

John: I know what you mean.

Michael: I think of it a bit like a boxer, in boxing if all you've got is a big right hook and that's your only punch, then you're going to come up unstuck sooner or later. In boxing every punch rolls into, every punch sets itself up for the next. You need the little set up punches, you need the jab, you need the big right. Do you know what I mean? You've got to be flexible.

John: Yeah absolutely. I've noticed, I think I made this mistake with my current email funnel is that a lot of the emails, it's this story format, but they often take the same angle when I'm trying to give them a bit of help with their email and then slide into a pitch. I think what I'm going to do is redo it next year, the idea is the whole thing will vary. Some days you'll get an email which will teach you something to do with email marketing, and then it will slide into the pitch for the product.

The next day you'll get some weird ass email about a funny story like you just said. Another day you'll have inspiring story about say Abraham Lincoln, which is an email I've got that's really popular. Every day you're getting something different.

Another day you could have the same classic story email but instead of that going to a product, that could go to a content page, either a podcast or a blog post or some amazing free resource on the Internet. So when someone opens your email, sees it in the in-box, you want them to have that feeling of I wonder what's in there today?

Michael: Yes. You want to keep people guessing a bit because otherwise, people get too much... even too much of a good thing, people get immune to it.

John: Okay, absolutely. You just want to always keep them guessing. Marketing is all about pattern interrupts. You know, people block out the banner ads, no one really clicks on banner ads these days because everyone is so use to them. But, back when the banner ads first started I'm sure that when those games popped up on the side of someone's screen flashing people were clicking on them most of the time because they were used to them.

This email strategy works really, really, really well but if you do it the same way every single time it's going to lose its effectiveness over the course of the sequence. One thing you mentioned when we got started was you wanted them to read your email last instead of first. Why is that?

Michael: I'm kind of my own direct experience here because probably like a lot of people listening to this and like yourself, I get multiple emails every day. So I get up, open up my email account and there's ten emails there. Now some of them are going to be... I'm not on Facebook but I get these Facebook things "So and so wants to connect with you on Facebook", and it's like delete before I even open it. So some of them is like those, there certain 2 or 3 I can just delete because I just know that I'm not going to be interested in them.

There's going to be certain others that could be one from a personal friend and there's going to be other things in there. A list I'm signed up to, I kind of know what their email is going to be like and I kind of open that. But there are certain emails that I get that I'm on lists for, these certain emails are actually very rare. I'm really looking forward to reading that one. It's like the treat; I want to open that one last because I want to be able to savor that one. It's like I want to have time to properly read that one because I know I'm going to enjoy it. The others, if I'm opening them before the last one I'm opening them and reading them thinking in my mind, "Yeah, but I want to get to that other one."

John: You're exactly right.

Michael: "How can I get off this one as quickly as possible.?" I want my emails to be opened last and I want people to... it's like, "Ah, I've got one from so and so, that's going to be good today, I will get these other ones out of the way and then I can savor this one."

John: You've just nailed it. I was thinking now I do this all the time. I'll go into my email in-box and just clear out just little notifications first and I'll go through and reply to the email that I can reply.

Michael: That stuff you've got to get done. It's just like ...

John: Yeah. Just get it out of the way because I want to get to the meat which is an email with my best friend back in, say, Australia or something. It's a newsletter email from some company that I really, really want to read.

You are so right. This is the equivalent of Gary Albert's sorting your mail over the trashcan. People are sorting their email in-boxes, they start with crappy stuff and the last two emails are the best ones, the ones that they really care about.

How do you do that? How do you make someone keep your email for last? Or is this just a side effect of being really interesting and engaging?

Michael: It's just been continuously being the person who's like, ah, I love getting an email from that person. Again, no matter what company you represent or you're writing for, all the emails, they want it as if it were coming from a person. Either

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they really jive with your personality or you tell great stories. Again, mix it up, they are always kind of like what's he going to say today?

John: Okay, we're right on time about now so before we go tell the listener where he or she can find out more about you. I don't know if you're offering this FUN emails PDF anywhere on your site that we can link to or if there is another guide that you have, that you are offering people. Tell them where they can go.

Michael: I hang out online. My website is michaelsilkconsulting.com. It's just my name, consulting.com. michaelsilkconsulting.com. I do offer this report. It's actually in one of my autoresponders sequence. They can get it there from me.

John: Is there a link to that? Where can they sign up to your list?

Michael: [Michaelsilkconsulting.com](http://michaelsilkconsulting.com), but you're welcome to offer it from your site if you want. They don't have to go to me, if you want to make it available so they don't have to sign up with me, I'm cool with that.

John: Okay, fantastic. I can have a link to your website and I'm on the homepage now. There's a squeeze page there, just anyone whose listing goes to your site michaelsilkconsulting.com and signs up and I'll have a link to your site in the show notes at dropdeadcopy.com and as well a link to the PDF in the show notes at dropdeadcopy.com as well.

Thanks for coming on, Michael. I really appreciate it. It's been great.

Michael: No, thank you, John. I've enjoyed it and I hope the listeners got quite a bit of value out of it.