
Mike: It takes a lot of resources to generate original content. And even if you do, you may not be able to do it on a daily basis.

Interviewer: All right Insiders, I'm excited to have Mike Cheng in the house today. Thanks so much for coming on today, Mike.

Mike: Thanks for having me Buckley, nice to see everyone.

Interviewer: Well, I'm pumped to have a conversation about [Snip.ly](#) today, and your growth curve, your growth case studies that we've talked about. But first I got to say this Mike, when I was researching you, I Googled you, and it automatically filled in my keyword with Mike Cheng with an A instead of an E. And I don't know if you've done that, but SixPackShortcuts comes up. And I was thinking: whoa, not only does Mike know how to grow a company, he has some series abs and shotguns.

Mike: He's the guy I wish to be.

Interviewer: Yeah, me, too. No, but seriously Mike Cheng with an E, you have some serious shotguns of your own. I'm absolutely impressed with your company growth and what you and your team have been able to pull off in such a short amount of time, so it's very cool, congrats.

Mike: Thank you.

Interviewer: Well, before we launch into Sniply in more detail, can you give a successful little snippet about you, your current company and what your role is over there?

Mike: Yeah. My name is Mike Cheng, as you've covered. I'm not the Mike Cheng people find on YouTube. But maybe after, as many of you probably know the entrepreneurial journey can be a tough one, and it's hard to workout ten hours a day. So I've been an entrepreneur pretty much all my life, as long as I can't remember. By trade I'm a designer, so I create products. I like designing user experiences, user interfaces, and so it blended really naturally into entrepreneurship because I work really well with engineers and programmers. And so long story short, I created a bunch of products.

And last year was when we came up with this idea of Sniply. And it was because we noticed that people are sharing content all the

time. And the way we consume content has drastically changed over the years. You know, a decade ago you may subscribe to *New York Times*, you may subscribe to certain newsletters, but if you consider the last ten articles you've read, it's probably from social media, from articles that your friends have shared, your networks, or brands that you follow, and to us that's really important.

And the key insights with Snip.ly is that businesses have started sharing content, but unlike friends on Facebook, they don't share for fun. There's a very clear ROI that they need to achieve. And when they share third party content there needs to be some sort of conversion opportunity for it to be worth the time. Because you hire someone –

Interviewer: That's right.

Mike: You have to hire someone to manage your social media, to share that content. And every single time, every single second that's spent – they're spending curating content is money, so there needs to be a return, there needs to be a conversion, and that's how we came up with the concept of Snip.ly. That's a problem we want to solve, how do we introduce a conversion opportunity for curated, shared, and third party content?

Interviewer: Well, that's great. I had a chance to play around with Snip.ly a few months back. And when I found it – and I forgot how I found you – but as soon as I saw how intuitive and yet powerful the tool is, I literally had to reach out. So forget the podcast and coming on here, I just – I wanted to know more about your success, how it's being used? And typically when that happens I reach out. And so I reached out and said, "Mike, this is cool. I really like it." And although we've just barely implemented it at IN THE KNOW, this is a tool I want to know a lot more about. I'm excited to see the evolution of where you're gonna go with it. It looks like you've just got an awesome team over there as well.

Mike: Yeah, for sure.

Interviewer: And I love how it just rolls off the tongue: Snip.ly – Snip.ly. How the heck did you come up with the name, let's start there, tell me a little bit about the evolution there?

Mike: Yes. So one of the main limitations is that if you played around with Snip.ly you know that we provide Snip.ly links, and that's Snip.ly. So the length of the URL was very important. It's actually relatively difficult to get a short domain name these days, with, given the sheer amount of domain names out there. And so we were actually in luck, Snip.ly was on our list. We shorten your links, that's one of the things that we do, and snip represents cutting, and that kind of fell together. And the domain actually was dropping off into availability from the previous owner just as we came up with the concept out of a much larger list.

We had 40, 50 different domain names that we were considering. This one happened to be available right at that moment that we came up with the idea, and so of course we purchased it and the rest is history.

Interviewer: Well, fantastic. As a designer, I would imagine you're a UX designer, right?

Mike: Yeah, all sorts. I do graphics. I do UX.

Interviewer: So how important was it for you to make sure that the design fit the name and fit the brand? Because everything that I see on your site just looks impressive, it's perfect.

Mike: Thank you. And I guess I can blend that answer into part two of your previous question, which is my role in the company, and how I contribute. I do everything when it comes to any form of human interaction. So anything from, you know, appearing on this show and this podcast to customer support, managing day to day bug reports, because I think that's all a part of design. And to me customer support is the best way to get feedback on a product. As designers, I always like to see it as there's two states of the product, there's how you imagine and envision it, and there is how your customers actually see it, so there's a dream versus reality.

And it's really important that somebody is involved in both of those ends, to see whether or not the reality is actually keeping up with the vision. And that's the role that I play. And it's constantly getting feedback from the customers, the bugs that they encountered, the feedback that they have, the use cases, how they're using it, and always vigorously integrating those ideas back into the product development cycle communicating with the

engineers and making sure that everything that anyone says is reflected in a roadmap, and our updates, and all things like that.

So the design, the visuals, the way it works and it all comes together, to me it's one, and that includes graphics as well. It's, the way it looks guides the way you use it, guides the way that it works. It's very singular for me.

Interviewer: Wow, that's great. I love data driven marketing, and I love qualitative marketing in terms of really understanding your buyer persona. It sounds to me like you're really going deep and diving deep by using feedback loops and so forth.

Mike: Absolutely.

Interviewer: Mike, promoting content is difficult, we all know it. If you're producing content, you know that it's only 50 percent of the battle. You got to get out there and promote it. And all of a sudden it looks like this tool is really making it easy to cross promote, right?

Mike: Right.

Interviewer: Can you talk to us about why cross promotion is so important in today's world, because it is different, just as you had mentioned.

Mike: Yeah. And I think the first thing that's worth noting is information overload. Going back to the previous example, you know, a decade ago you have a few publications, and maybe there were a few articles floating around, but with the popularity of content publishing, everyone is a publisher: WordPress, Tumblr. There's so many articles coming out on a daily, hourly – hourly basis, and such information overload that there's become a real value for curators, for filters. So when I follow say – let's say I want to follow Buckley.

It's not just because I trust in the content that you write, it's also me saying I trust that you know what I want, and that you would spend the time to scour the web, find the important resources that would help me and share it with me. And so the role of the curator has become significantly important as information becomes more and more overloaded. And then the flipside of everyone being publishers is that cross promoting helps you with those relationships. Because when you're sharing articles from other

people, they're sharing yours, that all becomes a marketing ecosystem.

Where we're not necessarily taking the fame and fortune from other people, but really funneling it, your content, other people's content, to the right people who are looking for that type of content, who may not necessarily be able to find it on Google with a simple search.

Interviewer: Yeah, you hit on two key things and that's being able promote someone's else's content that could add value to your user and that would otherwise not know about the content. And, it makes the content much less noisy, much more valuable and highly contextual, meaning that it's delivered at the right time and within the right channel to the user.

Mike: Absolutely.

Interviewer: Okay, let's get specific, so for a new podcast, a new book launch like *In the Know*, how would you recommend Snip.ly to do initially grow our audience and visibility, if you wouldn't mind just sharing something specific like this, for a new business that's launching?

Mike: Yeah, of course. So especially for new businesses, and that's us included as well. We still very much consider ourselves to be a startup. It takes a lot of resources to generate original content. And even if you do, you may not be able to do it on a daily basis. You got Twitter streams, they're rolling, and rolling, and rolling, you do want to be sharing something every day and even throughout the day. So with Snip.ly it allows you to not just wait for your original content to be published before you can interact with your audience.

You can begin curating content, looking for important resources that you think your users would find useful, and sharing those links, and not just seeing how many clicks they give, but begin to really see how many conversions you're getting from the shared content, from third party content, that's one way. A second way is earned media. So not just for shared a related article in the industry, but if somebody else wrote about your show *In the Know*, and you want to share that article where they talk about you, that's also a great opportunity for you to not just only share that piece,

but also include a call to action, and tell them really what you want them to do.

Do you want them to subscribe to your show? Do you want them to watch your show? Do you want them to download an app? And that's the power of the call to action is that as a publisher or as a curator, you always have – or as a business as a whole – you always have a call to action, something you want the users to do. That ranges from signups to downloads, all sorts of things, but that may not necessarily come through if you simply just share a link. And you don't want people to just read an article, move on, and forget about your brand, and that's where Sniply comes in, it gives you the power to do that.

Interviewer: That's awesome. Now you've been growing fast Mike, and you have some pretty big brands using your product, which congratulations for that. before we get into those case studies, can you give us some details about a specific tactic that you've been using to grow your business, something that's really been working for you, and if you can provide any metrics that would be fantastic as well?

Mike: Of course. When we first started, as I mentioned earlier it's such a struggle to produce original content, so we looked to other brands that have done it really well. And for me it was Buffer. You know, Buffer is in the social media space. They deal with a lot of small businesses and we love their content. What I actually do is I actually take the Buffer blog's RSS feed, and I connect it directly to our Twitter feed. So I make sure that whenever they publish a blog post, I'm one of the first accounts to share it. It's instantaneous, when they share I share.

Interviewer: Wow, that's perfect.

Mike: And of course – you know, there's our call to action on it, so it benefits us for sharing their content. They of course get the support of pretty much our entire brand. We're always pushing their content, so it benefits Buffer as well. So just to give you an idea in the past month, we've had 400 – 4,217 clicks on those Buffer links, 450 conversions, that's a 10.67 conversion rate.

Interviewer: Oh, wow.

Mike: And we've shared 71 snips in the past 30 days. So that's 10 percent conversion rate. And what I really like about the product that we've put together is that, you know, it's not 10 percent better than a previous product or an improvement off of an alternative, these are 10.67 percent of conversions that otherwise would have never existed because there was no way for them to come back to our brand. And so that's what we've been seeing personally on our own usage.

Interviewer: Wow. You know, Insiders, I'm talking to everybody here, if that statistic doesn't get your blood pumping I don't know what could. I mean, that is an amazing conversion rate. That's awesome. I would imagine Mike, you've tried a lot of different marketing tactics from your previous businesses to what you're doing now, to try to grow your business, and what marketing pitfalls, or what were some of the hiccups and challenges specifically that you encountered along your journey, and how has it helped you shape how you do things today?

Mike: Oh, plenty. I mean, I've worked on previous startups before, and in many ways Snip.ly is almost a marketing strategy in and of itself. We were developing new marketing strategies when we came up with the idea to build this product. But I think above all else, the biggest mistakes I've made in the past is looking to more the go to generic, you know, associating marketing with buying online ads and seeing that as the only way. Well, let's look at how do we grow our audience? Well, let's get some Google ads, Facebook ads. And you and your audience probably know it's much more complicated than that, even if you have ads it's how do you manage those ads, what keywords do you go for? For me it boils down to how well do you know your audience?

Are you able to step in the shoes of your potential customer and tell me what they do on a daily basis? What kind of Facebook pages do they visit? What kind of articles do they read? What communities do they hang out in online? And I think once you understand almost down to the grain what the day to day life is of a typical customer profile, you can then look at: okay, where is the best place to reach them? And understanding that part is all about conversations, it's about talking to people, understanding them.

And that goes back to what I said earlier in how I spend most of my time on customer support because I think it's important, not just to understand your own product through their eyes, but to

understand their lifestyle, their values, what they care about, what drives them, because that's where marketing comes in. How do you tap into those desires that they have, or ambitions that they have, and how do you help them achieve what they want to achieve. To me that's marketing.

Interviewer: It's really about finding the motivation, isn't it? and I think that you're – correct me if I'm wrong – but what I'm hearing from you is you're probably not a supporter of be everywhere.

Mike: Right.

Interviewer: You're saying: hey, let's go to the places where these customers really do want our service or product.

Mike: Yes.

Interviewer: And they need it. And we're developing our product specifically for that particular person, and it may not be on this channel, or it may not be over here, you really hone it down to a specific place, that's cool.

Mike: Absolutely.

Interviewer: That's great. So I would love – I can't wait to go over your client case studies and how they're using Sniply?

Mike: Yeah.

Interviewer: I'm excited about this. Let's dive in. I'm just gonna hand it over to you, and let's talk about – well, you've got a few to share, so let's dive in.

Mike: [Specific Case Study Content Only Available on Podcast at Marketing In The Know].

Interviewer: That's perfect. Now Mike, I want to follow your growth curve. I'm excited about it. I know you have more case studies. And I say let's save some of those case studies, let's have you back on later. I think what you're doing is amazing. It's innovative, it's cool, and I love it. I have a couple of questions to close out this conversation that I ask everybody. If you were to hire one person on your growth or marketing team, what would you be looking for and why?

Mike: I think it really ties into a lot of the things that I said earlier. I would bring on someone who is very good with people, talking to people, because that's what I really believe in. If there was one person I would hire, they would be similar to my role, but go much deeper into understanding who we're working with, our customers and our users. I deal with hundreds of support tickets per day. And it's difficult for me to have long and real conversations with each of those users about not just bug reports, but really what do they think of Snip.ly, what do they see in the future of Snip.ly? Because I've always believed that's the foundation of marketing and growth is really it starts with the understanding of your average user, or even in extreme cases, how do you get to know your extremely big user and extremely small user?

And the role that I would hire in the growth requirement would be that, to go really deep and start to segment our users into: okay, this is type A, type B, type C users. Here's what defines them. Here's their goals and motivations. And then start to devise a strategy on how we would go after them, that's the role I would imagine.

Interviewer: You know, you're a bright guy, articulate, could I just take you and put you in front of several clients that I have right now? You're very articulate. You're hitting on some of the key things that I believe in as well and that is people. You're a people first kind of guy. You want to know your customer's pain points. Everything you do you develop out of that feedback and those pain points, I love that. I know we've had a pretty good discussion today, but what would be the best marketing or growth tip that you've received in your life or you read about, that you could offer our Insiders.

Mike: And I think you actually kind of touched on it too is people first. And I think that actually transcends beyond growth. Because that mentality builds the foundation of your company, your project that you're working on.

Interviewer: It sure does.

Mike: And not just customer profiles, employee profiles, potential employee profiles. What does the perfect employee look like? How do you understand their needs and motivations and ambitions because I think that's a big part of growing, too. Growth to me is

not just external and the number of customers or users. Growth is also internal, how do you find the right partners to work with, the right people, employees, partners? And for me it's always people first because the products are built to solve the problems of people, and if you don't understand the people, then you don't understand the problem. And you can't solve a problem that you don't understand.

Interviewer: That's perfect. You're gonna hear me, or see me quoting Mike from Sniply said XYZ all over the place. Well, that's a wrap. Mike, thank you so much for coming on today. It was so insightful, and I'm really excited to help you get the word out on Sniply. And if you'd like to find out more, head on over to www.snip.ly, or head over to beinthknow.co to find out more information. Again Mike, thanks so much.

Mike: Thank you so much for having me.

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Duration: 24 minutes