



Roger C. Parker Interview Transcription

Chuck: Hello everyone. Today we are going to be talking with Roger C. Parker, who is a marketing coach and author of over 30 best-selling books on computing, design and marketing. He is an avid mind mapper. He has been devoting a lot of time and attention lately to creating and sharing tools to help other people become successful published authors. Roger is one of those unique souls who believes in being very, very generous in sharing his experience, expertise and insights, whether it's on his Published & Profitable blog, in a special report or as a guest post in places like the Mindjet blog. Welcome, Roger, it is wonderful to have you with us today.

Roger: It's great to be here, Chuck.

Chuck: Why don't we start out this conversation by telling our listeners a little bit about your business, how it evolved over the years and the kind of things you are focusing on today.

Roger: Well, originally, I was going to be the great American history professor. I wanted to be a teacher. I had the good fortune to be mentored by a lot of great history professors at Clark University and I thought it was going to be great. Soon after I graduated from college, I discovered small business marketing and I discovered how much fun it is to have control of my time and to work in a small environment and I just got into more of an educational role as an outside consultant and as a writer very early on.

Today I have Published & Profitable, I spend my time helping subject area experts build their personal brand through writing and publishing. I help them leverage their expertise into writing projects, to generate profits and open doors of opportunity. In most cases, I am a mentor or partner sharing my experiences and the observations I have gained while interviewing over 500 published authors. I help them set up their blogs and websites and everything like that. That's where I am. In some cases, I am a ghostwriter. I love books and I love helping people take their knowledge and organize it and see that they have the makings of a really big career-building

book. I am very fortunate with Published & Profitable, because I can be both a teacher and set my own hours.

Chuck: It sounds like a very important role, Roger. I would guess that most people really don't have much of a sense about how to go about publishing a book. There are probably a lot of people who would like to be able to do it, but they don't know where to start.

Roger: It's true. It's the organization and what I have always shared with people, is writing a book sounds like "Oh my gosh, there are so many things that I have to do". But, those who write books discover that writing a book is just a matter of the constant process of breaking a big project into little steps and I help people recognize that a book is not a miracle or piece of magic or a creative inspiration.

A book is simply ten chapters and in each chapter you have ten ideas. From that perspective, instantly, people say, "Oh! ten chapters." You have ten chapters divided into ten ideas and suddenly your book is written by simply filling in the blanks. Remember the paint-by-numbers idea? That is how I teach writing. It's like paint-by-numbers. You plan your book and you go from there. Suddenly, it's not a matter of going away for three months, it's a matter of spending 30 or 45 minutes a day. It's consistent progress.

Chuck: It sounds like just as much having a clear plan for what you are going to be writing.

Roger: Right, I have been very fortunate. I have interviewed Mike Gerber and read his books and I like to help writers create what he has helped all businesses create, which is a process. Things that are events don't get well done. But when it is a process, it's much better and it's much easier to enjoy great success.

Chuck: When you say "event" are you speaking in context of something that's kind of a one-off creation, something that doesn't have a lot of structure to it?

Roger: A one-off inspiration or creative inspiration project is like saying "I'm going to write my book this summer." Which is a horrible thing to do to yourself because the minute you sit down to write your book, suddenly you have expectations and you judge what you are writing and it's not good enough because Hemingway wrote better sentences and the stress builds and you go through the summer and haven't done anything and it's all stress. However, if you say, "Look: I'm going to spend 30 minutes a day and tonight I'm going to write about the idea for chapter 6," you'll find you have written couple paragraphs, get started and pretty soon you've got a page and a half done. Go on to something else and then tomorrow, you do another point or another chapter and suddenly you are moving forward. Most authors make the mistake of writing from

chapter one forward. That's awful because you don't know where your book will go once you write it. But if you break it down to ten chapters and ten ideas and you complete those ideas enough of them, suddenly you know what you are going to say in your first chapter.

Chuck: Based on what I have read on your Published & Profitable blog, and I have been following your stuff for years, I know that you believe that mind mapping software is an essential tool for doing that sort of up front planning.

Roger: Very definitely because when I discovered mind mapping, it solved all or most of my problems. When I wrote "Looking Good in Print," I wrote it from chapter one forward and luckily it just happened. It was very stressful, however. But now, having the idea of a ten chapter, ten points and consistent daily progress, the writing and the whole deadline issue became a non-issue. There is no stress or very little opportunity to develop writer's block, which is where you find you can't get anything written. Basically, mind mapping eliminates or can eliminate the stress and the panic that typically accompanies writing.

Chuck: Where are you using it in your business?

Roger: There are three main areas and I'm pretty excited about it because I have been in business since the bicentennial almost, now it's easier than ever. I have a content map or a content dashboard that I have created and it is a single map that automatically loads when I activate MindManager. So, instantly I am taken to the Roger Content Dashboard. The Roger Content Dashboard has six primary categories. Clients, Competition, Events, Promotion, Resources and Writing. So, you have a very simple map that shows that. From that I can do anything that I want.

For example, if I click on "Clients" it takes me to the first call and mind map I have created. The first time I have spoke to that client. I use mind maps with every client during our coaching sessions. If I click on "Competition," it gives me the URLs to the website and blogs of my biggest competitors. If I click on "Events," it gives me a list of upcoming teleseminars, upcoming interviews and upcoming tutorials that I am preparing. "Writing" obviously takes me to my writing templates.

One of my templates is a universal project planner that has been everything from a one page tip sheet to a book. And I use that as a guide. The thing to remember is from those six categories, each of those topics opens to reveal links to individual maps. Let me explain. Click on "Blogs" under "Promotion," and I have articles, blog posts, incentives, landing pages and one sheets. Again, my content dashboard Promotion is one of the most important topics. Promotion opens to reveal articles, blog posts, incentives, landing pages and one sheets. Each of those is a category of promotion.

Click on “Blogs” and it opens a new map that displays eleven blogs I currently post on. It’s wonderful because when I get to my blogs map, I can see at a glance the topics I posted on each blog as well as the topics I want to post about. I do a lot of guest blogging and each time I post a blog, I will list the topic or the title. Next to it is a link on that so I can go and I click on a link to access that post whether it is on my blog or any of the other blogs. I also have a link to the word process file for that blog. I have had some real scares and I have a very good friend who has written about a year and a half worth of blog post but she didn’t have it backed up on her computer. It was awful because when that blog went down, and it was an outsourced blog, she lost all of these wonderful ideas. I insist on having access to each of my blog topics so I can find the file that I wrote or I can click on files I am in the process of writing.

The other thing that I have learned from my content management is when I am doing a guest blog post, I do it as part of a series. I encourage people to think in terms if you are doing guest posting the Seven Pillars of Blog Content or the Seven Habits of a Successful Author. Do it as a series of posts. Even if they are one month apart, it provides a framework for a series and each one of the series sells the importance of the other posts.

Chuck: It sounds like one of the benefits of having this map of all these guest posts that you have done is you make sure that you are not hitting the same ground again and again.

Roger: Right, and that’s why I do it for my own blog and when you see the post, you can adapt things. You can see them and say “Gee, this can be used in a book as a chapter or these are the ideas that I can rewrite for another blog post.” Most writers tend to love the act of reinventing the wheel. It’s fun to be creative, it’s fun to take nothing and make it into something. The problem is there are only so many hours in the day.

By focusing on, hypothetically, on the one hundred big ideas you have, you can make more money. One of the people that I follow very aggressively is named Bud Bilanich, and he has a blog called The Common Sense blog. I think he has perfected hypothetically one hundred ideas. He has his own cycle of creativity, competence and credibility. Now, what he does is he addresses those main ideas, there are like 25 ideas in 4 categories, and he has information products that he sells ranging in price from free to \$9.95 to \$39.95 and he has refined this and he now come out with a book that he gives away. He’s now identified the points and he wrote a Twitter book called “Success Tweets” and he wrote one of those books based on 140 character Twitter posts. Then he is going through each of those 140 ideas and expanding them into blog posts. Pretty soon he is going to have a \$300 information product.

I think you have to have a mind map to see what are the components of my idea. What are the steps? What's the process? What are the component parts and how can I condense idea #54 into a one paragraph tip or, how can I expand it into a white paper? That's what the ability to see information in its context can provide. You can vary the shape of the information, you can vary the format, but you have to be able to see it in the sense of the whole part and it has to be visually displayed.

Chuck: Which is impossible any other way.

Roger: Exactly. Let's take a Word outline. Microsoft Word has a fairly good outliner built in. The problem with outlines is as you go down to the bottom of the outline, you don't see what is above. You are constantly changing screen views. You are constantly clicking but you are always forgetting what came above. The idea of a mind map allows you to see everything in its context.

I had a lot of trouble with managing manuscripts and locating files. The nice thing about the content dashboard is that I have basically three-click access to about 80% of the projects that I am working on. If I click on "Clients" for example, I click on the client's link to the planning map and that links to the mind maps that are created during each call. If I click on "Events," I can see at a glance that next week I am going to be talking on my Tuesday session about putting mind maps online. More importantly, I do weekly teleseminar interviews and I base them on templates so that I don't have to reinvent next Wednesday night's call because I know that it is going to have three main segments. I know it is going to have an Introduction, a Call to Action and basic questions about background.

When somebody says what about when you interviewed Michael Gelb, who wrote "Think Like DaVinci," even though that's about 4 years old, I can easily access the questions I asked. It's pretty exciting. I click on Chuck Frey interview and suddenly I see some sample questions that I have tentatively prepared answers for, not as a script, but just as a confidence builder as key words that I can glance at and instantly remember what I wanted to talk about.

I think everybody should have a content dashboard which allows them to access information whether it's clients, competition, events, promotion, resources, etc. Resources are ideas, like, "Oh, look at Chuck blog talks about this, I'll add it to the Resources". And then writing, I began working with MindManager to help me organize a book and the whole idea of the hierarchy and sequence just fell into place for me. It was what I have been looking for about the last 20 years that I didn't know I needed because "I could write good." Well, the ability to write is not necessarily the root to success. A lot of people write very well, but it's those who harness what they have written and repurpose it and recycle it, they are the successes.

Chuck: Let me just ask you, when you work with these maps, are you just basically rearranging the topics and subtopics and links and hierarchy or are you also using some of MindManager's project management tools like creating tasks and adding icons or symbols to help add context or meaning to different topics?

Roger: I do a lot with the deadlines and the ideas of filtering deadlines to just show me the topics or the projects that have to be done today. I don't do it as aggressively as I could, but I like to think I'm like everyone else, I am a work in progress. I am so happy with the idea of the content dashboard as a tool for not losing files and be able to instantly access things. I consider it is enough but I do encourage others to use mind maps for project management.

What I do is when I create a mind map of a book, I play a little game with myself. I have a mind map for a book and there are ten chapters on it and you click on each of the chapter titles and you see the main points that are going to be covered in that chapter, and as I write the first draft of those points, I play a game. I generally make the topic grayed out. So the topics that haven't been written are against a white background the ones that have been written are black type against a gray background so they are not attention-getting. It is a ritual. Writing is based on ritual and habits; each time I finish a writing session and I have covered a topic, I really enjoy making it grayed out and then I filter the map to do not show anything with a gray background and then I am focused on what I have to do next. It's just a game, it could be a red check mark or any number of things. It could even be MindManager's task icon that allows you to show how much progress you have made on a map.

When I work with clients who have co-authors, I use the "resource" capabilities or feature to indicate who is going to write which chapter and when it needs to be done. You grow into mind mapping. You find new uses as you use it. You find yourself asking, "how could I have not used this for the last ten years?" I am constantly discovering new things.

Chuck: You are the one who pointed out several years ago, Roger, that as you are writing a book or working out chapter ideas that if you have ideas floating around your head to put them in notes and then once you convert that map into a Word document you find that your chapters are almost half written.

Roger: Right. Essentially, it does permit you to write your proposal because a proposal is typically shorter than a book. I start most topics as notes because when you come up with ideas, it's not as if you are sitting there looking at a blank screen saying "Oh, what am I going to write today?" It's typically when you are looking at the map and you see point 3 of chapter 4 is "Avoiding a blue book cover," just hypothetically, and then you think to yourself, "Oh yeah, here's an exception, that's a pretty good cover" and then I'm looking at some books on

information management and marketing and they have blue covers too and suddenly a lot of little ideas are sparked now while you are writing but while you are looking at your map.

I use the comments feature for reviewing maps that my clients make. I can add, "What do you mean by this?" or "What about this?" type comments to maps and I also use the tracking maps a lot during calls to track changes and additions. There is a lot of capability for the advanced user but also a lot of simple joy in seeing ten chapters, each containing ten ideas or being able to click on "Chuck interview" and seeing the questions. It's fun.

Chuck: Roger, we have talked quite a bit about writers throughout this call so far but I sense that a lot of the principles that you are talking about especially with the content dashboard have a lot of applicability to any type of business our listeners might be in.

Roger: Right. I think anyone who blogs definitely should be blogging from a map that will display the topics covered as well as the topics they want to cover and planning one sheets. A one sheet is a single page document that can be used to sell your speaking services or the topics you speak on or an individual topic in specific detail. That comes down to a lot of information and having the ability to plan your one sheets. So anyone who is marketing also websites in general, you can use a mind map to create the information flow or navigation of a website. Also, everybody has competition. You should be able to go to your top ten competitors blog or website by clicking so you can instantly see what they are talking about now.

Chuck: That's a great idea.

Roger: Your idea of transferring skills from writing to a broader context one of the most important series of maps that I have created for authors is how to analyze books online. What are the steps you should take and what do I look for? If I am going to write a book I would need to identify the ten biggest, best-selling books in my area. You have a map with the first level that displays the most popular and/or most respected books on Amazon in your area. Then you need a structure for analyzing that book in greater detail. Meaning how many reader reviews does it have? What year did that book come out? What other books has the author written? What are the books that are typically sold when people visit this page? What are books that are packaged with this book? You have an awful lot of information there and having the ability to create a mind map that guides you as you review each of these books is really important.

But that's the same with everyone. Everyone should know what their competition is doing in any number of ways. How long have they been in business? How strong is their website? Do they have a good blog? How often do they post to Twitter? What are the links to their LinkedIn and Facebook accounts? So you can do, in any field, the competitive analysis you have to do to succeed.

Chuck: Absolutely. In as well not just in the marketing research end of it but in terms of developing your strategy, the last thing you want to do is market your product exactly the same way as everyone else. You need to differentiate yourself.

Roger: Right. That's a good point. Unfortunately, writers tend to think that good writing is enough and it really isn't. A unique niche and an engagement factor that makes it easy for people to choose your title over any other title and to write your title you have to know the titles of others. It all fits together.

Chuck: What do you wish writers knew about mind mapping software? We have talked about a lot of this so far on this call. Are there any other things you wish they knew to be smarter in their use of it?

Roger: Yes, I have identified a couple of things from the pragmatic to the abstract. One of them is to plan your writing so that you can track, reuse, recycle and reformat your ideas. So many bloggers have great ideas that they have addressed once and they are lost somewhere in their archives. You have to be able to bring back to the surface good ideas that you have posted before. One of the things that I like most about the Seth Godin blog is that he frequently does the "best of topics" on this, you know, the best of blog posts, I have written about topic A, topic B.

The other thing that it took me a long time to really recognize is that mind maps are not really intended to be used just by themselves. I was creating individual maps as an end to themselves. But I think that mind maps are best when they are linked to other mind maps. They are linked to other files. And they are printed. One of the most important recommendations I could give to people is print the mind map about the topics you are going to write about tomorrow and review it right before you go to sleep. If you are going to be writing about a specific topic tomorrow, print out the mind map and review it in bed. You are going to get new ideas and then you jot those down on pen and paper and when you wake up you will go, "Oh, OK". So, it is the interchangeability of maps.

We have already talked about starting writing projects using the notes feature and then exploring your maps to a word processor. A simple thing that I am amazed that more people don't use as aggressively is keyboard shortcuts. Most people, even people who have been using mind mapping for a year or so, when they want to copy and paste they click on the word or the topic they want to move and they go to the menu and open the menu where it says copy and they reopen the menu and paste. All of these programs, MindManager especially, have keyboard shortcuts that can save you great amounts of time.

I like the sorting feature. I like to number and sort my topics so I can see how the sequence should best be. The other thing that I discovered last summer that I have been proseletizing is a relatively recent feature of level of MindManager things is "view topic only." View topic only eliminates all the clutter. It only displays obviously the current topic but it also controls what gets printed. So if you have a big mind map, you can print it with one topic per page that will allow you to have six printed out pages but they are big enough to be useful. So the view topic only feature is really important.

Chuck: I have been a fan of that functionality for a long time and Inspiration was the first program that I saw that did that. It allowed you to focus on one topic and I am a little bit ADD. I tend to be a little bit distracted so that was fantastic for me to be able to put everything else aside, focus on one topic, develop it fully and then focus on another area and fully develop that. I'm very glad to see that MindManager added that functionality.

Roger: It is a lifesaver. I think it is a matter of viewing everything as a process and using MindManager or whatever program you are using to maximize that process. One of my favorite books is The Habits of Success and Mark Victor Hansen, John Canfield and one other individual talk about your habits are your success. If you have the habits, if you replace spontaneous writing with planned writing, it becomes so easy. I have learned a lot in the last two years from book coaches like Jack Hart or Don Murray who became writing coaches from a newspaper background. That's really entirely logical because newspaper reporters don't have the ability to say well, "I'm depressed today, I'm not going to write". When there has been a fire, you have to write and you have to write a good piece before the next edition of the paper and if you learn to think in terms of a writing process, you don't have to be creative. Most writing can always be improved once you have the first draft but you can't improve something that you didn't write because you were sweating profusely and stressed out. I think mind mapping takes this away and simplifies it.

The other thing that I think writers should be aware of is the next step down the road. And I think the next step down the road is definitely in the direction of online mind maps where you use an online mind map to either as a website navigation tool or an interactive tool to engage visitors in your next book or as an alternative way to explore topics on your blog post. Personal Brain is working with this and there are examples online at WilliamReed.jp. He has several "web brains." I started to create web brains so that the navigation of your website or your book's table of contents can be an online mind map. It's not a perfectly executed at this point, the technology is still in beta, but it does work and people can click on topics. It makes a whole different engaging experience.

Chuck: I have seen some of that and I kind of like it but I think with The Brain and web brains they are both done by the same developer so as you drill down through it

everything kind of moves around it, you kind of tend to get lost. You are too enmeshed in the trees and you can't see the forest anymore, at least that's been my experience.

Roger: Well, you know everything is developing. We are happy with and people who are mind mapping experts like what they like because they are used to it. Here is an example of one of the things that really was interesting. My latest book is called Tweet: 140 Bite-Sized Ideas for Compelling Article, Book, & Event Titles. Now, that book was written in the mind map and the hardest part of writing that book was identifying the 140 points. I did that in an afternoon. One Saturday afternoon, I created five or six categories or sections of the book. For example, the ten big ideas, examples of good titles, a section on a process for choosing a title, another section on researching your title online, another one was how to survey your market and double check your title choice before the printing press is turned on. Then it was a matter of writing the ideas down and then in (topic) notes I had text for each of the ideas. And that was in one afternoon. Writing and finalizing and tweaking took more time, it took a couple of days, because you have to have 140 characters or less and this included not only the big idea, meaning your title should offer an obvious promise to your reader, for example Get Clients Now by C.J. Hayden, now getting that down to 140 characters was harder than identifying the idea itself. But then when I exported it to Word and sent it off to the publisher, basically it was done. It was just a matter of cleaning it up from that point.

Chuck: Very interesting. In closing, Roger, where can our listeners find your work online? What are your main points of presence that you encourage people to visit?

Roger: Published & Profitable (<http://www.publishedandprofitable.com>) is my home site at this point. It is where I have numerous templates in the member area and many features and examples and samples in the sample content area. I'm really happy about the Published & Profitable blog which is obviously accessed from Published & Profitable. I blog about writing and the writing process for Active Garage (<http://www.activegarage.com/>) and I write once a week for Dan Schawbel's Personal Branding Blog (<http://www.personalbrandingblog.com/>). I have a continuing series of posts about the content dashboard on the Mindjet Blog (<http://blog.mindjet.com/>). These are all inter-related and they are all different content in each post. I just use it as a way of exploring new ideas and going back and simplifying things.

Chuck: When you say that it sounds like your system must be working very well for you.

Roger: Thank you, Chuck.

Chuck: Thanks again for your time today, Roger. I appreciate it.

Roger: Thank you Chuck. I continue to be inspired by your work and how much I have learned from your posts and the new technologies and tips that you are constantly coming up with. Together we will rule the world.

Chuck: Thanks again.

Roger: Bye now.