



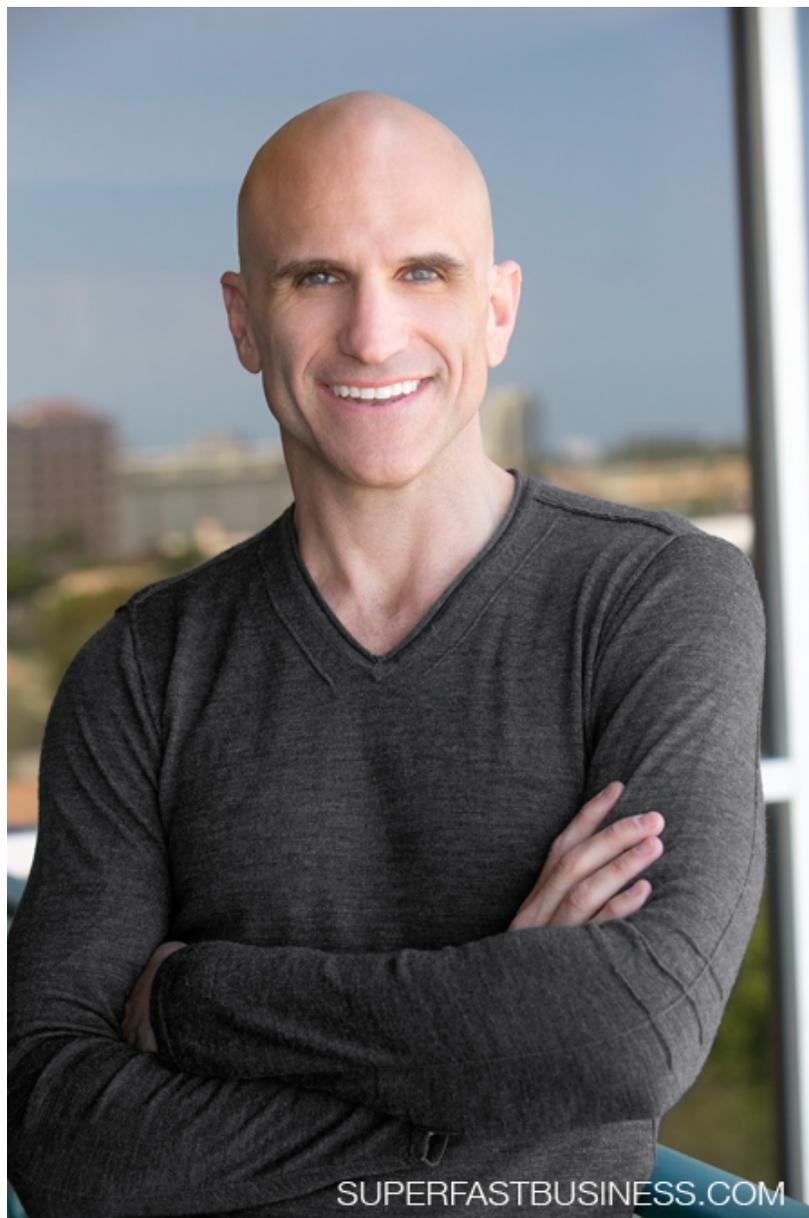
SuperFastBusiness Presents

Communicate Confidently And Steal The Show With Michael Port

Useful tips for delivering your message and achieving your communication goals.

Communicate Confidently And Steal The Show With Michael Port

by SuperFastBusiness



James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness.com. Today,

we're talking about how you can communicate better. I've invited a world expert, also a New York Times best selling author, Michael Port. Welcome.

Michael: Thank you very much.

James: Michael, we're talking about "Steal the Show," which is a new book that you are just launching at time of recording. Are you excited?

Michael: I am beyond excited. A little bit nervous and a little bit tired because launching a book takes all of your heart and soul, and it's worth it ultimately because if you care deeply about the work that you're doing, there are certain people who you're meant to serve. The work you do is to reach them. So I feel really grateful. I have a lot of gratitude, appreciation.

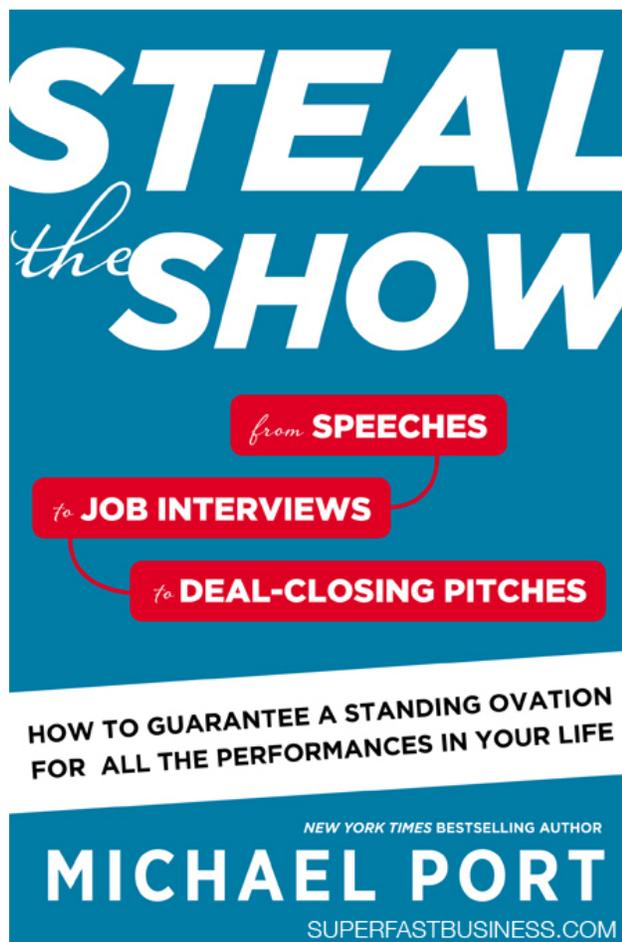
James: Well you had a previous book called "Book Yourself Solid." What prompted you to come out with another book?

Michael's career

Michael: "Book Yourself Solid"

came out in 2006. We've been focusing on that primarily. Over the years, what I've realized is that many of the very successful people, not only in my industry but throughout the world are the greatest performers in the world. And hopefully, authentic at the same time. Sometimes, people think that performing is inauthentic, that when you're performing, you're faking something. Nothing could be further from the truth from my perspective, with respect to what I've offered in "Steal the Show."

When you look at people who have done very, very well, they are able to play lots of different roles, they've got different styles of behavior, they are comfortable with discomfort, they're good at saying yes, they're good at acting as if, they're great at improvisation, staying in the moment and so much more. Then they have the mindset of the performer.



Now I was an actor. That was my first career. I have a Masters of Fine Arts from the graduate acting program at NYU, and I worked professionally in shows like "Sex and the City," "Third Watch," "All My Children," "Law and Order," "100 Centre Street." I did movies like "The Pelican Brief," "Down to Earth," "The Believer," "Last Call." And I made my bread and butter doing voiceovers for brands like AT&T, Pizza Hut, Coors, Budweiser, AMC, MTV and others.

When I look back on my career, the same thing is true. I have been able to move pretty seamlessly from one career to the next, from one project to the next, from one group to the next, using what I know about performance from my days as an actor. So I created a modern methodology that the non-actor can use to shine during all the spotlight moments of their lives because if you think about your life, your success is in large part a result of how you perform during the high-stake moments of your life. The outcome of those performances makes up the narrative of your life.

So I want to help people write the narrative, the story, that is the story that they want to tell by succeeding in those high-stakes situations.

James: Yeah that makes a lot of sense. Certainly, you have by far the best voice of anyone I've podcasted with.

Michael: Oh, that's very sweet. Thank you.

James: I feel like I'm immersed in a professional production here just because of the quality of your voice.

Authenticity and performance

I did acting school when I was starting a debt collection job, and I'm sure that it helped me collect payments without getting killed. Then I progressed into a sales role, and then a management role, and now I have this business ownership role, and I can relate to what you're saying about the performance. I imagine that would be a handy skill for Donald Trump right now, being a good performer in his presidential campaign.

Michael: You know interestingly enough, it's one of the things that the press often wants to do. They want me to analyze political figures, and their communication styles, and their ability to perform and speak publicly. Donald is an interesting character because Donald is a quintessential,

authentic performer. Unfortunately, his authenticity is not particularly appealing to many people.

James: He has a way about rubbing people the wrong way, doesn't he?

Michael: He sure does, but you know, he's being himself.

James: He's authentic. It's great.

Michael: He is authentic, unless of course, I don't know him so I don't know how much of it is an act and how much of it is authentic. That's one of the things that's interesting about the world of politics. We make this assumption that people are behaving inauthentically because they'll say whatever they need to say, either to get some attention or to get a vote. But fortunately, most of us aren't in that world. Most of us are in a world where people will give us the benefit of the doubt.

Now as a debt collector or in sales, maybe people don't. So your authenticity is even more important. The demonstration of that authenticity right upfront is so incredibly important because all interactions that we have with people should be proportionate to the amount of trust that we've earned. This is true for our sales interactions. This is true for our interpersonal interactions. A first date is a kind of performance and hopefully an authentic one once again, because if it's not, you're probably not going to get a second one.

Certainly when you're on stage, any audience interaction that you have should be proportionate to the amount of trust that you've earned. For example, if you start a speech and the first thing you ask, "Everybody raise your hand if you are in debt." I'm not sure that people are going to want to raise their hand in front of other people that they don't know and share something that personal. So we want to make sure that anything that we're asking of others is proportionate to the amount of trust that we've earned.

We are all performers

James: Excellent. So if I were to look at this from a timeline perspective, the transition from "Book Yourself Solid" to "Steal the Show" is really saying, hey, anyone can gain from being a better performer. They can persuade and motivate and inform. Even if they're not speaking from platform.

Michael: Yeah absolutely. I think that we are all performers, whether we

realize it or not. What I want people to see is that that performer is already inside them. What I want to do is help them access that natural performer, find their own style. I don't want anyone to adopt my style because it won't work for them, just like I won't adopt somebody else's style because it wouldn't work for me.

Each one of us is an individual. Performance should be unique and individual to each one of us. Performance doesn't mean that you're an entertainer necessarily. Performance doesn't mean that you have a big personality, that you're loud, that you get people to laugh. Performance is ultimately about connecting with other people.

Having a clear objective

So what we're doing is we're using the actor's craft to understand how to connect with other people authentically in the moment and intentionally. So one of the things that we do, one of the performance principles is having a very clear objective. If we have a very clear objective and we have a real deep understanding of why we're pursuing that objective, then we will try every tactic we possibly can to achieve that goal; ethically, morally and of course legally.

When I say we're going to try every tactic, we are going to take more risks. When trying different tactics to get where we want to go, we're going to be more comfortable with discomfort. If we find that our softer, more laid back approach isn't getting us where we want to go, well we need to adapt a different style of behavior for that particular situation, and maybe we need to be more assertive. Maybe we need to be more direct and clear with respect to what we want.

We need to then take those tactics or that tactic and put it into play to see if we can achieve that result. Well if that doesn't work, what's the next tactic we're going to try? What's the next style of behavior we're going to adopt and use in order to achieve that goal? It's very important that our motivation is high because if we're going after things that we don't really want that much, we just think we should be going after them. It's really hard to play that role fully.

James: That sounds like a student whose parents want them to be a doctor.

Michael: That's exactly right. What you do then is you say, "Well, I'll play the

role because I'm cast in this role by my parents, but I'm not really that passionate about it." It's why sometimes you see actors give great performances and in others, the same actor won't give a great performance. A large part of this is because they're not connected to that material, and they took a project that they probably shouldn't have. Maybe they took it for the money, maybe some other reason, but the more connected we are to the work that we're doing and the project that we are pursuing, the more expressed we'll be. Or fully self-expressed.

One of the things that people will receive, will achieve when they read "Steal the Show" is a real, true sense of efficacy, self-efficacy. They really will believe they have a clear and real, true depth of understanding of what they are capable of. Because if we feel that we can accomplish the things that we want to accomplish and that's self-efficacy, and if we have a high level of self-esteem, then we're confident. And then if we're confident, we are much more willing to go after what we want fully.

Sometimes, we need to act "as if." Acting "as if" is a very powerful imagination technique that you can use tactically to put yourself in a position that might make you nervous. You know, you step into a new leadership position or step into a sales position, you need to act as if you are comfortable there, as if you are making the right choices. Because if you act as if you are someone who continues to question themselves, who doesn't believe that they are worthy of that moment, then you won't be worthy of that moment.

So performance is such a big part of all the different things we do on a daily basis. I want people to understand how to intentionally leverage performance skills.

James: OK. So we've covered the idea that if you have clear objectives, that's sort of like to finding what show you'd like to steal and you connect to it, and you can be a better performer. Let's talk about some of the tools in the tool kit from "Steal the Show." I think you've got a few nice frameworks that might be worth discussing.

Tools and frameworks from 'Steal the Show'

Michael: Sure. When you're going after a big goal and you want people to say yes to you, you can design your presentation. This can be a presentation that you give on a stage, in a room, in front of a number of

people, or it's the way that you present yourself and your idea to an individual person, and that might be in a job interview or negotiation or even in a personal relationship. If you want to try to get someone to think differently or feel differently or see the world differently.

5 components of a great presentation

There are five components that are essential, and they are present in virtually any great presentation that you've ever seen. Number one is a big idea. We want to come to any type of presentation with a big idea. Now the big idea doesn't have to be different to make a difference. It just has to be true for you. It's not so much what you say but how you say it that makes the biggest difference. So what is your big idea? That's number one.

Number two, what's the promise that you deliver? The big idea is what supports that promise because of course, people are more likely to say yes to you if they want what comes with your promise. They want that end result.

Number three is making sure that you can demonstrate, that you know how the world looks to the people on the other side of your story. People in the audience, people sitting across the table from you. It's important that they know that you know the way the world looks to them because if they distance themselves from you, if they feel that you don't understand them, then they may not believe you, they may not listen to you. It's very easy to write you off by saying, "Well my situation is different. You don't really get me."

Anybody that's been in a challenging conversation with a partner, a spouse, a boyfriend, a girlfriend, has probably been in the situation where the other person says, "Well you don't really understand what I'm saying here. You're not getting me." You really want to understand each other. So the audience needs to know that you understand the way the world looks to them if you want them to buy into your big idea to go after the promise because that promise and the big idea may be confronting to them.

Because if you're asking them to change the way they see the world or you're asking them to do something different, well that may be confronting because they've been doing the thing they're doing, or they believe the thing they believe for the last 30 years.

Changing a worldview in such a significant way might bring up a number of issues for them. It might make them question how they've been behaving. How they've interacted with other people, the choices that they've made. It might mean that they have to learn a whole bunch of new skills if they adapt this new worldview. They have to change the people they're spending time with. They have to change business practices. They have to do things differently. That might be confronting. So the big idea, the promise, and the clear demonstration that you understand the way the world looks to them is essential.

Number four, you want to be able to demonstrate the consequences of not adopting this big idea. For example, if you don't adopt the big idea, that performance is an essential component of all aspects of life, then you may live a very average life. You may not get picked when someone is deciding between you and 10 other people because you faded into the background and played only a small supporting role.

You might fall flat when somebody gives you the mic, and I mean that both literally and figuratively. As a result, you may play someone else's story. You may play the story that your mother expects you to play. You may play the story that a spouse who is prohibitive or constraining wants you to play. Ultimately, that's a really disappointing way to live your life.

The reason that being able to demonstrate the consequences of not adapting your big idea, the reason it's so important is because the fifth component is demonstrating the rewards of adapting your big idea. But if you present the rewards first, oftentimes, what happens is they don't believe it's possible. Now you can present them first. Sometimes I do. But as long as you are also touching on the consequences, you're appealing to both their fear and their desire because we have fears and we have desires. There's nothing wrong with appealing to somebody's fear because you're trying to help them get to the place of the rewards. You're not trying to manipulate them in a negative way that serves you.

All of our work is about others, is about the audience. Stealing the show is a gift that you give to other people, to the audience, to the people that you're working with. If you're on a project and you steal the show, well the whole project looks better. It's very different than upstaging people. Upstaging is taking the spotlight away from them when it's their turn. This is very different. Stealing the show is a gift. Maybe it's about wowing an audience. Maybe it's about connecting with one person to make them feel like a

superstar.

But either way, those five components need to be in place. I mean what kind of presentation are you giving? A big idea, a big promise, a demonstration, you know the way the world looks to them, a demonstration of the consequence of not adopting this big idea, and a demonstration of the rewards of adopting this big idea, and achieving what comes with the promise, achieving the results of the promise.

James: So you've pretty much encapsulated the idea of story there, which we also see in movies. Actually, it's funny when the word movie, I know it comes from moving pictures but it's a lot to do with moving the audience, isn't it? For them to believe the story. You have a basic story premise I think as a backbone for your presentations, you start with circumstance.

A basic story premise

Michael: Yeah. So movies, plays and most theatrical pieces leverage the three-act structure. The three-act structure is Aristotle's. It's not a new structure. Many people are natural storytellers and they adhere to this structure without realizing that they are in fact working their stories, sculpting their stories, molding their stories around this three act structure.

Other people don't feel very confident telling stories and may get hung up when they tell stories because they haven't thought about how to sculpt the story, because just because a story happened to you, it doesn't mean that you're able to tell it to others in a way that makes it compel, even though it was really quite an exciting story for you.

The first time that I tell a story that happened to me, it's not always fantastic. So I've worked on using this structure to improve the way that I tell stories because storytelling, we know is such a powerful device. When we tell stories, we should only be telling stories that are helpful, that move the audience closer to the delivery of the promise.

So we don't tell stories just to tell stories. Most of the articles you see written about public speaking will say, "it's very important to tell a story." OK. Open with a story. To what end? Just because people like stories? I don't think so. I'd rather see a presentation that had no stories that served the promise of the presentation very well than a speech that has lots of stories that didn't really serve the promise of presentation even if the stories

were good ones.

James: So a golden rule must surely be that anything in your communication must have a point.

Michael: Exactly right. There's got to be a reason. Now that doesn't mean we're perfect. I'm not perfect all the time. I'll wander around, trying to get my thoughts together. That's a normal part of the human brain. What we're doing is we're working toward finding the right message to connect emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, maybe even physically with the people that we are trying to serve.

3 acts of every story

So the structure goes like this: there are three acts in every story. The first act is the exposition. This is the given circumstances, the time, the setting, the place. It's the information that we need to know in order to understand what comes next. If we have too much information, then we sometimes get a little bit bored. We say, "Come on, let's get to the meat of it." If we don't have enough information, then we are confused once we get into the meat of the story, and we check out because we are not following it very well. So just enough to understand what's coming next.

The next is act two. Act two is the conflict. This is where things get exciting. Something happens. Some sort of hurdle, some sort of breakdown, some sort of inciting incident that creates tension between the characters in the story. The characters in the story might be you and the woman who worked at AT&T when you called up to ask about your phone. That part of the story is really the majority of it because one conflict creates some sort of response. And then that response creates another conflict, and each conflict produces more action because a response is some kind of action. The more action they have in the story, the more interesting the story.

So act two builds and builds and it builds and it builds to act three, which is the resolution. Resolution is the payoff. The resolution can be quite quick but it comes in different forms. It could be you know, everybody lives happily ever after, or it could be everybody dies in the end, or it's the punchline to a joke, but it's the resolution. It's what we need to resolve the conflict that has occurred in this story.

The longer the story, the bigger the payoff needs to be. Through a quick

short story, the payoff can be, "OK. That's good." But if it's a very long story, it goes on for quite some time, but the payoff is meh, then the story didn't work. It wasn't worth the audience's time to listen to it.

James: Excellent. Talk about content because that's a big term in our space, in the Internet marketing space. We have to create a lot of content. We produce podcasts, we are presenting from platforms, of course we're making videos. You've got a 7-step process for content methodology.

Great frameworks for organizing information

Michael: I do. I do indeed. What I want to do before we go through that, almost maybe instead of because I think that I want to structure people around a number of frameworks, and you mentioned them earlier because I think that if we just go into the content creation mode, we often produce a lot of information but not well-organized information.

So in "Steal the Show," I teach these frameworks first and then I go into how to come up with all the content that goes into the framework because there often isn't a massive difference between the person that is perceived as the expert and the intermediate professional. Because the difference is how well organized that expert's information is.

So I'm going to give you a number of frameworks that you can use to organize your information. The frameworks also help you deliver the information because it makes it easier to remember it, and as a result, it makes it easier to consume the information. In Internet marketing, historically we've heard that content is king. And of course, that makes sense. It's a very sensible idea.

I would posit that consumption might even be more important because the information is not hard to come by. The information is harder to retain. So if you're producing information that people can consume and retain and act on, you're often more effective. You're getting the people that you serve toward the result that they want. So these frameworks help you do that.

I'll use a few books as examples because most of us have read the same books rather than speeches, and content creation on the paper is often similar to content creation for speaking. Now the written word and the speaking word are different. That's very, very important. I just did a blog post for Copyblogger about that particular concept but the structure that

we use for either of those delivery systems is very similar and the ideas of course are similar.

The numeric framework

So the framework that most people, that people are very, very used to, is the numerical framework, very popular. Seven keys, seven rules, seven elements, seven components, etc. One of the reasons that this formula works so well, say Steven Covey's "7 Habits of Highly Effective People." One of the reasons that this framework works so well is because you can deliver all seven of these and it doesn't have to be seven of course, I'm just using that number. You can deliver all seven of these keys or rules, or you can deliver one or two or three or four, you don't have to deliver them in a particular order, and you have a lot of flexibility.

So if you're giving a 20-minute presentation, maybe you just deliver two of those keys. But if you have 60 minutes or 90 minutes, maybe you can deliver all seven. It also allows you to repurpose the content in many different forms as a result.

The chronological framework

The second framework that you can consider combines numerical with chronological. So there's a step-by-step process. People of course love step-by-step processes. It makes it easier for you to remember how to teach it, easier for them to consume it, and it's a very, very logical, linear process, and that can be very helpful for people when they're learning.

So "Your Pregnancy Week by Week" by Glade Curtis is a great of example of this. It's helpful to go week by week rather than jumping around. If you're in the 18th week, it's probably good to stay there before you go on to the 42nd week. Just stay where you are, one step at a time.

"Book Yourself Solid," my first book, is on a chronological framework. In that book, I also used a modular framework, and that's the third framework.

The modular framework

The modular framework allows you to take a lot of big ideas and organize them in such a way that they have their own box. Because if you can take the ideas that are most relevant to each other and put them in their own

box into their own modules, then it makes it easier for people to consume because it doesn't become overwhelming. All these massive ideas running together.

In "Book Yourself Solid," I have four modules, and you go chronologically through those modules. Now interestingly enough, when you have modules, even if there's a chronological format, the framework that you're using, you can actually break them up. Sometimes, I'll teach one module. I'll teach just the first module, I'll teach just the fourth module. A lot of my certified coaches will do that when they're doing shorter presentations, or webinars, etc. because the overall "Book Yourself Solid" system is a very large system that takes time to teach and to implement. So that's a nice way to organize the information both for you as a creator and also for the consumer, the person who is using it.

"Steal the Show" is also organized in that way, in that modular way, and I did it in parts, three different parts. Inside those three different parts, I use different frameworks. So you can mix and match these frameworks. So the second part uses the numerical framework. The third part uses a chronological framework because in the third part, it's a real master class. A tour de force on public speaking techniques specifically, very nitty gritty, technical approach. So I want you to go through the process in a particular order so you're building on your knowledge as you move forward.

So far, we've covered numerical, chronological and modular. There's also problem-solution framework.

The problem-solution framework

This is a great way to get into your material when you're starting out because really all you need to do is identify a number of problems that people have. Again, see how you're bringing in the numerical component and then a solution for each one. So a colleague of ours named Mitch Meyerson wrote a book, and he wrote this I think 25 years ago or so, a book called "Why Parents Love Too Much."

What he identified is that there are certain things that parents do when they are helicopter-type parents. Because they love their children so much that they're actually causing a number of problems So he says, here are all the problems that you create when you are a parent who loves too much. Here are solutions. Here's how you solve these problems. Of course his

answer is not to love your children less, but here's how you show your love in a different way. That's a great way for you to organize your content or for you to conceive of it, organize it and then present it.

The compare and contrast framework

We also have the compare and contrast framework. Jim Collins's book "Good to Great" is a great representation of the compare and contrast framework. He took a number of different companies. Some were good and some became great, and he compared them, and he said, "This is what's similar about these companies and here's what's different."

So you were able to look at what's different and go, "Wow. If I add in those elements to my corporate structure or the way that we behave, then maybe we can also be great." These structures, this kind of organization is so effective for your content development both on paper and on the stage, it makes it a lot easier for you to create it, makes a lot easier for you to deliver it and it makes a lot easier for people to consume it and do something with it.

James: Yeah. That's great to have these frameworks. They remind of some of the ones that I've been exposed to in the past, especially the selling one, which was spin selling. It sounds a lot like the problem-solution framework slightly expanded.

Michael: Yeah, yeah. In a sales conversation, you're looking for "here's the problem, here's the solution, here's the problem, here's the solution." That's right.

James: And in the training frameworks, we're using a format, which I usually use for podcasts and for training things, but I'm a big fan of the modular training. I like that a lot. I remember putting out a large traffic course and it had a whole bunch of different traffic modules, but they were each standalone and someone could just do one of the modules. I even had a learning expert come and explain to me on a podcast why step-by-step training may not always be the best solution because a lot of people default to one or the other, but having different frameworks allows you to rotate to the one that's going to serve your audience the best.

Michael: That's exactly right. So you're not limited to one of these frameworks. You mix and match and you use them inside your

presentations or whatever type of content you're developing. Also because certain types of content is better served by a particular framework and it helps to deliver that kind of content using that kind of framework. So obviously, if there are some things that are well-served by a chronological framework, then you would use that. But you don't try to take content that wouldn't fit naturally into a chronological framework and try to make it chronological just so that everything stays the same.

7-step process for creating content

Now you asked also about step-by-step advice for creating content for a speech of a 7-step process for that. I'll go through quickly. We could detail it certainly at length if we have more time together to do it. But I think I'll be able to introduce enough of it that people would go, "Oh yeah, that makes sense. I can do that."

Step 1 – The brain dump

The brain dump is always where we start. I mention this because people go and often will say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. I get that. I mean come on. I'll just get everything down." But the reason I mention it, the reason I think it's important is because often, this is where get hung up right at the beginning because we have a blank piece of paper, and we want to write it or create it as a final draft before we've even put any ideas down on paper.

We edit ourselves, we try to make sure we spell things correctly, that the grammar is proper, and all of those things just get in our way. So what we're trying to do is just do a dump. You dump everything you know on the topic onto paper. I do it on audio. I record it and then I have it transcribed, and that's where I start because I feel I can go more quickly, I don't worry about editing, I don't worry about spelling when I'm speaking rather than writing. So that's where you start.

Step 2 – Organizing ideas

Then number two, you organize this brain dump by compartmentalizing related ideas. So you start moving ideas into different sections based on what you think is most appropriate together, what mashes together, what feels like it's getting attracted to each other. And then that may change over time, but at least you're trying to organize it on paper in such a way that you can see visually what works together and what is separate. So

you're starting to actually put some different ideas, maybe creating some modules here, or separating out different ideas.

Step 3 – Noting your direct experiences

And then number three, you note your direct experiences that relate to your main topic. This is your direct experiences. What kind of experience have you had as it relates to the topic at hand.

James: And this is going to increase your authenticity.

Michael: Absolutely. Here's the thing, if you present an idea, and we don't know why you're presenting the idea, what your experience with that has been, we don't connect with you quite as much. There was a young man who was a naval officer who came to one of my master classes on public speaking because he's working in a speech to give to midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy. It was on stopping domestic violence in the military. It was an incredibly important topic.

But after he went through it, it wasn't clear to me and it wasn't clear to anybody in the audience why he was speaking on this topic. Was it assigned to him by one of his commanding officers? Did he have some abuse in his family? Had he committed abuse? We didn't get it. As a result, the message wasn't strong because the messenger didn't seem connected to it.

Ultimately, the truth was he had committed abuse and was trying to make amends for that by going out and doing this work. But if he is not honest and authentic about his experience, then we don't necessarily get the message from the messenger. So your direct experience to what you're talking about is so incredibly important.

Step 4 – Gathering direct data

And then number four, you want to gather direct data. Now it could be anecdotal or scientific that supports your topic. Just do your best to go to more authoritative sources rather than just random musings by people on blogs because the old expression, "67% of all statistics are made up on the spot."

James: Yeah, well never believe a statistic you haven't manipulated yourself.

Michael: Exactly. Exactly right. So just do your best, especially in the self help world, business help world, there's a lot of studies that are cited over and over and over, and often what happens is they're misappropriated. They're not necessarily accurate or they weren't meant to be used in that particular context yet they're taken out of context, and as a result, they're not necessarily true.

James: You're absolutely right. The classic one about communication being verbal and nonverbal is taken out of context.

Michael: Yup. Absolutely.

James: The quote about Henry Ford, there's no record of him ever quoting the one about if he asked people what they want, they'd say faster horses. And then there's quite a few quotes that have made it into big books that have no foundations. So it's really important to do good data searching.

Michael: Or a quoted quote attributed to the wrong people.

James: Right. There's a few quotes that have multiple attributions.

Michael: Indeed. Indeed. I've heard other people quote me to me attributing it to someone else. So that happens too. So you want to be careful, make sure you're getting the right attribution.

Step 5 – Identifying vulnerabilities

Number five would be to identify any holes or vulnerabilities of logic or persuasiveness in your content because when you present an idea, people are looking for holes if they want to resist it. Even if they like the idea, even if they like the rewards that come with the promise, they may find it, as I said earlier, confronting to consider.

James: This is the "Yeah, but..." reaction.

Michael: Exactly. So if they can find a lot of holes, it makes it easier for them to...

James: To worm out of it.

Michael: Exactly. Here's what's interesting, here's an example of a way to put a lot of holes into your speech or content on paper inadvertently: when

you use absolutes, you often create more holes and opportunities for people to make excuses to ignore what you have to say. Now this may fly in the face of what some marketers may suggest you do when marketing, but if you say, "Everybody does this," or "It's always this way," people may be able to say, "Mmm, not really." You know if I said nobody likes earwax flavored ice cream.

James: Well, it's not going to appeal to contrarians. They're going to want to disagree with you.

Michael: Yeah. You know what there might be, someone out there who likes earwax flavored ice cream. In fact, I remember Fritz from the sixth grade who used to pick his nose and eat his boogers all the time, or pick his ears rather and put his finger in his mouth, whatever it is, just disgusting things, and they start thinking about that, "I bet he likes earwax flavored ice creams." So you've got to be careful about those kind of absolutes. Or you might make an absolute that you cannot succeed in business unless you do this.

James: And I imagine contradictions are holes as well and I quite often, and somewhat disappointingly, find authors contradict themselves in books. They'll say something in one part and then contradict themselves in another.

Michael: Yeah. And you know, when I introduce these concepts, I always make the caveat that most of us from time to time will make these mistakes. I find myself making them, I catch myself. I will often have to say, this doesn't work. And I go, no no. I have to catch myself and say no, this may work. More often than not, you will find that it doesn't. And then I've taken the hole away because that's harder to disagree with.

James: Well, having been from the motor trade where we had custom ordered Mercedes-Benz waiting for 3 to 6 months, I used to have to come up with words that were not in absolute terms. So generally speaking, most of the time, albeit, everything going well, this will happen.

Michael: Yes that's right. And this is different than making commitments and fulfilling them. So sometimes people will use non-absolutes to weasel out of making commitments. "I'll do my best to get it done this week." That's very different. That's not what we're talking about.

James: Or endeavor, or to try.

Michael: Yes. Exactly, which is an entirely different than making absolute statements about the way people think or feel or the things that people do. Just like 92% of all statistics are made up on the spot, all generalities are false, including that one. So when we make generalities and we don't give people the option to disagree, they may be more likely to take a confrontational or contrarian approach to what we're saying and make it an intellectual argument rather than allowing what you're saying to wash over them and into them so that they can consider it. So that's number five.

Remember number one was brain dump, number two was organize the brain dump by compartmentalizing related ideas, number three is note your direct experiences that relate to your main topic, number four, gather the direct data, either anecdotal or scientific that support your topic, and then identify any holes or vulnerabilities of logic in your argument.

Step 6 – The editing process

Number six, then you let the editing process commence. Editing, editing, editing, editing, this is essential. Editing is improving, improving, improving, improving. But then number seven is cutting, cutting, cutting. Because editing is you're making sure that your arguments are strong, just like we said in number five, you're taking out some of the data that you use because it didn't really prove your point, you're pulling another data, you're reorganizing your ideas, you're in this very iterative and generative process of improving your work.

Step 7 – Cutting

And ultimately, that last step of the process is cutting. Because your audience often needs a lot less information to get the a-ha moments than you might think. So we're doing our best job to cut as much extraneous detail as possible. As I said again, this is an art. It's not a science and even the best of us will often offer extraneous detail. So we shouldn't expect ourselves to be perfect. We shouldn't expect other people to be perfect. We're simply trying to do the best we can in service of our audience. As simple as that.

James: It's very courteous to your audience and respectful to offer them the maximum point with the minimum fluff.

Michael: Yeah, you know it's interesting. When a book comes out, no one can review it, it's certain that you can't review the book until it's published on Amazon. No one can put reviews until the book is actually released because people don't have the book. But Amazon has a program called Vine, and they give products as well as books to the top reviewers on the site, the people that have written the most reviews and get the most helpful feedback clicks on the reviews. They can write their reviews in advance. And often, those reviews start popping up on "Steal the Show" and I was really surprised that that was possible.

One of the things that I'm seeing across the board is that it's no fluff. And I was so happy because sometimes when you write about a topic like this, you could tend to go towards the fluff. That's certainly possible in any topic. But this isn't as technical a topic as, say, writing about SEO maybe. And I was really proud of that so I just wanted to mention that because I'm super, super proud of that and that's what we're always trying to do.

Why there's fluff

One of the reasons we add more than we need often, there's two different reasons that I'll say, and there maybe more, but there's two big ones: either you are not well-prepared so you just put in lots of filler and the filler becomes fluff, or you are trying to demonstrate how smart you are, so you've put in a lot more information than the audience actually needs to get the point.

We want to stay away from working for approval. We want to focus on working for results because working for approval is a dangerous position to take as a performer. You tend to pander to people, you tend to try to spend a lot of time making yourself look good and both of those, they can stand against your efforts.

James: You might become unbelievable.

Michael: That is true too. Yes, exactly.

James: It may affect your demonstration.

Michael: That's right. You may seem less sincere, less authentic. So what we're doing is focusing on results, and we're not so much worried about what people have to say. We are focusing on what we're able to do for

them. And as a result of course if we produce great results, we will get a lot of approval but let's try to get that approval through results rather than through looking cool or looking smart or things of that nature.

James: And I appreciate you sharing that 7-step content method. You know, number one, the brain dump, that's Charlie Munger's technique for making great decisions. He writes down all the possible scenarios and eliminates the bad ones.

Choose early and often

Michael: One of the performance principles in the second part of "Steal the Show" is choose early and often. People who perseverate are often less likely to make things happen quickly. My sister was trying to decide what kind of birthday cake to get for her birthday, chocolate or vanilla, and she called my mom about 10 times in one day trying to decide which one to get. I'm not kidding.

James: Right. She needs to get a hold of the 80/20 rule.

Michael: Yeah. I mean I love my sister dearly but I called her up and said, "Just pick one. If you don't pick one, I'm just going to pick it and send it to the party." Because you just got to make a decision or get on with more important things and we often do that, we perseverate on things that aren't so important and we waste a lot of time. But if we choose early and often, and this is different than just quickly. Quickly on big decisions is often foolishly, but choosing early and often is different.

For example, I recently hired a new assistant. I didn't wait until the last minute to hire her because if I did, then I'd have to make a really quick decision without a lot of thoughtful work going into it. But I decided early that I need to make a change and get a new assistant and that gave me the time I needed to find the right person. I wasn't trying to decide, should I get one or should I not get a new one? I said you know what, this has to happen. I know it. Let's do it. Now, let's do it in the right way that's allowing me to make the right decision as quickly as possible but it's not just doing things quickly without any real work or thought around it. So choose early and often.

Decision makers are leaders

People like decision makers. Decision makers are appealing. They're attractive. They often are powerful. Leaders are decision makers. That's what leaders in large part are responsible for is making ultimate decisions. And if you have trouble making decisions or won't make decisions or make very weak decisions, it's less likely that people will look to you as a leader. It's one of the reasons that it's a key part of part two in "Steal the Show" because it's one of the performer's principles and it comes from acting.

When an actor is auditioning, their job is to go in there and make a lot of decisions about that character and act on those decisions in the audition. A lot of the decisions that they make or many of the decisions that they will make, not necessarily a lot, sometimes just a few, but often many, won't ultimately be the right choice but the director is able to look at them and say you know what, that's an actor that I can work with because they'll make choices. And eventually, they'll find the right ones because they'll make choices until they get to the right one.

But an actor who comes in and doesn't make strong choices, the director goes, I can't really work with them because I can't just tell them what to do all the time. Their job is a large part to make choices.

James: Especially if you're Woody Allen. He doesn't want to tell them what to do at all.

Michael: He often won't even give them a script.

James: Yeah. He'll just say act.

Michael: He'll give them their parts. But not the others.

James: And he just says, "Look, I've hired to act. Just act. Just do what you do." I agree with you that decisiveness is a great trait of a leader. Peter Drucker said that the power in decisions is the reflective hindsight. I imagine you could refine your presentations by looking at past ones and seeing what choices you made and where you might be able to change it in the future if you were to present again.

Michael: Yeah James, that's a wonderful observation because I would rather look back and improve what I've done than not perform at all

because I can't make the decisions that I need to make in order to perform.

James: Well right after my very best presentation, I wrote down everything that I did right, and everything that I would change for next time, and I started to refine the process.

Michael: There you go. Well that's pursuit of mastery. You are obviously someone who is in pursuit of mastery in the important areas of your life, and that's what it takes.

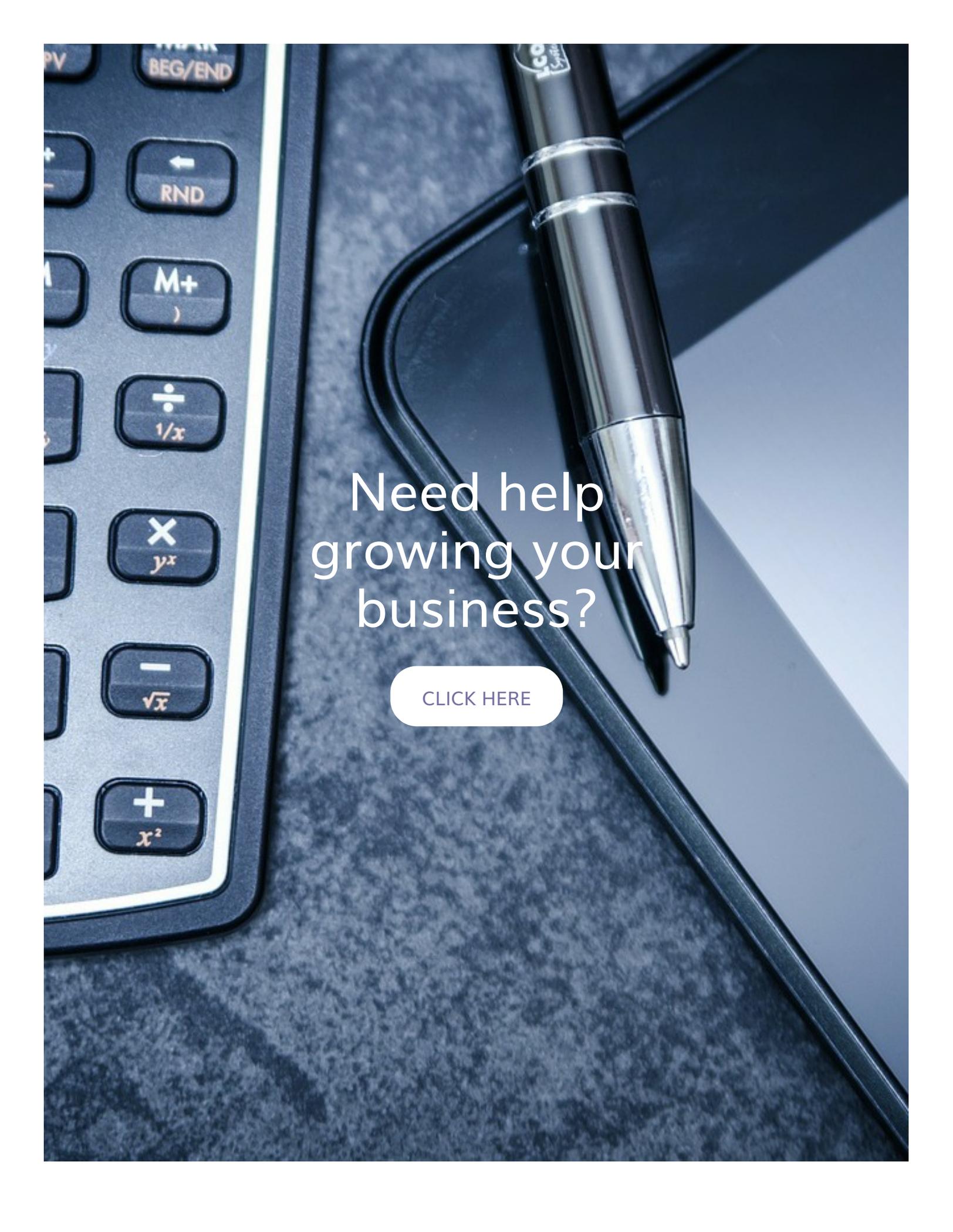
James: Well I'm a big fan of "Steal the Show" because I believe that like you, confident communication really is an important skill and you're doing a great service by helping people learn the foundations and to take it to the next level through their life, not just from platforms, but job interviews, dates, negotiating with kids.

I love your take on stealing the show. It's not a selfish thing. It's really you get to decide what show you want to be in but you can do it from a nice, heart-centered place where you're helping other people to move and to improve. Anyone who's an educator or in the information marketing space has an obligation to edit and cut their work down to the most usable and actionable information.

That being the case, I think we'll wrap it here. We should just say, well thank you so much for coming along and sharing these ideas with us, Michael.

Michael: It's my pleasure. I never take these opportunities for granted no matter how many I do. Each one to me is so special, and you do a great job at this. So thank you so much.

James: Thank you. You can check out Michael Port's book, "Steal the Show." Head over to stealtheshow.com and it's up there on my library as well. Great addition to the world of information. Thank you.



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