

The Interest Index

If you've ever watched Simon Cowell judge talent competitions, you've heard him say, "I won't remember you."

Then someone with seemingly less talent does something special and Simon says, "People are going to be talking about you tomorrow."

It's not enough to be good; we must be interesting. Our message must spark an interest to listen deeper and longer. We must want more. The X factor that so many pundits preach about has everything to do with the creation of something interesting. We know it when we see it, hear it or read about it.

When I measure my own creative output, I often realize I probably didn't move the mercury in an "interest barometer." My book received solid reviews from readers. But it wasn't interesting to many. Simon won't remember my book. The book didn't fill any sort of vacuum or add something that mattered much at all.

My book sits on an overstocked shelf of uninteresting books.

A few weeks ago, I found a piece of academic research about the pursuit of interesting content. The paper is titled, "That's Interesting" by Murray S. Davis. He presents "An Index of the Interesting." Here's a link to the summary document: [Interesting](#).

He presents 12 points worthy of a good chin scratch. I will highlight three of his thoughts:

1. What seems to be an individual phenomenon is in reality a holistic phenomenon.

Most of our very personal worries and foibles are felt and experienced by many others. When a researcher documents

universal feelings, it is interesting when I consider my own battles. Other people have had this pain. How did they cope with it?

2. What seems to be bad is really good.

It's easy to find health articles that debunk myths about the good that's hidden in what was once thought to be bad for our bodies. I'm currently searching for this research about Snicker bars.

Many of these stories are boosted by click-bait headlines because the fact tends to seem unbelievable. Therein lies the interest.

3. What seems to something that causes something else to happen is in reality totally unrelated. This "causation" blunder, when exposed with research, becomes very interesting to the reader.

Does sugar consumption cause bad behavior in toddlers? Does a full moon increase crime rate? Does practice make perfect?

Well-researched stories about these questions will probably score high on the interest index.

So how do you determine if your content message will interesting to your readers?

1. Know the interests of your target market.
2. Test your content idea with a Tweet or Facebook message.
3. Tell the story in your voice. Your readers want to hear it from you, the way they know you. Be authentic as you share every topic.

People who need help are easier to interest.