

We started theedmontonian.com 2 years ago, for about \$200 bucks, to an audience of nobody. We wrote stories, took photos, recorded podcasts and shot videos about the version of Edmonton *we* experienced - because we felt that it wasn't being reflected on TV or in the media.

We've generated a lot of stories since then, and while we still don't earn our living through the edmontonian, we have an audience of more than ten thousand readers a month, a 6 part TV series on Shaw, several advertisers - and we recently won Best Local Blog in See Magazine's 2011 Best of Edmonton.

Best of all, though, is that we have friends everywhere we go in the City, and we have the honour of sharing stories of Edmonton businesses, bands, people, events and issues with thousands of people. We're hardly geniuses (hell, we're barely literate), but here are a few things we hope will help you with your own projects:

Buy a real domain for your website.

There are a few reasons for this: first, it's a little thing that makes you look super-legit (while there's nothing wrong with yourbusiness.blogspot.com - if you plan on expanding your site, or using it in the long term, you'll need a custom domain). A custom domain also helps your search engine optimization (a.k.a. google ranking) and it makes it easier for people to remember your name. Plus, if you want to get really high-end, you can get an email address like "yourname@yourbusiness.com."

If you do what we did, which is buy some webspace and a domain, and set up a hosted site - don't panic, it's easier than it sounds - it'll be between \$100 - \$200 for the first year. But if you're on a budget, just spend \$20 on a domain and point it at your Tumblr, Etsy or WordPress site.

If you want hosting, we recommend ANHosting.com (you get a free domain with hosting purchase), and if you just want a domain, we use Directnic.com.

Save money

Whether you're podcasting, blogging or shooting videos for youtube, you don't need thousands of dollars of expensive stuff to get started. We used a mini DV tape standard def camera with no microphone for the first year and a half, and people were just as excited to see their stories told in that fuzzy, grainy format as they were when we upgraded to a fancy mic and HD camera.

Be respectful

No matter what you're writing about, be respectful of your subject. It's okay to give someone a bad review, or to write in criticism of a person, place or event - but it's the internet, and if you write about someone, they'll likely see it - so be honest, but don't be a Hate Tank.

Also, we usually try to be FOR something, instead AGAINST something. Being FOR something - improvements to public transit, transparency in government, redeveloping the municipal airport lands - keeps the conversation going, and helps generate new ideas to improve the community. It's okay to hate that I'm building a nuclear reactor in my backyard, but if you really want to change things, try to see where I'm coming from, and then give me a better alternative to what I'm doing.

Be patient

Not to burst your bubble, but you most likely will not get a million hits overnight. HOWEVER! Even if no one is reading your blog, watching your short films, or listening to your music, that doesn't make it any less legitimate. When you feel like quitting, remember: "Every movement starts with nobody but the leader." If you love what you're doing, keep at it. It will always take you somewhere great.

Be willing to do something that sucks

It's really easy to get paralyzed by the idea that what you're doing "isn't good enough." You don't need to have a certain skillset before you get started. You don't need permission to participate. Your job is make something you really believe in, and get it out there. After that, it has absolutely nothing to do with you.

"Because local still matters."

Books that might interest you:

“WordPress for Dummies” by Lisa Sabin-Wilson

“The Thank You Economy” by Gary Vaynerchuk

“Ignore Everybody and 39 Other Keys to Creativity” by Hugh MacLeod

“Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us” by Seth Godin

Great local websites:

mastermaq.ca (edmonton)

theunknownstudio.ca (edmonton podcast)

daveberta.ca (alberta politics)

onlyherethereforthefood.ca (local food blog)

thecharrette.ca (local urban planning)

westedmontonlocal.ca (hyper local news in West Edmonton)

makinwhoopie.ca (CJSR’s Tuesday morning show)

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