



Channel Mastery Podcast, Episode #10: Kristin Carpenter-Ogden Interviews  
Jeff Sieh

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Kristin: Jeff Sieh, it's wonderful to have you here on the Channel Mastery podcast welcome.

Jeff : Well thanks so much for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Kristin: And I follow a lot of your stuff, obviously you're on the social team over at Social Media Examiner, but you're also, I love this title; the Head Beard over at Manly Pinterest tips. Can you give a little bit of information on how people can find you online and what your passion is around online marketing?

Jeff : Yeah, [00:00:30] well see I started a long time [ago]. I've had a digital marketing agency here in Longview, Texas for like 15 years and I started doing commercials and stuff like that. And then I decided [that I'd] been telling my clients to do the social media stuff so I better figure it out. And so, I started doing that. The short story is I wrote an article called, "Manly Pinterest Tips #1" and it was how to share a secret board with my daughter, and it took off, and it was crazy. And I was big over on Google+ at the time. That's when all the shows were coming out - the live shows - over [00:01:00] on Google Hangouts.

Kristin: Uh-huh (affirmative)

Jeff : So I got in there with a bunch of guys and it took off, the show did. We had like five guys on there a week, [and I] got to interview people like Guy Kawasaki. The producer for Pretty Woman came on and talked about business and social media. We got some really cool guests and it took off. I created a website and a podcast called manlypinteresttips.com, and I started pushing Pinterest and talking about that, 'cause you know? Jay Baer is an incredible social media [00:01:30] guy, and Michael Stelzner, so ... and they all have their own platforms.

I was like, "Well, how can I talk about any of this stuff." Pinterest was wide open, so I grabbed that one and it led to awesome things. It led me to being on Micheal Stelzner's podcast talking about Pinterest, and then he said, "Will you run our Pinterest account?" And then one thing led to another. I was speaking at Social Media Marketing World and now I'm on the team. It all came from that one little blog post and that one little podcast. I've been very blessed. [00:02:00] It's been a lot of fun.

Kristin: Well I feel super lucky to have you on the show, and I love to introduce experts from outside of the passion industries that channel mastery serves, and enable us to kind of cross-train through what you do and your day-to-day life. So, dear audience, I did explain to Jeff our background in terms of coming from outdoor active lifestyles. A lot of us are coming from the wholesale market and we're trying to figure out the multi-channel strategy, which is the very [inaudible 00:02:28] for this podcast. [00:02:30] The reason I invited Jeff on, is because I was listening to him on Social Media Examiner's New Podcast. It's the Social Media Examiner talk show, is that right Jeff, did I get the name right?

Jeff : Yes, it's the Social Media Marketing Talk Show, is what I think it is.

Kristin: Thank you.

Jeff : It's a mouthful but that's what it is.

Kristin: Yeah, and so I'll have all the links in the podcast's note page, but Jeff covered Amazon's "Social Media Offerings Spark." And that's why-

Jeff : Right.

Kristin: ... I wanted to invite him here today to tell us as brands and as product [00:03:00] sellers. A lot of the things I think Jeff - you and Social Media Examiner and Manly Pinterest Tips - maybe you do serve a lot of product-oriented brands or passion brands? I find that a lot of people that I follow online are more coaching consultants.

Jeff : Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Kristin: They're coaching coaches and it's more of a person developing a platform. Whereas in our world, it's brands - with audiences in tribes - migrating from having a middleman tell their story [00:03:30] through wholesale, and telling the story themselves. We've been doing a lot on Amazon, and I wanted to make sure we covered Spark. In my mind, it's like, "Okay well, exactly what is it? Is it truly a social platform?" Then how does it work with Amazon, what's the opportunity for a brand that sells product?

Jeff : Right, so it's very interesting. I just want to let you guys know [that] I try not to be one of those so-called "gurus," who tell you all this stuff what to do and have no experience with it. So I've worked with a lot of brands [00:04:00] that sell products and I actually have created my...

Kristin: Yay! That's so great to hear.

Jeff : Yeah, and you know those people who say things? And you're like, "Well have you ever sold anything?" And they're like "No, not really." And so, okay: why should I listen to you?

Kristin: Right.

Jeff : But, I also created my own e-Commerce store, just so I could have a little bit of [inaudible 00:04:18] so I could say things -

Kristin: That's awesome.

Jeff : ... talking about promoted pins and stuff. Because if I'm not walking the walk, why should I talk the talk? Anyway here's Amazon Spark. It's only [00:04:30] on mobile right now, and it's only accessed through Amazon's app. It's kind of weird, you have to go into the programs and features in the menu to get the drop down. When you first go in there to set it up, they're going to ask you for five interests. It really is kind of the same, or parallel to, the Amazon categories that they have. You'll see things in there that are akin to their breakdown, like books and that kind of stuff.

[00:05:00] The platform is very image heavy, but sometimes it almost reads like a product review. The skinny is when a photo contains a product that Amazon sells, there's like a little shopping bag icon in the bottom right corner, with numbers that indicate how many items from the photos can be shopped on Amazon sites.

Kristin: That's amazing.

Jeff : Yeah, it's really kind of crazy. Once you have set it up and you want to make a post, it gives [00:05:30] you four different options. It gives you a photo, it gives you a product, a link, or a poll. It's really interesting. So I tried a lot of these things. I first tried setting up a poll. The interesting thing is that it only does polls for Amazon products. I have an Amazon Echo and some Dots, and I was going to try to do a poll between Amazon Echo and the new Google Home. Well they don't sell Google Home anywhere on Amazon. So I...

Kristin: Isn't that interesting?

Jeff : Yeah. So, I couldn't [00:06:00] create a poll about it. But I could do one against the Dot and the Echo. I set that one up. And, I did get a lot of responses on it. That was interesting just to see how it worked. It's not a "like," it's a "smile." There are people that can make comments, or they can "smile," kind of a Facebook "like." So, you get somebody's smiles-

Kristin: Does it give you visibility into how many people have already started to use Spark?

Jeff : [00:06:30] It doesn't tell me how many people are using Spark, but it does tell me how many people who have viewed it.

Kristin: Okay.

Jeff : [Back to] the poll. I checked it before I got on with you to [see how many] people have seen it; 535 people have seen it. I got so many responses, and it was interesting. There are people that comment on it and say, "Hey, I just got the Echo and I really like it, it's better than this and this." So, there are people on there, which I was really surprised about since it was so new. [But there are people] using it, and making comments, and interacting on there.

Kristin: [00:07:00] And do you have to have a Prime membership to have any visibility into this or to use it?

Jeff : The funny thing is anybody can use it. But if you want to comment, or...let me see...as I'm pulling up the exact wording. If you want to comment on it, you have to be a Prime member. You can scroll and look at everything in Spark, but you can't comment or post your own thing until you're a Prime member, and you've actually spent \$50.

Kristin: Interesting.

Jeff : So, yeah. [crosstalk 00:07:30] [00:07:30] They can-

Kristin: How does that work for a business that has a marketplace page or even a wholesale account on Amazon -- for a brand that's selling product through there?

Jeff : I'm really hesitant to tell people. I'm seeing a lot of people going #Sponsored. What you do is you upload a photo, then you can tag things in that photo that are products. I did a test where one of my hobbies is I that make Pins. I would turn them on [inaudible 00:07:59], and I bought some [00:08:00] blanks from Amazon. I took a picture of that, put it online and then you have Dots that actually go into the shopping bag that tell you how many images or things you can buy in that photo.

So you upload that, and it ties...well...I saw people using sponsored posts and they're like #Sponsored post, I still think that breaks Amazon's terms of service. If I had a store, I'd be really hesitant of trying to use this platform until they clarify it. [00:08:30] A couple of things: I don't know if any of your listeners have had their store banned or they've been kicked off of Amazon, but it's a pain in the rear end to try and get that back from what I've heard from some of my friends that have had this happen to. So I'm really hesitant to recommend trying to put your own products from your store, and linking to them using this platform, especially if you're using your affiliate link.

Kristin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeff : If you're an affiliate for Amazon, I'd be real hesitant to do that because I don't want to get anything [00:09:00] messed up with my brand since it's really vague. I went through the terms of service when I got on the show with Social Media Examiner. It's just not clear what you can do. For links, they don't want you linking out to your own e-commerce site that sells this product. They don't want you to do that. It really seems like it's for the end-users, but they still have a lot of ways where I'm scared that people can game the system. [00:09:30] They can get somebody to go there and say, "Hey post this for me and link back using this link." It's really, really vague right now.

Kristin: Okay. What my take away is for the people listening: don't try and hack this.

Jeff : Right.

Kristin: Because ultimately this is intended to be a way for Amazon to bring some broadness and maybe open up the consumer reviews to an interesting new group of people. Ultimately this has to be a user-generated [00:10:00] social platform, I'm anticipating.

Jeff : Yeah, and to me, it's almost for Amazon's super fans. Because it's hard to find for one. Like I said, you have to go into the app on your phone and then go to those programs and features into Spark. They're doing a little bit better job, they're highlighting some things at the top of the app, I noticed today. But Tech Crunch was reporting that they think this is like a new frontier for product reviews. So they said that Amazon is moving away from [00:10:30] rewarding the top reviewers who write up their thoughts and rate Amazon, and they're going to move to these - what they're calling enthusiasts. Enthusiasts will get a badge, which will appear when they post to Spark or when they write product reviews. But yeah, like I said, you've got to be a prime member and make a minimum amount of purchases, that's what it says on the community guidelines. Now non-members, like I mentioned before, they can browse the feed of Spark, but they can't post or comment.

Kristin: It's interesting. So it's a social platform [00:11:00] but it's almost gated, or it has a lot of boundaries around it.

Jeff : Yeah, and they only want you to like Amazon's products. The interesting thing was when I go to post, like when I want to do a photo, or post something, automatically it brings up my last purchases.

Kristin: Oh.

Jeff : So they're really pushing me to go and write reviews, and to post what I just got and how I'm using it, when I first get on the platform. [00:11:30] It feels a little bit forced. But you know, if it makes sales - if you've got a brand and people love your stuff and they're sharing it on Amazon Spark – well, that's really cool. Because people can purchase it right from there, into the app. So it's a good thing if that happens organically, I just don't know how, technically yet, because it's still so vague, how you can incentivize your customers to do that or how you can go in there and make like business type posts by saying #Sponsored or #Ad. [00:12:00] It's just not very, very clear.

Kristin: Okay, well we'll be following it obviously for the audience.

Jeff : Right.

Kristin: So I want to make sure before we maybe move on to other social platforms that have click-to-buy embedded in imagery, which is obviously like one of your specializations, is there anything that I haven't brought to light that we know of right now that would really be helpful for my brands to know?

Jeff : One of the things is, I really think that in the future that people are going to be able to generate some income [00:12:30] via Spark postings. I think they're going to be able to incentivize the reviewers to do this in some way. There's got to be a way they're going to nail down monetization, especially if they're wanting to challenge Instagram. It really has an Instagram feel to me. You can shop really easily from that. On July 30<sup>th</sup>, they allowed users to share their previously written product reviews from their profile to Spark, so-

Kristin: Oh interesting.

Jeff : Yes. Some of those top reviewers can move it over to Spark, which may give [00:13:00] it a little bit of a boost. It is available for the US and it's only available on Amazon iPhone, meaning for the iPhone application and using the Amazon app in your own phone.

Kristin: Okay. I know that it's a little bit challenging because it is more for the end consumer if you will, but is there a customer service angle that my audience might want to know about?

Jeff : I would just monitor it [even though] I didn't see a way to monitor it. I don't have any of my brand stuff [00:13:30] in there yet, so I don't know how you get a notification if somebody has made a review, or they posted your picture. I need to contact some companies that I tested it with, but they haven't responded yet. So I'm thinking they haven't heard it.

Kristin: Right.

Jeff : They haven't seen anything. They haven't gone back in there and responded. I'm assuming that's coming. I would make sure if you want to get on the bandwagon with this, that you've got to start surfing through Spark. You can search through your categories, 'cause right now the categories [00:14:00] are limited. Like when I uploaded my Pins thing, the only thing I could tag it with was woodworking, I couldn't do Pins or anything like that. I couldn't put my own Pins in. It's limited; so it might be a little easier for them to search their products. The other thing is, when you do post something, you can't edit it. Like if you made a mistake, I made a mistake with capitalization, the only option was to delete it and do it again. So there's not a way to go edit it like you can on Instagram.

Kristin: That sounds like a pain in the, you-know-what.

Jeff : Yeah, [00:14:30] so it's really to me just beyond beta [stage]. I think it's coming, and I think they really want to have a social platform for their people. Amazon is smart; they do a lot of smart things. I think this is just the forefront. If people really want to get into the cutting edge, go ahead and sign up and look at it and try to see how their brand looks inside of there. Then as [Spark] rolls out new features, [brands will] be ready for it.

Kristin: So interesting. Because some of the shows we've done have covered [00:15:00] how Amazon is buying Whole Foods. The analysts we've interviewed basically said [Amazon's] going into a new channel because they realize that their end consumers want more than just digital. I think in this case, the super fans or "target consumers for Amazon," they want community.

Jeff : Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kristin: And I think any retailer, no matter what your platform is - as a retailer, brick and mortar, digital, etc. - I think you have to have the community front and center, so maybe that's what they're trying to do.

Jeff : [00:15:30] Yeah, and also, the reviews are super helpful for me [as a consumer] when I buy a product. I buy a ton of stuff on Amazon. I always look at the best review and the worst review. You know the five-star, and then the one-star, and say, "Is this valid and is this something still I want to get?" So being able to see a nice picture that's user generated and uploaded and have those reviews there too, I think is going to be a good thing in the long run. I just think it's another way for them to get [00:16:00] people responding to the photos and the products in a positive light.

Kristin: That's awesome. Well, dear audience, I also want let you know that Jeff has a lot of other chops, if you will, with image-driven social media sites, and I thought it would be also helpful for us to maybe spend a few minutes talking about other things, like Pinterest and Instagram, that are coming up with innovative ways that are really becoming a proven way to sell successfully online.

Jeff : [00:16:30] Yeah. So I'm a big Pinterest fan because it's so easy and it drives tons of traffic. If you're trying to get traffic to your blog, or to your e-commerce site, or any sort of web property, Pinterest is the best way to get longterm traffic. I have pins that I pinned when I first started still giving me traffic back to my site. In fact, for Social Media Examiner, Pinterest is number two behind Facebook for driving social traffic.

Kristin: You must be incredibly [00:17:00] proud of that, because Social Media Examiner is...oh my gosh. It's humongous. That's really, really cool.

Jeff : It is very cool. And it's the long-term stuff, so it's almost a snowball effect when you pin stuff. Because you know Facebook stuff doesn't last very long in the feed. Twitter even less. And Instagram is kind of that way too. It just drives a ton of traffic. If you have a product for your company, Pinterest to me is just a no-brainer. [00:17:30] The new things they have, in fact, are like the buyable pins, not bible pins. I say it fast sometimes and people think I'm being religious. No, it's-

Kristin: It's like what bible pins?

Jeff : Buy-able pins, which let you go straight to and purchase. They have a cart that ties in. Pinterest doesn't take a cut of it. It's so cool because if you add a product on your mobile, it stays in the bag and then it's still there on your desktop version. [00:18:00] You can check out, if you feel better, on your desktop. I mean it's just very, very cool and very, very seamless. A lot of the big brands are using it. You'll see Target, Macy's, Neiman Marcus, some of those use it.

But, if you have an e-commerce site, you can use big commerce. The one I'm using is Shopify, which is just so awesome. It ties right into Pinterest. You have buyable pins once you get approved, and it's a great way to let people know about your [00:18:30] product. The biggest hiccup businesses have is, one is, "Oh gosh, there's another network," but Pinterest is so easy. The other thing is the image size. Most blogs and images are the landscape version and Pinterest is all about tall images. Once you can get past them or figuring out how you can crop and create your products, it works so well, and I just love it.

Kristin: That is awesome.

Jeff : Yeah.

Kristin: So can you-

Jeff : And so-

Kristin: Go ahead, I have one more question, but you go first.

Jeff : [00:19:00] Yeah, I was going to say there is a difference between Pinterest and Instagram. Instagram is square images, they do okay on Pinterest, I still like the tall ones, but it's a different audience. Instagram is the king of the selfies. Everybody uses a selfie on there. It's all about that. Pinterest is more about people. Go there and it's more of a search engine than really a social platform. People go there because they're dreaming and planning and wanting to try things.

Faces don't do good on Pinterest. That's even [00:19:30] with clients I've worked with and you'll even notice it on Target, like on their blog catalog. They'll have like a lady with a sweater and you see your face and everything. But on Pinterest, it'll be cropped, like at the neck. You won't see your face. The reason is because people want to see themselves in the pins on Pinterest-

Kristin: Fascinating.

Jeff : ... and so you've got to use that kind of thinking between Pinterest and Instagram. So, things that work on Instagram won't work on Pinterest and vice versa.

Kristin: Huh [00:20:00] okay. That's really, really interesting and I think a lot of our audience is already familiar with Shopify, but we'll have links to all of these sites in the show notes. Tell us how Instagram is evolving, in terms of buying off of Instagram as a social platform, because we've had to kind of create a few workarounds over [inaudible 00:20:18] a very this.

Jeff : There are some apps you can use the do it. Thanks Inspector just talked about one the other day, but a lot of them do that because you only have one link in there. Shopify does [00:20:30] have an Instagram kind of thing where I think it ties into it. I don't use it right now, but I think they have a plugin. There's ways around it. Most of the time it's like a lot of recognition. They'll do "like" contests on there. I see a lot of fashion companies will say, "Here's our are new line, that link is in the bio."

Kristin: Right.

Jeff : There are some apps that will let you click through and purchase. Just remember if there's a big purchase, sometimes people will hesitate to purchase things [00:21:00] like that on their phone. Of course that's getting to be less and less of a big deal as that used to be. Just keep in mind that if you have a big ticket item, sometimes people are more comfortable to go buy it on their desktop. There are some workarounds. But for fashion, and even the travel and outdoor stuff, Instagram is still really, really popular. It's slowing down a little bit, we've noticed with some of the engagement.

I think there's been an algorithm change, so just be aware that. I'm sure [00:21:30] Facebook is wanting to monetize that because they're running out of ad space on the main platform. Instagram's right for the ads, so that's coming. So just be aware that as well.

Kristin: Yeah, I think that we've trained a lot of our clients to realize the arrays. They get us addicted to it and then they charge for it. That's just the way it works.

Jeff : There is some recent news that you can tie in and target your Facebook Ads to your Instagram audience, which is very, [00:22:00] very cool. So if you have a big following on Instagram, you can now target those people with your Facebook ads and even use some Instagram ads to do so. Just remember that as well. If you have a good following, all is not lost. You can actually, maybe target them with some ads on Facebook.

Kristin: One last question before we wrap up. I've always had a belief and it's probably from listening to a lot of the people in the community that you're in. [My belief is that] we need to be building our own audiences, and [00:22:30] that we don't want the audience to be on Instagram or Facebook and even Pinterest. Obviously, Amazon it's a little different, because the super fans do live there, right?

Jeff : Right.

Kristin: But in terms of everything we've talked about today, what is the best practice in terms of growing your own list, an e-mail list, and also continuing to build fans and followers on social media? Are you feeling that it's maybe becoming a little bit more accepted to have your fan base on [00:23:00] Facebook and on Instagram and possibly on Pinterest, or do you still hear and advise people that we should have an email list?

Jeff : Well, it all comes down to sales. You can say whatever you want, if you're not making sales it doesn't matter. My thing is, yes it's always better not to sell your stuff on rented land, but use that rented land as a tool where you can put a billboard on. You can rent a billboard. I have a Shopify [00:23:30] store, but I'm still putting my products directly on Amazon because they will sell better. But I have my Shopify store because I can sell stuff there, too. I own that, but I can make a lot of sales on Amazon. I'm really careful about making sure I'm following their Terms of Service and all that stuff.

So, I would use both. I would always have my own property to fall back on in case something happens because I hear people who've used you know FBA on Amazon [00:24:00] and built their whole company on their, make one little mistake and it's all gone.

Kristin: Oh gosh!

Jeff : And it's a pain to get back on, so I always want to have a backup. I always want to have a place where I can sell my own stuff because you never know. You never know what's going to happen. Pinterest may be bought by somebody else, so I always want to drive traffic back to my site. But I will use whatever tools are necessary to make the sale. Look at what the big brands are doing, see how they're strategizing, [00:24:30] Target sells stuff on their website, but they're still selling stuff on Pinterest, too. They're trying to get

out there as much as possible too. Just be careful. I'm not one of those who say, "Just sell through your website and forget all that stuff," because to be honest, you want to have exposure.

I'm all about building a list so I would make sales, I would advertise on those social platforms to get people to get on your list, and then you can use that to re-target on [00:25:00] Facebook and Instagram and Pinterest. You can put up a new, look-alike audiences and all sorts of cool things when you have that list. But yeah, I would work on both and not do one exclusively or the other.

Kristin: Well, I'm very happy to hear this because this is a show about multiple channels after all.

Jeff : That's right.

Kristin: Well, thank you so much, Jeff Sieh. Can you tell my awesome audience where they can learn more about everything that you do online?

Jeff : Yeah, you can find me everywhere @Jeff Sieh and the last name spelled S [00:25:30] as in Sam, I\_E\_H. That's I before E, especially in Sieh. And then also you can find me at manypinteresttips.com where we're always adding testosterone one pin at a time.

Kristin: I love that. Well, thank you so much and I'd love to have you back on the show to maybe give us some updates, maybe next quarter.

Jeff : Sure, love to.

Kristin: All right, thanks so much.

