

# TRIGGER FINGERS

PERSONAL BRANDING  
THROUGH STORYTELLING

ADAM RODRICKS



IGUANA

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*“Use what talents you possess; the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best.”* —Henry van Dyke



## Confessions from My Commute

*“There is no such thing as an attention span.  
There is only the quality of what you are  
viewing.” —Jerry Seinfeld*

In the summer of 2006, I got my first part-time job, which made it necessary for me to take the train into the city. It was all very official. There were paycheques and everything. I wasn't quite ready for it as evidenced by my showing up to the office on the hottest day of the year in shorts. I wasn't a very bright young man, but what I lacked in intelligence I more than made up in regulated body temperature.

Knowing I needed to fit in better with my fellow nine-to-fivers, I would peep curiously at what they would do on the train ride every morning, hoping for more insight into normal adult behaviour. I distinctly remember the patterns of the three other people who invariably shared my row of seats every day, because I studied them to avoid another shorts-like catastrophe.

There was Mom of the Year, a mother who called home the second we had boarded to provide her husband with the

most descriptive instructions on how he was going to somehow manage to keep the kids alive until she returned home that evening. Next to her and directly across from me was Mr. Jenga. Mr. Jenga was a tall man in a beige overcoat who had the most fascinating sleep patterns: every so often he'd nod off into a deep sleep until his body began swaying with the motion of the train and inevitably dipped so low that he got the sensation of falling. He would abruptly wake up in a tizzy, often sprawling out violently to brace himself from a fall (I'm aware that this description is much more reminiscent of Slinky than Jenga, but I was 17 and I wore shorts to the office—clearly intelligence wasn't my forte). Finally, next to him was a young woman who taught me a lesson I carry to this day.

You see, I never once caught her name as she never took a call like Mom of the Year, and she never looked at me—not even momentarily in horror as she was jolted awake like Monsieur Jenga. So we'll just call her Elon Musk ... sorry, Elona Musk. From the moment Elona boarded to the moment we arrived at Union Station, her eyes were glued to her phone screen. She was a master of multitasking. Once I realized her gaze was unbreakable, I would just blatantly stare, incredulous at how fast her eyes would move and her finger ... her fingers darted so quickly that I'm fairly certain they never completely left the screen. She had this ability to absorb information at an alarming rate and she never really took breaks either. Invariably she was the most interesting of our quartet and the subject of most of my stalking ... research. Once I saw her pause momentarily to yawn, and I got so excited I held out a Kleenex. She still didn't flinch. And every day, Elona would switch from app to app, texting now and then, but furiously

scrolling through her feeds as if it was some sick game: *Finish by the time we arrive or a loved one will die.*

So what did a smartphone-obsessed commuter teach me that I'm sharing with you? Just what we're up against.

When I write content, I write for Elona. Because I imagine that with any piece of content—no matter how well-written it is, or how eye-catching a visual is attached—my opportunity to make an impact can be gone in the flash of an eye, especially if she is on the other end. So whenever I think of mailing it in, or publishing content for content's sake, I hear the train pulling into the station in my mind, and I imagine producing something of a high enough quality that maybe it'll find its way onto her feed long enough for her finger to leave the screen.

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### **Social Media Activity:**

## **HOW TO WRITE A GREAT SOCIAL MEDIA POST**

I'm sorry.

If you googled “how to go viral” and landed here, I can't help you. I can, however, give you a formula that will help maximize your chances of generating quality engagement on your social media posts.

The anatomy of a great post is:

**STEP 1:** Add something of value with everything you share.

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**STEP 2:** Include a click-through direction, e.g., “Register now,” “Click here to learn more.”

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**STEP 3:** Attach an eye-catching visual from a site like <https://www.pexels.com/> or <https://unsplash.com/> (free from copyright) to disrupt feeds and stop people from scrolling past your content.

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Quality post.

### **EXAMPLE**

I put this exact formula to work on my own social media content and regularly enjoy reach and engagement that spreads far beyond my own network of followers.

As an example, in the first week of January 2022, I came across a listicle entitled “22 Ways to Supercharge Productivity in 2022.” I thought:

*Great! I need this.*

But the article was full of rubbish.

At this point, I had a choice. I could “flame” the author for wasting my time, I could carry on my way silently or I could implement the formula above.

So instead, I commented on the article:

*Interesting take. I was surprised not to see my favourite productivity app listed so I’ll share it here. It’s called Evernote, and it enables me to track my notes regardless of the platform*

*I'm on. For those interested, here is a link to download it free from the app store: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/evernote-notes-organizer/id281796108>.*

And I kid you not, by simply adding value, telling people where to click and having the rich media snippet populate in my comment to break up the otherwise dense wall of text, I generated more engagement on my comment than the article itself had.

The best part? I didn't need a PhD or hours of research to make an impactful post. I simply drew authentically from my own experiences and followed a formula.

And you can too.

<p><b>Key Takeaway:</b></p> <p>Attention spans are short; make it count.</p>	<p><b>Lessons Learned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Our opportunities to make an impact are shorter than ever, meaning our content needs to be of a higher quality than ever.</li> <li>- A greater understanding of our target audience is critical to the success of our content strategy.</li> <li>- Make sure your brand and your content answer the “so what?” question at every step.</li> </ul>
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**Questions to ask yourself about your personal brand:**

- Why would I care? Why would I share?
- What can I do to disrupt my audience's feed?  
(e.g., include an engaging visual, ask a question, present a poignant statistic, etc.)
- What pain-point or value proposition am I addressing for my target audience?

**Action Steps:**

