

018 – Casey Graham

Announcer: Do you dream of making a living as a speaker, writer, or performer? Do you want to learn to communicate with clarity, focus, and power? In each episode you will learn the secrets of dynamic communication so you can make a living doing what you love.

Welcome to the Art and Business of Public Speaking with your host, who, for over 30 years has helped men and women build exciting careers, Ken Davis.

Ken: Hello, this is Ken Davis, your host, for the Art and Business of Public Speaking, where we peek behind the curtain to discover how to create, grow and maintain a successful career as a communicator.

I'm being the host today because my friend who is our cohost, Brian Scheer, is not with us, and that's why you heard my voice first. He'll be back with us soon, but we are excited today because we have a very special guest. Casey Graham. Casey is the founder and CEO of the Rocket Company. This amazing company won Number 14, Best Place to Work in Atlanta. Number 602 on the Incorporated 5000 list. And that's amazing. Infusionsoft's Ultimate Marketer of the Year 2013.

But here's what's most amazing about Casey Graham. I heard him speak at a conference recently and I was running, grabbing my team going, is there any way I can get a recording of what this man just said? He has ideas. He has information that will help any communicator – anybody who is trying to build a business or a career of any kind.

Welcome Casey Graham. I can't tell you how delighted and privileged I feel to have you on our program here today.

Casey: Thanks for having me, man.

Ken: You are one of my heroes. We introduced you – we talked about the fact that you started four companies. That those companies are successful, they're profitable. And I'm going to jump right in here and ask you a question that relates directly to me. And later on we're going to talk about vulnerability. So I'm going to be a little vulnerable with you, is that okay?

Casey: Let's do it.

Ken: Okay. I have a major company. My major company revolves around me. I started speaking. The speaking was based on my name, and I developed that as a major part of my business. And then I started several other companies that basically drew on the people that were my followers and my fans. But you've got four that can run without you. What are the principals that allow you to put that kind of thing together? Because I think our listeners would love to know about that.

Casey: Well for me, I'm just a redneck from Alabama. So I don't know a lot about a lot. And I don't try to know a lot about a lot. And I think the thing for me early on was I just don't like doing a lot of stuff. So a part of it is just strategic laziness. I literally do not enjoy

working on stuff that I'm not good at. And I'm not just trying to be funny. I'm serious. I really don't do that.

So for me, it's really been from Day One – and I haven't got this perfect, and everything isn't kosher. And if you look at our website, it seems much better than it is. And behind the scenes we're scrambling and we're running around. All of that's reality, too. But it's just strategic laziness. I refuse to do things that I'm not good at or that drain me. And I hire people – when people tell me you shouldn't hire people. You're too young. You're company's too young. I just hire people to do stuff, and maintain profit margins at the same time. So that's what we try to do.

Ken: That is amazing. Folks out there, I know many of you have scrambled to get pens or you've grabbed for your iPhone or something to write down "strategic laziness." Now I'm going to tell you something about this vulnerable guy. There's another way to say that. Business genius. That's not strategic...I'm telling you. That is business genius, man!

And here's why. When we're working at stuff we don't enjoy, it drags us down. It really is a waste of our energy. Why not surround ourselves with people who can do what we don't do well and don't enjoy doing?

Casey: And people will say, well, I don't have the money yet. And I literally hired my first two employees when we didn't have one customer seven years ago. Very part time. Renee, who just came in the office, we've been working together for 13 years. I hired her. And literally it was just two hours a day, and I can barely pay you \$8-\$10 an hour. And just those two hours a day, the multiplication effect that she had in my life by taking stuff off my plate – just for two hours a day.

So everybody thinks all or none, and I say hey, get very strategic and very smart. And the people that you should hire first, and the people you use to get stuff off your plate are often times people that love you. They like you. They just want to be around you and help you. They're not looking for pay even much. They just have a passion for what you do, and they're often times in your life – you just got to open your eyes to see it.

Ken: That is powerful. I remember the very first – by the way – all my people say, finish a sentence, dude. Okay, so I'm going to finish a sentence. I'm a dreamer. I'm a visionary. And the people that are around me make my dreams come to reality. I am not a detail person. But I can feel what we need. What people want. And I think you're the same way. The first person I hired Casey, I could only hire him half time. I could not afford to pay him more than half time.

And after the first two months, he was going to work for me for six months, he made such a difference in our business, Casey, that I just said to him, okay, it's full time. I can't afford not to have you on our staff.

Casey: Yeah, that's huge. And especially in the speaking business and what you do. And again, I'm not an expert in the speaking business. I'm a CEO that gets to speak. I'm not a speaker. I've just seen that a lot of speakers and people that come to us for coaching

and help and things like that, is they're literally just doing too much. And they're typing emails at 11pm on airplanes, flying and doing all this kind of stuff. And that's wonderful to want to work hard, but you're going to hit a glass ceiling that you're never going to be able to get your income or influence above if you keep doing things that you're not great at.

Ken: You know, one of your best topics is how to monetize your platform through creating membership sites and courses. Nothing gets more traction than when you speak about that. And there were four little items that you listed there when we sent you our questionnaire. And the first one was – Getting People to Take Action. Can you talk about that a little bit? Because even though you say you're not a speaker, you are a communicator. Your membership sites are communicating to people, and you have great ideas that work in speaking, and a lot of people that listen to our podcast aren't speakers either. So talk to us about Getting People to Take Action.

Casey: Well, I say I'm not a speaker but I speak every day. I'm just not the traditional sense of a full time speaker where it's my name, and going out and that kind of thing. Taking action. For my whole life, when I'm 14 years old, my granddad shoots himself. I have suicide, and it's because of finances. Immediately right after that I don't want my life to ever struggle – I don't want to struggle financially.

And so I literally went to a friend of mine who did something in finances. I said, what do I do? He said, start investing \$50 a month, and I literally started having auto draft taken out of my account, \$50 a month when I'm 14/15 years old. And then I started getting my friends to do it. I was like an Amway salesman at 15 years old. But the point was, any time where I have pain, or anytime that I have something that I want, for me, it's not like I don't sit around and think about it for a long time. I just know that the best benefits have come when I'm taking fast action. Rapid action right then.

When I started working with people and speaking and especially getting people to take action and sell, I've seen a lot of CEO Speakers – we do a great job informing people. We do a great job inspiring people. But we very rarely directly ask people to do something. To take a next step. One next step, but not wait. Literally take it right now.

I was in a meeting, people called me in to do a speaking thing with photographers this week. I literally, at the dinner table, looked at a lady and said, you're going to sell something before we leave the dinner table. Right now, we're going to find somebody that will buy something. Right now. And the point of that is not to be dramatic or over the top. The point of it is, if people don't take action in the moment, the chances of them taking action probably aren't going to happen.

So speakers do a great job. We get everybody all warm and fuzzy. But then when you walk away, it's great and they loved your presentation, but that's not success for me that they loved my presentation. Success for me is, did they take the action that is going to change their lives.

One of the things I say is, one direct ask is greater than a thousand hints. One direct ask is greater than a thousand hints. And quit hinting around. Get to the freakin' point and get people to take action now.

Ken: That is absolutely amazing. You and I both run into what I call conference junkies. They go from – do you know what I mean by that? They go from conference to conference to conference listing ideas. Their brains overwhelmed. They're drinking from a firehouse, and they never swallow. They never take that first step. That must frustrate you when you see that as it does me.

Casey: It does. And the thing that frustrates me is that, again, I think you can be the busiest people or the laziest people. Because business is a form a laziness. It's like I'm going to go learn this, think about all this kind of stuff, but I don't ever want to do anything. And it feels, with people, I've just found, and the people I know – and Dave Ramsey did a great job of this when he started Financial Peace University. He said, the very first thing you do – save \$1,000.

Ken: Right.

Casey: That's it. What do you do? Baby Step One. And I see so many people gain traction. What I always teach is action creates traction. If you are to gain traction in any area of your life you've got to do something and quit talking about it.

Ken: Now those of you who are holding on to your iPhones or they're nearby, you've got about nine fantastic tweetable little tidbits here. This is why I was scrambling going to my staff, saying, find me something I can write – wait, wait. Has this been recorded so I can go back again and listen to it again?

Let's just stop here just for a second because we are going to, together here, enhance somebody's life today. Let's take action on what you're talking about. Years ago a man said to me – I'm excited about how parallel our lives are here. Years ago a man said to me, Ken Davis, put away \$80/month. I was making \$8,000 a year. He said listen to me. He said, put away \$80 a month. That's about a tenth of what I was doing. He said, I want you to give your future that much.

And then later as our income grew, we had people who came alongside us who convinced us to save for the future. Let me tell you something Casey. And I know you'll agree with this. There are 50%, maybe more than that, of the people who are listening to us today, who will come to a time in their life when they are miserable, doing something they don't want to do because they have to. Especially in the later stage of life.

Dave Ramsey talks about this fact, that personal wealth isn't about inheriting a million dollars from your grandmother. It's about taking care of your future now. And I would just like you – you seem to know about this. You've been around Dave more than I. And I listen to him all the time on the radio. But would you agree with me that one of the most important things you can do for your future – because not so you can retire and go play golf or ride on a yacht, although those might be part of it – so you can spend

a portion of your life not making a living, but living because there's resources there for you to do it.

Casey: Yeah, and so specifically if you're listening to this, the thing I would say is, the immediately thing they think when I meet with people is they immediately are throwing out, yeah Ken, but you don't know. You don't know my situation. You don't know my payments. You don't know my bills. You don't know. And immediately we start to think about all the reasons why we can't. And it literally is just saying – I wrote a book about fundraising, and the first thing was, get rid of all the head trash of what you think you can and can't do. And here's what I say.

Now Ken, you might cut this out of your podcast. I don't know if you will or not. But here's what I tell people I say – in 30 days from now, the people that you care about the most were going to be brutally executed in front of your face, would you be able to get out of your job or get out of the thing you hate right now and create enough money to be able to survive in the next month. Would you be able to?

Every time I ask that question, which I totally try to get their brains to just get out of this self-imposed walls and give something that shocks them. And they go, of course I would. And so I said, so then you can. You can. The problem is - here's what's happening, Ken. When people don't take action, it's because they're telling themselves a story that they get this benefit out of telling themselves, oh me, oh my. Or you don't know my situation. Screw the story. Take the step right now and you can do it. And I promise, if you put yourself in a desperate situation.

And so I'm with people, and their paycheck is the most dangerous thing in their life, but they're addicted to it. You've got to just take the step. Make the action. But anyway, that fires me up. I know it's an extreme example, but it really works.

Ken: I would never know that fires you up. I get a chance to look at you on TV. I'm watching you personally as you say that, and we will not cut that out of the podcast. And I'll tell you why we won't cut it out. Because life throws those kinds of situations at people every single day. Divorce, earthquake, tornado. You name it. It throws those kind of situations at people every single day. That's a great piece of advice.

The second thing you said was that it's important to connect in the first five minutes with people when – I think you were talking about speaking here, and then you used two examples with likeability and vulnerability. Now talk to me about how you create those in an audience.

Casey: The first thing I say is that people don't take advice from people they don't like. So I listen to people that I like, and I take advice. And so the reason why it's so important to create the likeability right out of the gate is because the chances of them actually consuming or taking action or content go through the roof. So it's not about that they like you. It's that you break down the walls so that their life, so they can hear you. So the way I create likeability, there's just a couple strategies that I use.

I tell stories about where I'm from. I'm from Alabama. And I grew up in Pleasant Grove. And I just talk about the simple things, like where I came from, and maybe a little bit – you're way more funny. You're the humor guy and that kind of thing. But I just share stories that are endearing. I'm from Pleasant Grove, Alabama. My dad was a steel worker. My mom was a substitute teacher. Those kind of things. And literally, those kind of items – and another thing I like to do is throw a picture up of my family.

Another one I do, and this one seems so stupid, Ken. I'll put a picture of my dog up sometimes. Because most people have pets. And so there's something about me talking about this little dog. This little woman dog.

Ken: Please tell me. That does sound stupid. What kind of dog you got?

Casey: It's a Westie.

Ken: Go ahead!

Casey: And I just throw that stuff on. And I talk about it. And the other thing I do is self-deprecation. And I talk about, hey, I talk fast, and I'm Southern. So if you're from the North and you can't understand me – that kind of thing. I'm just throwing out little personal things for likeability.

Vulnerability – I get to that very, very quick. And I share specific, personal failures. I was \$80,000 in debt three years into the company. I had to fly around the world to save it. I'll tell stories about that. I talk about personal failures in my life when I neglected my family. I neglected my wife. I neglected my kids. Because I cared more about profit than I did people. All of those different kind of things. And when I shared those negative stories about myself, people go, well, I can relate with that. I've been there. I've done that. And that's kind of what I try to do.

Ken: And because I know you, because I've heard you speak, because I can actually see you making your presentation as we're doing this podcast, this isn't acting so you can fool the people. I remember one time in our SCORRE conference, we had a man. We said, you need to be more vulnerable. You need to be more open with the people. And he said, this was his response. Oh, I can do that. I've had acting class.

Well if you have to have an acting class to be more open and vulnerable, you don't belong in the business. That's great, man.

Casey: Well acting portrays something you're not. All we're doing is just talking about things we've done well and things we haven't done well. And everybody can relate to that. So I would just say be honest, be truthful in your stories. Don't exaggerate them. Say it as it is.

I'll tell you one other thing, and this seems so simple. And I know you've talked about this before. Just smile.

Ken: Absolutely.

Casey: Just putting a smile on your face draws people in.

Ken: Yes. And I've just to figure out if there's any way – I'm talking to our producers now – that we can get a picture, just so that people know that he's being honest and vulnerable, of this little woman dog that he's got. I want to see a picture of that dog. I say that, buddy, because I have a whole routine on small, worthless dogs that I do. And guess what kind I've got at home? Two small, worthless woman dogs. And I love the daylights out of them.

Here's another one you said. Be yourself. What does that mean? You said you used to struggle with that. Now be vulnerable with us. Tell us what did you try to be that was besides yourself?

Casey: I worked at a church early on, and the first thing I tried to be was a famous pastor. So I would listen to these famous pastors, and one guy would be all talking like this, and so I would get on stage and be all talking. And another guy would be all calm and slow and he would start with a scripture and do this. And I would start with a scripture.

And so I literally was just trying to act like them while I was talking. And the reason why I was is because somebody told me early on, Casey, you're too passionate and people don't want you to get up there and just go off and just speak from your heart and your gut. You've got to slow it down. All this kind of stuff. And so they gave me head trash early on, and so in that I was searching and seeking for a time. And literally Ken, when I was 23 years old I had a guy look at me, and he literally told me this. He was literally my direct supervisor. And he said, Casey, we had you doing announcements, we've had you doing a couple things, and I'm going to tell you that speaking and doing anything with public speaking is just not your gift. And so we're not going to let you do that any more.

And it was simply because I literally was so scared when I got on stage, that I was trying to please everybody else. And my whole thing was I want to impress my boss, I want to impress the crowd. And what I realized is, in that whole thing of impressing the crowd, I wasn't impacting anybody's life because guess who it was all about? Me. It's all about me.

And so when I finally said, you know what? I care more about the crowd than I do about my personal worth from the crowd, everything changed.

Ken: Right. I believe that. You would not believe how many people we have had as guests on here. In fact, I was just doing a mastermind presentation with Michael Hyatt the other day, and he said the same thing. The fear drops away when you realize it isn't about how do they like me. That comes up over and over and over again. And if every guest we ever have on this podcast says it, it's staying in the podcast because it's one of the keys to genuine success as a speaker, a communicator, a blogger. When your heart is built around benefiting other people rather than getting something from them.

Casey: Can I give one specific tip on this to help me?

Ken: Absolutely.

Casey: And I know a lot of speakers don't like doing this, and if you're more seasoned you don't have to, but for me, I literally work the room before I go up and speak. I go meet specific people. I get their names and I ask them specific questions and I understand.

So when I was at your Platform Conference, I literally talked to about 20 people, specifically got their stories, what their name was, and even in the first five minutes, I would literally say I would talk to John and Becky there back there, from Illinois, and there was something about it where I just said, you know what? My goal is to help John and Becky. And I was able to listen to their story, and even weave my content around John and Becky and what they have going on. And it was a common struggle for everybody in the room. And that was something that helped me be more about them than be about trying to impress the crowd.

Ken: Wow. Hey, can I ask you a question?

Casey: Sure.

Ken: What do I have to do to get you to run for President of the United States this next term because it sounds like you've got the stuff that could do it, man?

Casey: I'm the worst political person on earth. You don't want me doing politics. I'm too emotional, too reactive. I'm out.

Ken: I have a feeling that political correctness is not your forte. I'm just guessing.

Casey: No.

Ken: So you also said here, and this is going to be interesting because it addresses something you said before, but maybe from a little different direction. You said that you got criticized before for your passion. But really that was kind of a head trash that was put in your mind. But then you said, later on, one of the things I need to work on is taming my passion. What did you mean by that?

Casey: I mean that a passion is good, but passion needs to be used correctly. So if it's like a fire, man. Fire that's under control is great. Fire that's out of control is not. And I've watched myself back and I get so passionate sometimes that actually my face will get so intense, I'll get so fired up that I was just listening to that, I was looking at it, I would feel that I was angry or upset. It wasn't coming from a place of happiness or joy. It was coming from just this – and so I have to some time tame it back, slow down, tell a story. Just ease off the gas, because if it's full throttle the entire time, what I've found is people emotionally – it's the volume, even the cadence, all that kind of stuff is. It's just da-da-da-da-da-da machine gun. And it's okay if I use it at certain points, but then I've got to draw it back at other points.

Ken: We teach that in our SCORRE conference on public speaking and it is a powerful point. I hope that some of our listeners got that down. You overwhelm people unless you back off and give them a little bit of a break. That's one of the powerful aspects of humor, by the way. Humor gives people that little break, and then you can go back to the intensity again.



I want to get this in as well. How do you, when you have so much to say, you said you've learned that you need to keep it super simple and short. And your goal is to take ten minutes less than the conference gives you to speak. How do you manage that? Can you tell our people some action steps they can take to make that happen in their presentations?

Casey: I'm all about doing bad presentations, but just not when you actually do the presentation. And it's called preparation. So many speakers, and especially people like me that's a CEO that gets invited to speak. I don't have all these canned talks. I write a specific talk for events I'm going to based on what the event is. And so here's what I do. I literally film myself doing the talk, and I do it at least seven times out loud before I give the presentation. And what I do with the thing is I have a coach – a guy I send it to, and he literally helps me just cut everything that's not essential. Everything that's not essential. Everything that's not essential.

And I cut, cut, cut. And it literally goes – I'll start with an hour of content, and I can get an hour down to like 25 minutes of content. It's kind of like books. Most books I read, there's about 20% of it are great, 80% of it just say the same thing over and over again. And I just cut. And so I literally did, even at the Platform Conference. They said you've got 45 minutes. I said, put 35 on the clock, because I want to do that.

Here's the deal – this is a selfish reason. I don't want to listen to people talk for a long time. Do you?

Ken: Right. No, I don't. I want to get what I'm going to get, and then get out of there.

Casey: Move on. I don't want to listen to people talk for a long time. And so it's just like, I want to get what's the most important and move on. It's that simple. But the key is practice, and the key is literally filming yourself. And again, you may say that's over the top. That's what I do. And having somebody else in the mix that said that listens to it and helps you do all of your bad presentations before you get to the stage.

Ken: Have you read my book *Secrets of Dynamic Communication*? I'm going to send you a free copy, and you're going to say hey, wait a minute. He wrote that right after our podcast! Because we encourage people to do exactly what you're saying. The power of a speech isn't on the platform. The power of speech in the preparation. That's where it happens.

Casey: Maybe my speaking coach has read your book and he's just coaching me on your stuff.

Ken: Hey, have him send 20% this way. Listen man, this has been one of the most powerful podcasts that we have had. You have given our folks so much that they can use. And I just want to encourage people as we finish out this podcast – stay with us for a second because I want to thank you – folks, the one thing you need to do, and my buddy is going to agree 100%. Pick one. Act on it. Now. Before you leave the room you're in right now. Pick one of those points and act on it. Get started on it.

Thank you, Casey, for being with us. What a great interview. Thank you so much.

Casey: Thanks, bud.

Ken: Hey people, wasn't that a great interview? This man is offering us, by the way, a free trial for his eight step process of building predictable income called "Get Paid Daily." Say that about eight times real fast and it'll blow your head off. "Get Paid Daily."

Also, by the way, he sent us a picture of his dog. And I saw it. It is a little girly dog. So we've also included the two dogs that I have as well, that we talked about. And all of this is in our Show Notes at [dynamiccommunicators.com](http://dynamiccommunicators.com). And you'll find out how you can get Casey's free trial, and learn more about Casey and the Business Rocket.

Casey also gave us a Road Tip, and I want to read this, because I think this is so important. From this dynamic, powerful, passionate man came this Road Tip. Never travel alone if possible. It is so rare, he said, that I travel alone. If you're just starting out, maybe you have to. But Casey said this. I don't travel alone. And he gave this reason. Men on the road alone don't have a track record of success. I don't want to be a statistic with some moral failure.

And I'll tell you, I have followed Casey's advice for probably the last 25 years of my life. I have not been on the road alone. There's a young man that's in the room right now that travels with me and not only is he there from keeping me from getting in trouble, but he's also there to help me be strategically lazy. He's so good at the things that I'm not good at. And allows me to be good at the things I am good at. So that's our Road Tip for the day.

I always say Road Trip. If I do say Road Trip, you know that it's really a Road Tip and there's no need to write me letters or anything like that.

And how about this? Some of the best speaking advice I've ever heard, passionately delivered by a CEO of a company who says he isn't a speaker. This is the kind of advice that we give and the kind of principles that we help you learn to practice at the SCORRE conference. And the SCORRE conference is coming up October 26 through the 29<sup>th</sup> in Vail, Colorado at the Park Hyatt Beaver Creek Hotel.

If you want to see something beautiful – I mean there are people I think who would pay the money to come to the conference and just stay at the Park Hyatt Beaver Creek Hotel and look outside their window at the fall colors, and then go home and say, that was worth it. They wouldn't even have to come to the conference. But you get the conference on top of it. So go to [dynamiccommunicators.com](http://dynamiccommunicators.com) and find out more about this conference and our online training. Thanks for being with us. We'll see you next week.

Brian: Thanks for tuning in to another episode of The Art and Business of Public Speaking. Be sure to check out the full Show Notes at [dynamiccommunicators.com](http://dynamiccommunicators.com) where you can find the resources we discussed today and a downloadable transcript of the podcast. By the way, if you enjoyed today's episode, we would love for you to rate the podcast in iTunes. This helps us get in front of more people who are interested in our message. Thanks so much for your help, and we'll see you again next week.