

HOW WESTHOUZ CREATIVE HELPED MICHAEL REDDINGTON BRING HIS START-UP TO LIFE ON A TIGHT DEADLINE, GAIN CONFIDENCE PRESENTING HIS BRAND, AND BUILD INSTANT CREDIBILITY WITH HIS TARGET AUDIENCE.

Michael Reddington was at a crucial transition in his career when he partnered with Walt van der Westhuizen to help launch InQuasive, back in 2019.

He'd spent the previous 10 years working for a company that specializes in teaching interviewing interrogation techniques, **but was ready to go solo and pivot his skills and experience** into teaching sales negotiation and leadership communication techniques.

Things got off to a great start. "I was very fortunate that I could leverage the network I had to create my first opportunity," recalls Michael, of having business engagements already lined up.

But immediate contracts also turned up the pressure. "It was a good problem to have but a very real problem because I was technically still in the pre-start-up phase," he remembers.

After leaving his previous company, **Michael had just three weeks before his first solo gig, and the pressure was on to successfully launch - and impress - within his tight deadline.**



"I needed everything – fast!" he laughs. "A logo, business cards, a website, workbooks for seminars, invoices – anything branded. I needed all of it. **My company name was literally all I had.**"

Fortunately, he knew where to go. "I knew Walt from a previous life, if you will. Back in 2014, we were both involved with the same group of businesses in San Diego. We didn't work directly but worked in the same office and often socialized and spoke strategy, like about how Walt would approach and do things. He taught me his creative eye and how he sets things up."

In addition to his full-service design agency, Westhouz Creative, Walt has a Master's of Business Administration (MBA) and years of experience of being both personally involved in start-ups or helping others on their journey.

So fast forward five years to launching InQuasive, and Michael went straight to Walt. "**I needed a designer I could count on - on a trust level, a quality level and a collaboration level,**" he recalls. "I knew Walt well enough to know he fit the bill for all three.

"But I had a very real deadline and tight timeframe that felt out a bit out of my control. I was really stressed because I knew how much work it was going to take."

Walt had just three weeks to set up InQuasive from a creative standpoint. "But within two and a half weeks we had workbooks, business cards, handout materials – all completely created and designed from scratch," remembers Michael. "And within a month after that, Walt had the website up and we were working on the additional things."

It wasn't all smooth sailing, though. "The day before that very first gig, the print shop couldn't print the file of the workbooks, but Walt got straight on it - troubleshooting and educating them on the mistakes they were making to get the books printed. He did an incredible job stepping up for that."

Outsourcing to Walt, says Michael, gave him a sense of confidence.

"I KNEW I COULD TRUST
WALT'S CREATIVE EYE AND
GET THE QUALITY I NEEDED.
AND I KNEW ENOUGH OF
HIS CHARACTER TO KNOW I
WASN'T GOING TO TURN UP
TO MY FIRST ENGAGEMENT
UNPREPARED."

But the stakes were high. "**My reputation was at stake, my launch timetable was at stake, my path to profitability was at stake - plus my ability to make money,**" says Michael. "I couldn't show up without the right materials or cancel the first class, or my on-ramp to being profitable would get extended that much further.

"If Walt wasn't able to deliver, I had a lot on the line as a one-man service business. And if I wasn't ready to perform on day one, I was in big trouble. **But Walt took it on and he nailed it!**"

Michael says Walt's consistent communication (despite a three-hour time difference between them), flexibility, and their shared priority for decisiveness made the collaboration all that more successful given the urgent deadlines.



"The integration of investigation techniques into my business communication training programs meant the messages had to be stated in a very specific way," explains Michael, of his copy challenges.

"WHEN I SENT WALT A
RUDIMENTARY, LIFELESS
WORD DOCUMENT, HE PUT
HIS CREATIVE DESIGN TO
IT AND TURNED IT INTO
A WORK OF ART."

And so, as InQuasive grew, Michael and Walt's partnership did, too.

"It soon became clear I needed a website that differentiated me from the business, so Walt built another site which focuses more on me as a speaker," says Michael. "Then I had my book published so he built a website specifically for that.

"Again, with Walt, it wasn't just, 'Okay, here's two new websites'. It was the entire strategic conversation of what migrates, what's new, what's similar, what's the same? From a design theory standpoint, how do we make them look the same but not identical so Google doesn't think we're trying to beat the system with three websites? **Walt knew it all.**"

When asked what results Michael has seen due partnering with Walt, his answer is twofold.

"Number one: **Confidence presenting my brand.** Without meaning to sound arrogant, I truly believe my presentations and the concept I deliver are of very high quality. And for me, the design language of everything I do has to mirror the same level of quality. It's imperative that if someone looks at it after they hear me speak that it reminds them of the quality of the session.

"My biggest comfort - apart from the partnership element and actually having the ability to exhale - is knowing and trusting that Walt understood that. That he's capable of delivering, but also willing and able to challenge how I look at it, so it's that educational element for me as well."

Number two, says Michael, is credibility. **"The biggest result that Walt's work has given me is instant credibility with my target audience.**

"In my world, regardless of where I've been and who I've worked with, I don't come from a famous background. I didn't run a department for Google or Facebook so I didn't have the instant credibility that those types of companies add to your resume. **Creating credibility with everything I say and do is paramount** because my background is so unexpected.

"Thanks to Walt, when people look at my websites or material, they think, 'Wow this guy is for real, he's good'. At presentations, I'll see materials the previous resource left and compare mine to those and, well, you know....!"



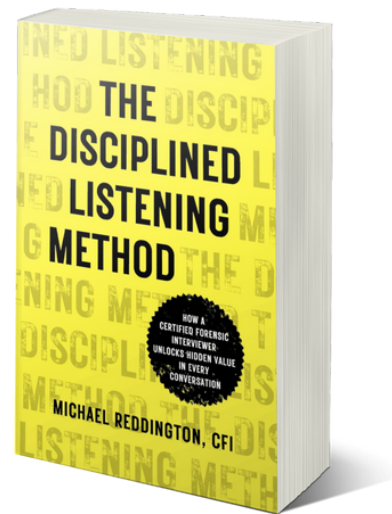
"WALT IS AN EXTENSION OF MY BUSINESS, PLAIN AND SIMPLE. IT'S VERY SAFE TO SAY I WOULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN TO WHERE I AM THE WAY I HAVE WITHOUT HIM, AND I PROBABLY WOULD'VE LOST CLIENTS IF HE HADN'T DONE WHAT HE'D DONE. I WOULDN'T HAVE THE PERCEPTION OF CREDIBILITY THAT I HAVE WITHOUT HIM, AND I KNOW FOR A FACT THAT I NEVER WOULD HAVE LAUNCHED A BUSINESS ON TIME WITHOUT HIM."

For other start up owners looking to get the same results, Michael says this: **"Not only does Walt understand the start-up process very clearly, and the necessity of both urgency and flexibility that often comes with it. He also has an innate appreciation of how keeping the essence of individuality of the entrepreneur is key, despite having to outsource certain roles.**

"When you're starting a company, it's an extension of yourself and a reflection of your ideas and vision. Even though Walt has recommendations and very valuable input, never once did I feel that he was trying to force his vision onto my business, and people do that all the time.

"Walt's expertise is bringing an entrepreneurs' vision, message and passion to life - and all the strategic elements that go around it."

Which is why Walt is now working on the creative design for Michael's latest venture, his upcoming podcast, I See What You're Saying. "We're often talking about new projects," he says. "And as long as he has the bandwidth, I'll always go to Walt."



To learn how Westhouz Creative can help with your branding, video, design, digital and web needs, visit westhouz.com

WESTHOUZ

