

# HMA

**HIDDEN MARKETING ASSETS**

## *University*

**INTERVIEW SERIES**

**The 7 Hidden Ways  
Audio Can Powerfully Control  
The Minds Of Your  
Prospects And Clients**

*Michael Senoff Interviews Vic Conant*

Dear Student,

I'm Michael Senoff, founder and CEO of [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://HardToFindSeminars.com).

For the last five years, I've interviewed the world's best business and marketing minds.

And along the way, I've created a successful home-based publishing business all from my two-car garage.

When my first child was born, he was very sick, and it was then that I knew I had to have a business that I could operate from home.

Now, my challenge is to build the world's largest free resource for online, downloadable audio business interviews.

I knew that I needed a site that contained strategies, solutions, and inside information to help you operate more efficiently

I've learned a lot in the last five years, and today I'm going to show you the skills that you need to survive.

It is my mission, to assist those that are very busy with their careers

And to really make my site different from every other audio content site on the web, I have decided to give you access to this information in a downloadable format.

Now, let's get going.

Michael Senoff

*Michael Senoff*

Founder & CEO: [www.hardtofindseminars.com](http://www.hardtofindseminars.com)

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## Michael Senoff Interviews Vic Conant

I have the great pleasure to welcome you to a very special interview with Mr. Vic Conant, the President of Nightingale-Conant Corporation. Nightingale-Conant is the world's largest producer and publisher of personal development products and services. For over 45 years, it they've been bringing people the information, skills, and motivation they need to create the life of their dreams through audio products and programs.

Nightingale-Conant Corporation was founded in 1960 by Lloyd Conant and Earl Nightingale. Lloyd Conant, an early direct mail expert and owner of a direct mail, printing, and fulfillment business and Earl Nightingale, a well-known motivational talk radio host for Chicago's WGN Radio and author of "The Strangest Secret" combined forces to market and distribute Earl's recordings of "The Strangest Secret", "Lead The Field" (a self-improvement industry classic), and "Our Changing World". In 1978, Nightingale-Conant began publishing and marketing new authors, beginning with Denis Waitley and eventually including Anthony Robbins, Brian Tracy, Deepak Chopra, Zig Ziglar, and many more of the industry's most recognized names.

In this interview, you will hear Vic and I discuss the early years of both his father, Lloyd Conant, and Earl Nightingale. You will hear exactly what motivated Earl Nightingale to begin to speak and create products dealing with self improvement. Vic tells how Earl and his father eventually joined forces to create and market their first huge success.

Listen as Vic explains the advantages of audio products over video products and even books and why Nightingale-Conant products are ultimately so popular. He goes on to explain why very successful people and entrepreneurs are so interested in self improvement products.

A few of the highlights of this exceptional interview are:

- How Vic became the President of Nightingale-Conant Corporation.
- Who is Vic's Number One mentor and why?

- What the best-selling self improvement topic is and has been for many years.
  - Which types of media have brought the company the most sales (i.e. television, radio, Internet, etc.).
  - The most profitable strategy used to market and sell their products.
  - How and why the personal development business has increased over the past twenty-five years.
  - The importance of good time management.
  - Some of the very sophisticated marketing analyses used by the company.
  - The new **Mentoring Program** offered by Nightingale-Conant to coach potential customers to meet their unique needs.
  - The importance of relationships. Vic shares some of his own personal experiences.
- 
- **Attention Information Product Authors!**
  - How an audio book author would submit a product to Nightingale-Conant.
  - How Nightingale-Conant works with new authors.
  - The importance of the product having a great title and why this is more important than the graphics or the packaging.

I invite you to become acquainted with Vic Conant through this insightful interview. He is personable, truly interested in how his business helps people, and shares a great deal of inside information into the audio publishing industry through his years of experience and wealth of knowledge.

Visit their web site to see all of the fabulous self improvement products that they have available. <http://www.nightingale-conant.com>.

Michael: How old were you when you took over the company?

Vic: I was 39. I didn't think I was going to run the company, but my dad always kept me informed, and it was such a fascinating field. I was in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 1978 in a sales position with a company, and my dad found out he had cancer. He gave me a call and said, "I think it's time for you to come back to the company." Without even hesitating, I said, "You're right." I didn't even know if I was going to say that, but there was no doubt in my mind that that was where I was supposed to go.

### *Music*

*Hi, it's Michael Senoff from Michael Senoff's [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://www.hardtfindseminars.com). You're in for a treat. I had the pleasure of interviewing Vic Conant, President of Nightingale Conant. Nightingale Conant is the world's largest producer and publisher of personal development products. For over 45 years, they've been bringing people the information skills and motivation they need to create the life of their dreams. Now you can hear the inside story from the president himself. There's no hidden charges or strings attached to hear this recording. You won't be sold anything, and you don't have to call in. It's all right here after this introduction. So, get ready and enjoy! If you have any questions after the interview, please don't hesitate to contact me. Let's get going!*

Michael: The difference between radio and TV – obviously you're in mainly audio only market. What kind of advantages do you see for marketing your audio as compared to a visual media more like videos and TV?

Vic: We've experimented a lot with video. We certainly have videos, but for our audience who tend to be people on the go and people in their cars a lot and they just tend to not want to take the time to sit down and watch a video. The audio medium is just so convenient.

It's so easy to use, and when you can't sit down and read a book or you can't sit down and watch a video, and when you're on the move or exercising or in your car or doing housework – there's so many places you can have a headset or a Walkman, or in your car you can just put it into your CD player, and it's so convenient to be able to listen, and as we say when your hands are busy, but your mind isn't. They also have the great advantage unlike a book which most people are lucky if they ever read a great book, and the chances of them rereading it are very unlikely.

There are a lot of people that get into the audio listening process, and find that it's very valuable to have the opportunity to replay an idea that they just heard or actually replay the whole message over and over with customers have listened to "Lead the Field" from Nightingale – I don't want to say hundreds of times, but there are people who have reported hundreds of times where they

actually wear out the program and buy another one. That's unusual, but it does lend itself to relistening, and we do need reminding.

The great benefit of our minds is that we forget. We forget our failures. When we have something that is very embarrassing that has happened, we feel like we're going to die. Then, a month or two later, it's gone from our minds. So, that's a positive, but when we come up with an idea that really positively changes us and we want to remember the idea, we tend to also forget that. So, these messages are usually relistened to where a person can remind themselves.

Michael: Your dad knew that. Your dad used to have speakers in every room in the house including the bathroom, and you remember when he played Earl Nightingale's recordings. You listened to them no matter what you were doing, right?

Vic: Right. In fact, those radio programs, Earl would do five a week, and they'd come on a record that would have ten of them on a record, and he would bring one of these records home, and you'd want to hear what Earl was up to and what he was saying. So, he would be constantly playing this. We ended up with 7,000 of these radio programs over the years.

Michael: Seven thousand different ones?

Vic: Right. Earl really thought of himself as a radio personality, and he continued doing them right up until he passed away. That was his genius, and a lot of our authors are this way. If I read a book, if you ask me about it, I might have trouble remembering the title much less the key points. He had the genius of being able to concisely put the key message in a form that you say, "Oh, that's what he meant. I can use that idea." So, it's a unique talent.

Michael: Here's a question from Mark Hansen from Podunk, Iowa. "A question I'd like to ask Vic is concerning Earl Nightingale's TV clips. When I was a kid, I remember watching Earl on TV, and what he said was always so interesting. Are these TV messages he did still available?"

Vic: Earl was a fabulous author and, just a little history, he was a radio announcer to being with WBBM in Chicago. His life dream from early childhood was to become a radio personality, and he started out in a tiny little radio station in Phoenix, and eventually went to Chicago and got himself on the air. He was raised in the depression. He was a poor kid, and one of the things that fascinated him was he would walk or drive by in one neighborhood and see these palatial mansions in people living even in these terrible times seemingly wonderful existences. The people that he lives around seemed to be totally confused and not knowing the rules of survival almost living a prosperous life.

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So, that became kind of an obsession with him, and he frequented libraries and really got into being a student of this whole field. So, when he became a radio personality, he was actually one of the first talk radio personalities in the country. He'd have to go out and sell his own time, and it wasn't like today. He would speak on the subject of self-improvement. So, he builds up clientele, people who would listen to him and look forward to his messages.

When he and my dad met, my dad was an early direct marketer back in the '50s and Earl had just recorded a message called, "The Strangest Secret", and that message you become what you think about is the secret. He was looking for someone to market that, and my dad came along and they met through a marketing effort of my dad. Eventually, my dad sold over a million of "The Strangest Secret".

Michael: I had met Joel Welden. I had met him in Phoenix about a year and a half ago, and I had asked him the whole story, and he said that your dad was listening on the radio to one of Earl's radio messages, and that they had somehow got hooked up together.

Vic: The story I heard from Dad was that he was a direct marketer and he sent a direct mailing in the Chicagoland area and Earl responded because he had this product he wanted someone to market, and he had several other people working on it, but my dad was the person who hit the jackpot or figured out a way to do it effectively.

Then, because of his radio background, they did well with this recording, "The Strangest Secret", which was a product. It was actually a record back then, but a couple years later, they created a five minute radio show called, "Our Changing World", and again my dad was selling it by mail. It became the largest syndicated radio program in the country back in those days.

Michael: And, your dad was selling it to radio stations?

Vic: He was selling it to radio stations by mail and telephone. So, at one time, they had including overseas, around a thousand radio stations carrying it at one time. It wasn't like ABC. They were all small radio stations that would carry it.

So, anyway, this was a huge success for us and for the company. I was just a kid back then, but eventually they said, "Well, why don't we take these messages that are so popular, and let's try television." So they took these little five minute radio programs, and he started doing the same idea in a studio. So, he would create a five minute TV program, and he did that for a couple years,

and it wasn't as successful as the radio program. I think they actually did it on WGF in Chicago.

So, after a couple of years, it died as a product, but the great thing about our audio program, and the great thing about the TV back then is we have all the footage. Now, a lot of it is dated, but we did create a video series out of many the clips. We do have one product that does have some of the TV programs on it.

Michael: What was your dad selling, and what did he first start selling in his direct mail business back in the 50s?

Vic: He had a little print shop, and he had the original personalized letter automatic type when the electric typewriter was first invented. He had a machine that was like a player piano that would suck down a key from this new electric typewriter and actually automatically type out a letter, and you would have another machine that would actually sign the letter. So, it looked like a totally personalized letter.

He used to sell those machines around to different companies, and they were used a lot in collection efforts and so forth. He used them to market chicken and anything that somebody needed marketing. He would use this to automatically type a personalized letter to market. Instead of marketing your product, he was always looking for a product that could be his because he saw all these people making a lot of money from his marketing efforts. Eventually it was Earl's Nightingale's product that became, you might say, his products when they became partners.

Michael: Here's a question from Randy Sellers in Silver City, New Mexico. "Vic, what do you feel is the most helpful program your company has ever sold and why?"

Vic: My answer is the first program that you listen to. People tend to fall in love with that first author. If it was Earl Nightingale, they just love Earl Nightingale. If it's Dennis Weylen who later came along and did the Psychology of Winning, we ended up selling over a million of those programs of his and it became the largest selling program ever produced. They tend to be life-changing because for the most part, these programs can be mind expanding. They tell you how great you are. They can release your potential.

So, when you're first exposed to this idea that, "Gee, I control my own environment and my mind has controlled my existence and my thinking." It's so powerful that whatever that first product is, you tend to love that author. From then on, it's kind of your favorite.

Michael: I'd agree. I haven't told you this, but this is what got me into what I'm doing today with the Brian Tracey Psychology of Selling and Zig Zigler and all these guys. I used to listen to them constantly. So, it's really had a great impact on my life. I thank you for that, and I thank your dad for that. Here's another question from Tom, "What is your opinion of subliminal audio self-help tapes?"

Vic: We had some subliminal products in the past, and there just has been no real concrete evidence that they work that I've seen. When it gets right down to it, we need to know as a publisher that a product really does work and really is life changing. Some people swear by them, and as I said, for a while we were experimenting with them, but we just couldn't get a study that was ever done that really proves that they work. So, we stopped marketing them, and I was approached just recently by someone that has a very sophisticated, very supposedly good subliminal program, but until they can actually prove it, we just can't afford to put our reputation on the line for that product.

They may very well work and the science behind it is interesting, but we just need proof for ourselves.

Michael: Here's a question from Gregory Day of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His website is [freemailorderhelper.com](http://freemailorderhelper.com). "Vic, what have you found to be the best media to advertise personal development products – print, television, radio, Internet, or anything else?"

Vic: I guess all of the above. Every one of them has their own part because of my dad's background. We've been very much into mail order and still are. We've used television effectively. We've used radio effectively. I guess like everybody we're learning our way on the internet and feel that has huge potential for the future.

Earl used to get mad at us. He had this great program, "Lead the Field." He'd say, "Gees, we've got this life-changing program. How come you guys can't sell more of it?" It's always a marketing problem. We have the ideas. We have the program, and for direct marketing, it's, "Can you get the message down that's provocative enough to get the person to try the product?"

We send it out on a 30 day free trial. We put all the emphasis on ourselves. So, we have to prove ourselves to you, but even with that, people are so jaded today that you have to figure out a way to entice them to try it.

Michael: In your market research, what percentage of the population is really interested in self-help that even take the time, your customers. Is it one or two percent of the population or more?

Vic: Unfortunately, it's a very small population. We have a saying that the people that don't need our products are the people that buy it. People like yourself who are high achieving. Your mind has to be in a certain spot where it's receptive, where you're looking, where you're seeking. We, like many people, would love to help all the disadvantage people. All the people that need the product, need these ideas, need to know that they can control their own destinies, but unless you can give the product to them, then they won't listen.

So, we found just for survival that the people that we have to approach are the very successful people and the entrepreneurs and the people that are looking to have the advantage. They're already working twelve hours a day. They're wondering, "How can I make whatever I'm doing more productive?"

Michael: Here's a question from Keith Joy of Singapore, [wealthmountain.com](http://wealthmountain.com), "Vic, I'd like to know from your experience, what is the most profitable strategy you use to market your products online as well as offline?"

Vic: It's been this open account idea. When we advertise, we typically say, "Try this product for 30 days on open account or at our risk for free. We'll send it out to you for 30 days, you try it, and we have the risk on our side." My dad came up with that idea back in about 1978, and sales were kind of stalling out. We were asking at that time for people to send in \$50 and we'd send them the product. That just wasn't working to a great degree.

So, he tried this, and it worked very well, and because of that our business exploded and we still use that technique.

Michael: So, the total risk reversal, and you've been using that for how long?

Vic: For the last 25 years.

Michael: Now, when someone orders from you, they put a credit card down, but it's not charged until 30 days later?

Vic: Typically, you can sign saying that you want it, but typically it's nothing. It's just strictly, "Bill Me Later."

Michael: They respond well to it, but how is it on the side of your collections? What have you found? What percentage you've got to go chase money?

Vic: We have a very sophisticated collection effort, but it's basically using guilt, you might say. We're very sophisticated as far as taking lists in the direct marketing business. You take lists and you test that list. So, if you test the lists that returns all the products or doesn't pay, then you don't use that list anymore.

So, we tend to use very strong lists like Business Week subscribers or people that don't have time to screw around and are not out taking advantage of the situation. So, we test our way, you might say, into using the list where there are sophisticated people that can afford the product and who pay.

Michael: What's a general test? If you're going to test a list with your offer like that, how many names do you generally role out a test list?

Vic: Usually, we'll use 5,000 names. Statistically, that will give us enough, and then if that works, then we'll go to 10,000. If that works, we got to 15 or 20 thousand. Even if that list has a million names, we test our way in very slowly. You just learn over time which lists are trustworthy and which lists you can get rid of.

Michael: Do you use list brokers or do you have experts in house who handle all of that?

Vic: We have experts in house, but we also use list brokers.

Michael: How about on your collections? Is that all done in house?

Vic: We do that in house.

Michael: Here's a question from Bill Hibler of [Ecommerceconfidential.com](http://Ecommerceconfidential.com), "Vic, I know that developing back end products in a strong marketing system are critical for speakers. What would you say is the most important skill for a speaker to develop in terms of presentation?"

Vic: I have two answers for that. We work with many speakers from the National Speakers Association. We're good friends of theirs, and a lot of the speakers that are out on the market have their own products and then they market our products as well. The key is whether they use our products, or you definitely want your own products. First of all, you need to develop a product that you have, but even if you don't have a product, if you love – let's say Brian Tracey for example. If you loved Brian Tracey, and you become a distributor of ours, and you take a hundred or a dozen or whatever number of programs of Brian's to your seminar. If you love that product, and you express that love to your audience, they'll love it too, but you have to convey that conviction. That product has had to work for you in order for you to market it. Then, of course, your own product should be easy to sell.

Michael: Here's a question from James Elion at [www.jameselion.com](http://www.jameselion.com), "Vic knowing what you know now, if you were to start again from scratch with only a

couple of products, what would be the first three steps you'd take to quickly establish cash flow?"

Vic: Well, you'd have to be really lucky and pick out the right product for one thing. We're pretty sophisticated now because we can use our own database to tell us when we survey our database and so forth. If you didn't have that ability, you have to pick out a product that has a great title and that has great content, number one.

Back when Napoleon Hill was creating, "Think and Grow Rich", he went to his publisher and his original title for Think and Grow Rich was, "How to Use Your Noodle to Make a Boodle".

Michael: I've heard that.

Vic: I love that, and that publisher worked on that and eventually came up with, "Think and Grow Rich", but he had gone out with that first title, we probably would have never heard of Napoleon Hill. So, the title is critically important in my estimation. Then, the first message is critically important. You don't want to save the best for live.

In that first CD, the message has to be worth more than the whole value of the product, or else you'll get it back. Then, you have to come up with a great marketing piece with great copy. So, selection is obviously critical. Once you get it, you have to know what to do with it.

Michael: Testing is definitely critical. Through testing, you can get a lot of your answers.

Vic: It's relatively inexpensive, at least in direct marketing.

Michael: When you have a new author come to you and he's got a product, are you influential in developing and creating the title before you'll take it on?

Vic: Yes, a lot of times authors come with a good title to begin with, but we always go out to our audience and survey two, three, four different titles just to see which one resonates with our customers.

Michael: How are your tapes mainly sold? Are they mainly sold through direct mail, and can you find them in any retail outlets other than through your distributor network?

Vic: The only way to get our full line of products is through our catalogue or through our internet. The internet is replacing the catalogue. So, that's our main vehicle if you want to look at our entire line of products.

Simon & Shuster, we have a marketing agreement with them. They're one of the largest publishing houses in the country, and they distribute a line of our products into retail stores. So, we do have a significant number of our product titles in retail as well through Simon & Shuster.

Michael: They're in all the major bookstores?

Vic: Yes.

Michael: How about Amazon?

Vic: They don't carry our entire line. They just carry more of the retail line.

Michael: Is that all done through Simon & Shuster?

Vic: Simon & Shuster works through them, but we also use them as well. Someone comes to them and asks for a product, and they'll always come over. We have found it to be a large segment of business, but it is possible to find our products.

Michael: Here's a question from Robert Revard, "Vic, what is the worse business mistake you have made?"

Vic: Back in the '90s, I thought I knew a lot more about business than I must have, but I got into venture capital. I really got out of our core and invested in some businesses that really I had no expertise in. During the dot-com period, I went a little crazy. So, I definitely would love to have that period again. I invested in businesses that I didn't really understand, and that was a good learning experience.

Michael: Here's another question from Robert, "What book most changed your life as a person? And, who would you say is your number one mentor, if you could name one?"

Vic: Earl Nightingale was my first author you might say that I was exposed to. We brought out some books of Earl's, but they were compilations of his radio programs. So, his audio programs are my book. I'm kind of an audio guy. Then, like you, Brian Tracey has been very influential. I love his products. Deepak Chopra and Wayne Dyer I think are very life changing and tremendous authorities. Napoleon Hills, "Think and Grow Rich" as a book was significant for me.

Then, from a spirituality standpoint, one of our authors put us in touch with “A Course in Miracles”, which is a series of books that I found to be life changing for me personally.

Michael: Here’s a question from Steven Street, “Since you took over as President of Nightingale Conant in 1986, you’ve probably seen some remarkable changes in the industry. Could you describe how the personal development industry has changed in the past 19 years?” Any major changes you’ve seen over these years?

Vic: The biggest change has been, I think, the acceptance. When we started, you become what you think about was almost people didn’t understand what you were saying. I think people are more educated now hopefully because of us, and because of people like our company. So, they’re being educated in the power of their own thinking, the power of their mind earlier on in their lives, and I think hopefully that’s having a positive impact on our whole society.

I think there’s more ways to get exposed. You have Oprah Winfrey and Dr. Phil who are very significant influences in getting messages out on human potential. They’re helping to raise that consciousness level so that people then realize and will start looking for other avenues like ours, and other publishers like ours. I think the television, for that perspective, has had a very positive impact.

Michael: Here’s a question from David Dutton out of Nashville, Tennessee. “Vic, do you use continuity programs where you bill the customer each month? How long does the average customer stay?” So, on your offer, you said try it for 30 days, you bill them. Is it until further notice?

Vic: We don’t tend to do continuity products. We have a couple, but our product is more like a book club where we send you out a listing of our latest products, and you just pick ones that you like. So, we don’t tend to do the continuity as much as just the constant exposure every month. We bring in a new product almost every month, sometimes two or three. So, we just educate you to those, and people buy what they feel like buying.

Michael: He also has another question. When you were young, say in your 20s or so, did you have any idea that you’d be in a position like you are today?

Vic: In a way, yes. In a way, no. My dad said early on, “Some day you’re going to run this company.” Like Earl Nightingale, he was a depression kid and his dad lost his job. I think he worked for a candy manufacturer in St. Joe, Missouri. My dad grew up caddying. I think through caddying he was exposed to these guys that were doing well in their lives. So, like Earl, he got that image of, “I want to become one of them someday.”

Michael: How old were you when you took over the company?

Vic: I was, I think, 39. I didn't think I was going to run the company, but my dad always kept me informed and it was such an interesting field and such a fascinating field, and he was so involved with it seven days a week, running it, looking back I just naturally subliminally, you might say, kept an eye on the company or was exposed to the company. He was in love with the company. So, that must have rubbed off.

I was in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 1978 in a sales position with a company, and my dad found out he had cancer. He gave me a call and said, "I think it's time for you to come back to the company." Without even hesitating, I said, "You're right." I didn't even know that I was going to say that, but there was no doubt in my mind that there was where I was supposed to go.

Michael: How do you manage your time when it comes to running a business as large and successful as Nightingale Conant? Is time an issue?

Vic: It's huge with everybody, and I've been fortunate in that I have now my son in the business. I have some very capable people that have joined our company over the years, and I tend to be a pretty good delegater. I think delegation is critical to allow yourself to have free time and have your own life.

I have really great people that run various segments of the company, and I tend to be able to look over and make sure everything's going well. Then, I can get to look at the bigger picture.

Michael: Do you have siblings?

Vic: I have a sister who was involved early on in the company, and actually Earl Nightingale had a son that was in the company for a while. Bill was a very close friend of mine, he was also in the company for a while but choose to work elsewhere after a period of time. So, I'm the only one of my generation in the business, and now my son.

Michael: When the company started, when is Nightingale Conant, was it a 50/50 deal?

Vic: Yes.

Michael: It was, okay. Here's a question from Sam, "How do you price your products? Is it driven by the length of the product, the number of the CDS, the personality of the writer, or the content?"

Vic: It's a little of all of those, but probably the content is the key. We're tending to create larger products now than we did in the past. We're finding that people get more involved in more of a study kit than just a series of recordings. Our surveys have showed that people actually get more out of it.

We tend to price things by almost the length of the product and the amount of workbooks and so forth that goes with the product.

Michael: Obviously, you've done a lot of testing on pricing, and your pricing is probably the magic number. Do you test a lot of different price?

Vic: The great thing about our business is it's very testable, and we test everything. So, we test our way to the price that seems to work the best.

Michael: Why do you like audio as publishing format?

Vic: It's such a forgiving format. It's so simple. It's so portable, and portability is probably the key. You can take it with you. You can use it. Most of our customers say they use it when they're driving, but while you're exercising or while you're doing anything again when your hands are busy and your mind isn't. It's just the perfect medium for plugging in and using otherwise wasted time. Earl Nightingale called the audio cassette the greatest invention since the printing press.

When you think about it, audio as we know it only really was invented in the '70s. Up until then, you could get audio on records, but they were very difficult to use, very unportable, and so, there really was no effective way to portably use this medium of audio until the late '70s. So, it's actually a very new medium, and it's been extremely powerful.

Michael: I notice on your site, you're going to make all the audios available in download format on your site. How is your market responding to that?

Vic: It's slow so far. I think we probably have the largest group of cassette owners in the country. It took them forever to stop using cassettes because they just like that medium. Now, we've shifted over to CD, and there just seems to be a cycle where people are used to buying in a certain way.

Michael: Is everything you're producing CD? Are you still producing any cassette?

Vic: Our larger selling products will still bring out cassettes, and maybe 15 percent of the people will order cassettes, but all the new products coming out are strictly CDs.

Michael: How would an audio book author submit a publication for consideration to you?

Vic: We actually have a little guideline that if you call in, we'll send it out. Basically, you need to submit a pretty detailed outline of what the product is, and hopefully a presentation by you in some way where we can hear your voice and where we can hopefully hear your message.

Many of our authors are speakers, and they have a lot of their information. It's very easily obtainable in audio, but if you don't have that, somehow you have to get your message to us so we can hear you as well as read what you have.

Michael: You have a lot of different titles, but you've got a couple key name people – Zig Zigler, Brian Tracey, and you can see them up on the site there. Are you getting inundated with a lot of people who want to get in with Nightingale Conant?

Vic: Sure, probably for every product that we produce, we go through a hundred products or more that are submitted. One thing about this industry is people, when they discover these messages, it's so exciting to them. They tend to think, "I just discovered this for the first time. This is a new discovery." Then, they come to us, and they say, "I've got something totally different, totally new." When we hear it, it's the same message but not done as well as the great authors – Tony Robbins or whatever.

We're always looking for that, and you maybe saying the same thing because what will appeal to me and what will inspire me maybe different than what will inspire you. We don't mind getting the same material if it's done very uniquely and in an exciting new way.

What is amazing for me is because years ago I thought, "Geez, we've published all these great people. There is no way we're going to be able to find any new authors." But, everyday somebody comes in and they do have new material. I'm listening now to a new product that we did, "The Five Forces of Wellness", by Mark Thiman, and here's an MD that's got fascinating information that all of us need to know about our health. I'm pretty educated on health issues, but he had a lot of new ideas. We're just always looking for that person who's the cutting edge.

Michael: So, he comes to you with his product. What kind of deal do you negotiate? I know book publishers, when someone gets published, they make a small royalty on each book sold. Does it work that way?

Vic: That's exactly how we work. We bare the expense of the production of the product, and then we do all the marketing.

Michael: And, you have an exclusive on it?

Vic: We have an exclusive on that product, and we pay a royalty to the author.

Michael: When he's doing a speaking engagement, let's say he's out on the road speaking, can he sell that product himself?

Vic: Yes, and in fact, that's a major reason why authors come to us and they want the sales that we'll generate, but they also want to be able to market a high quality product in the back of the room.

Michael: Do you split the proceeds?

Vic: Then, it's not a royalty. At that point, they buy it at what we call an author price, which is very favorable, and many authors make a large part of their income selling their products.

Michael: Do you have authors in your line that aren't out there speaking constantly? Having authors out there speaking is good business for you because they're promoting their own stuff? Is that a requirement or is it not that important?

Vic: No, in fact, a lot of authors come to us because they want to get off the road. Being a professional speaker on the road takes a unique personality because the more successful you are, the more you're out of town. In fact, you mentioned Joe Welden before. He's one of my favorite guys. He's a great author and a wonderful person.

He told me early on every year he raises his fee ten percent, and cuts back his speaking ten percent. He's been doing that every year for the last 20 years, but he's good enough that he can get away with it.

Michael: I saw on your site, you have a whole section for speaking. So, if you book a speaking engagement, is that something you split with the speakers if you can get them a speaking gig?

Vic: Yes.

Michael: How is that going? Is that a nice part of the business?

Vic: That's a very tiny part of our business. There are speaking bureaus who do it professionally. We do it more transfer. If we mail out a million Brian Tracey letters out, a certain percentage of those people are going to call in.

Michael: Can you tell us about how you produce the physical product? Let's say you hire me to come in and do a product. What does it cost your company to produce say a six cassette program or a six CD program from start to finish?

Vic: That's kind of protective. Hopefully, the person has the message developed, but in some cases when we want the product bad enough, we'll in some cases write the product or in some cases write parts of it or rewrite part of the product so that we help that individual out.

Speaking and a book is different than an audio program, and it needs to be written from a different angle. So there's a little bit of a different technique for audio programs than book products. So, we've helped that author make that transition.

Then, we bring the author in and some authors who are great speakers are not good in a studio. So, it takes an education in some cases, and some people just can't do it. They're individuals that we get all the way to the speaking stage, and they just can't carry it off because they have to be interesting and passionate in what they're saying. That's the whole reason for having audio is you get that passion of the author.

Michael: Are you involved in each one of your new products? Do you meet each one of the speakers when they come in and you're putting a product together?

Vic: I don't do every author, but when they actually come in to record, if I'm in town, I will certainly get involved with the author. But, as far as going through the whole production angle, that's done with other people.

Michael: Is all the production done in house, your CD duplication, packaging, the cassette binders – everything in house?

Vic: We do everything in house. Certain authors, if they prefer, will go record it at a studio with them. We like to have them in house because we can control it better, but when you're dealing with Tom Peters or Wayne Dyer, they record wherever they want. Sometimes you're recording a live presentation. So, we don't necessarily record in house everytime, but probably 75-80 percent of the time we do.

Michael: How many copies of a product would you produce in an initial run, and I know it probably varies.

Vic: It does vary. It can be 500 or it can be 5,000. We make pretty much on demand. We don't produce more than the initial test, and we test our way into every product as well. So, we don't just roll out every name that we have

because we test all the segments of all our customer files first, and then see what segments like that product.

We pretty much know to being with if you're an achievement author or a spiritual author, we'll take you to the spiritual buyers and then grow from there.

Michael: We talked a little bit about this, but what would you say is the profile of a typical customer?

Vic: They tend to be babyboomers. They tend to be in that 40 on up, and they're upwardly mobile, and they're way above average income – a lot of entrepreneurs, a lot of business owners, and just very top people in the fields that are looking for more information.

Michael: What percentage of your customers are international compared to the US?

Vic: We have a UK operation that is probably five percent of what our volume is here. We have another few percent in Canada, but we're almost all English speaking. We have a beautiful relationship with our Japanese distributor where we've licensed our products in Japan, and they do a tremendous job for us there. They translate there obviously.

We haven't found yet a real successful way. Especially now that we're on the internet, we did a lot of miscellaneous orders from around the world, but in no case except for the UK are we making a specific effort.

Michael: Have you had any presenters or authors who had a foreign accent? What consideration do you take in putting out a product with an accent? How does the English speaking market respond to that? Any negatives on that?

Vic: There is. In fact, to me, it's interesting. It's not only the English accent or an accent, but anybody that has a different style, you might say. It's funny to me because to me having grown up in this field, I listen for the content. I'm listening for the great idea, and I don't even hardly notice the accent.

Let's say Deepak Chopra who has an Indian accent, and there are people how say, "I just can't listen to Deepak." It cracks me up because I always say, "What if Jesus comes in and he has this little message he wants to share?" And, they say, "I don't want to listen to him. I don't like his accent."

With Wayne Dyer, there's people that don't like that he's so powerful, and the same with Tony Robbins, and Deepak they don't like his accent. Yet, they're not getting the point and that is forget the accent, listen to the ideas. That's what you're after.

I guess my point is if you're really interested in the achievement field or into the idea field, I'd say get over it because I can tell you from my perspective, there isn't anybody that you just can't understand them. We had one author that just literally, you just couldn't understand them, but if you get somebody like Deepak Chopra, he's one of the most brilliant people on the planet, and I would do whatever necessary to be able to listen to that guy.

Michael: In what ways do you stay in touch with your customers? You say if someone signs up, are you sending out new title releases monthly, bi-monthly?

Vic: We send out probably five different mailings a week, and a couple different internet mailings a week, but they don't go to every customer. Again, a lot of those are tests. A lot of those are just going out to specific segments of our audience. Probably though, if you're a good customer, if you don't buy from us very quickly, you don't get anything, but it all depends on what area of interest that you've shown and in what area of business activity that if you're an avid buyer then you're going to get a lot of communication from us.

Michael: I saw on your website, it was a very great idea. People can fill out a profile, and you would have your coaches call and try to determine the needs of your prospective prospect or client. How has that worked out for you?

Vic: That's been very good for us, and I think very good for our customers. The whole area of coaching has become and continues to become bigger and bigger for us, and I think the whole industry. We all need mentors, and I think if you go down to any very successful individual, the chances are they had significant mentors in their lives whether it's their parents or relatives or teachers.

We are the mentor as you are. You are a mentor to your listening audience. So, our authors provide that mentorship to a large group of our customers.

Michael: Are you selling coaching services?

Vic: Yes. We do the personal profile and that is just a pre-service that we'll do to just see where your interests are, where you feel you're weak and where you're strong and what you're interested in. Then, either we'll recommend a series of products that could be beneficial to get you to where you want to go, or a lot of people want that one-on-one mentorship which is the coaching. So, then we have a series of coaching type products.

Michael: Are all your coaches in house?

Vic: No, in fact, pretty much all of them are out of house?

Michael: How is that going? Are people responsive? Do they really want that one-on-one, kind of like a personal trainer? Some people could do it on their own.

Vic: They do, and we get more testimonials from that than anything else because the coaches hold you responsible. That's what many of us need that hand-holding, and I don't say it in a negative way, but our lives are so busy and going in so many directions that the coach makes sure that you're spending the time on this thing that you said you want to accomplish. The customer tends to love the coaches and love the results from the coach.

Michael: Out of all your subjects and your topics, business and strategy, and health wellness, where is the hungriest market? Where do you see the biggest demand in which type products on the market today?

Vic: Well, the biggest is wealth building, making money, and also getting out of debt is our number one product. It's kind of a sad commentary, but we have a product called, "Transforming Debt into Wealth." That's our number one product and has been for several years now. We just have a tremendous audience of people that have a debt problem. So, we're just finding that.

The other half of it is in "Transforming Debt into Wealth", our audience tends to want to figure out how to make more income and be prosperous and become independently wealth.

Michael: What would be next after that?

Vic: Spirituality for the last probably 15 years has been very, very good, very strong for us.

Michael: Can you tell us what the Acres of Diamonds award is?

Vic: It's a yearly award that we give out to an individual that demonstrates, you might say, the principles that our authors espouse, and that have shown that they have taken their life to a different level, and have used our methods as one of their keys to their success.

Michael: Do you think there will still be a demand for a physical product in the next ten years at the rate things are going?

Vic: If I was to guess, I would say yes. People tend to like that ability to have that product with them. For example, it's just so easy right now. The CD is a very convenient type of a product. However, we don't really care what the medium is. We really are conveyors of a message whether it's a download or whether it's on a chip beaming into your brain. We really follow the market wherever

the market is, and we're content producers. Whatever our audience wants, we'll figure out a way to provide them in that form.

Michael: Could you tell me about the importance of the graphics in the packaging in your products?

Vic: Again, the title is critical. The graphics are important because it's the first attention. The title is, again, probably the most important thing. Of course, having a great author is good. We're finding that having on the internet having the ability to have the person listen to the product is important.

So, the graphics aren't as important as let's say in retail where you're totally going to be stopped by the packaging, but we need a great package if we're going to send out a mailing. People like to see the picture of the product. So, it's very important.

Michael: Do you have any strategies to keep customers? What kind of stick strategies do you have in place to keep customers? Do you keep up with the lifetime value? What's the customer worth for your company? What percentage of the customer really gets into this and orders tons of products? Any feedback on that?

Vic: We usually lose money acquiring a new customer. So, we live on the lifetime value of the customer, and the backend to us is other sales of other product to those same buyers. We're very sophisticated in the way we analyze what products you've bought, and we have a whole series of communications that we'll send to you. If you buy Wayne Dyer, we'll send you Deepak Chopra or send you other products that would also be like the type of product you just bought. So, it's a very sophisticated algorithm you might say.

Michael: Can you recount any specific testimonial or life changing story that your tapes have an affect on anyone? Who sticks out in your mind? I'm sure you've got thousands of testimonials, but any one story that really sticks out that you can recount and talk about how your tapes have changed their lives?

Vic: There's so many, and the ones that I love the most are the awakening ones where it's the first time that individual has realized their potential, and not only realized it, but gone on to make fortunes after realizing that they have this capable. Drew Carey comes to mind. He was one of our Acres of Diamonds recipients. Somebody that used our products early on in his career, and certainly we don't take credit for anybody's success, but helping them at critical times in their lives is something that we do. He's of course somebody you can identify with. He's a great guy.

Michael: You've got your own product, and I read that you talked about the importance or relationships and how that's critical. Can you talk a little bit about your philosophy on that?

Vic: That's such an important aspect in our lives. When we die, it isn't going to be how much money we had that's going to be the most important thing. It's going to be those relationships. So, it just is the most critical aspect in my opinion for our lives that we get that right, you might say.

I think probably the number one thing that I have learned in 37 years of marriage with a wonderful lady, but we went through literally many years when we first got married of not liking each other. There was some period of time when she didn't like me, and other period I don't like her. It was really, I think, when we finally forgave each other for being who we are and kind of let each other be that person who we are and stop trying to change them. So, forgiveness is huge in religion and also realizing that none of us have it figured out.

I'm totally screwed up, and I'm working on things. My wife is working on different things. So, things that are easy to me, like health issues are easy to me. I'm just healthy, and she has more health issues. There for a while, I was just thinking, "Why can't she figure this out?" Because it's so easy for me. What I finally learned is she's working on her thing, let her work on her thing. Don't try to make her thing my thing. Let them be who they are, and go with it. If health is her issue, then empathetic about her issue because you've got your own issue.

Michael: It must be nice working with your son in the business.

Vic: It's wonderful.

Michael: How old is he?

Vic: He just turned 31, and he's just a fabulous young man.

Michael: What's his name?

Vic: Carson Conant. We just introduced a couple years ago a magazine called "Advantage."

Michael: I saw that. Tell us about that.

Vic: It's taking a lot of our information, a lot of our authors, but he really runs it totally independent of, you might say, the rest of our business. So, he goes out and just tries to figure out what ideas, what authors he can put down in print,

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what articles he can put down that will positively impact your life. He started it on his own, and he's done a great job of creating this. It comes out every two months.

Michael: So, it's a paid subscription?

Vic: Yes.

Michael: How many subscribers do you have? Can you share that?

Vic: We probably have 15,000. It's very small, but it grows every month. We're a small company. We can't fund millions of dollars of advertising. So, this is not our business. So, we're just kind of internally growing it, but it's in all the Barnes and Nobles and other book stores. It grows every month.

Michael: What do you want to happen ten years down the road or when your son takes over? Do you have any really lofty goals for the company?

Vic: Our messages are pretty well known in the United States. I'd love to see us more effective around the world getting our great messages translated and effectively marketed. It's always back to that marketing. I would love to just see us continue to become better at convincing people to try the product. If they try the product, we're in because we have great products, but getting the people to try it has always been our challenge.

Michael: How can people find out more about Nightingale Conant?

Vic: Probably the easiest way is to go to our website which is [www.Nightingale.com](http://www.Nightingale.com). There we have all of our products.

Michael: Vic, have a great day. It was a pleasure.

Vic: I hope it works out well for you.

Michael: It was great thank you.

*That's the end of this interview with Vic Conant. I hope you have found this helpful, and go check out their website at [www.Nightingale.com](http://www.Nightingale.com).*