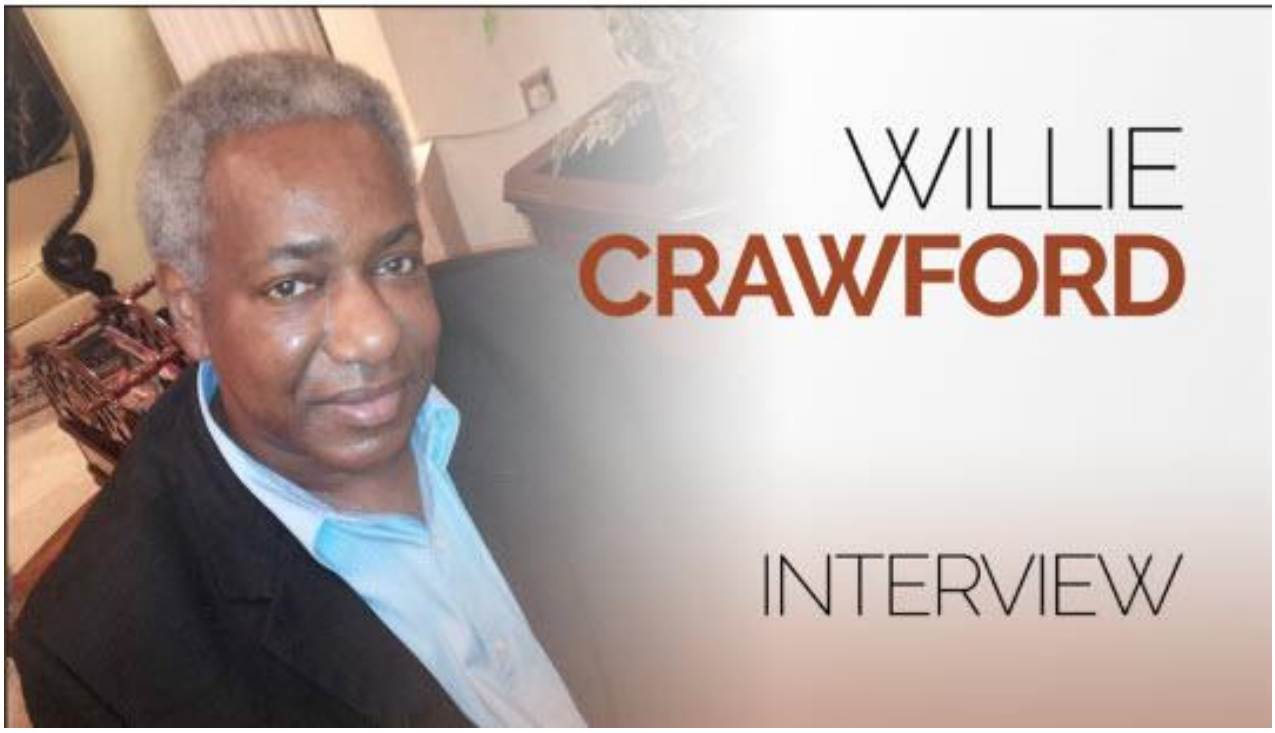


Willie Crawford Interview

Archive Interview Transcript

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Willie Crawford Interview — Full Transcript

Editor:

Hello and welcome. Joining us this time is a true veteran of the internet marketing scene and someone who, if you don't already know, you will soon want to. He's been called one of the most genuine and most respected marketers in the world today. And in this session you'll hear why he thinks it's important to choose who you listen to, why you should have a loose plan, but also still be open to change and why age isn't an issue. It's my pleasure to welcome to the show Willie Crawford.

Willie Crawford:

Thank you very much. It's my pleasure to be here.

Editor:

Well, you've been around on the internet marketing scene now for many, many years. How many years has it been and how did you get started?

Willie Crawford:

I've been around since 1996, at that time I was in the United States Air Force and I had been trained in economics and business in college and I was ready to start a business of my own, even though I had six years before I would retire from the military. And so, it was an office job where I had access to the early internet and I looked out and saw advertisements on the internet that said you could make money by doing different things and so I just started doing them.

Editor:

That's an amazing story. And here we are now all these years later and you're still as active or possibly even more active than ever. What kinds of things are you working on at the moment?

Willie Crawford:

Well, my biggest thing right now is doing the rank and rent websites and I'm actually working on putting together a course on how to do that because it's fairly easy to build a website and even to rank it in the search engines, but to find a tenant, a renter, that's the challenge for a lot of people. And so I

decided to do a six week course, six one hour sessions and so I'll have six hours of recorded audio and video and the transcripts and I'll sell that as one of my many, many products. Other than that, I'm turning 61 next month and I want to work less. And so I'll still do some consulting, and I'll do some internet marketing where I'll mail out a newsletter several times a week, but I won't do much else.

Editor:

I was going to say, you're going to make sure that you match the lifestyle to what you're doing online as well. So that's the dream I think for most people, isn't it?

Willie Crawford:

Yes it is. And I'll have my military pension and when I turn 62 I'll get a social security pension, they call it. And so I'll have like lots of sources of income, I don't need to work 18 hours a day and anymore. I've done that in the past and it's sort of crazy.

Editor:

I can imagine it. So Willie, what made you want to get into internet marketing in the first place?

Willie Crawford:

Well, when I looked around I was just trying to figure out what I could do. And I came across a number of people who said what you do is you build an audience and you find out what they want. And you offer it to them, but what really made me get into internet marketing was the fact when I first started, I was flying a C-130 aircraft and so I was flying all over the world and I put in like 16 to 18 hours crew duty day and then land and then try to do some work on the computer. And so I needed something that was portable, so that no matter where I was, as long as I had access to the internet, I could work on my business too. And so that's sort of what nudged me towards internet marketing.

Editor:

Got you. And then how easy or how hard did you find it right back at the very start?

Willie Crawford:

It was very difficult at the very start because the standard crew duty day is you were expected to put in up to 18 hours working from when you first showed up at the base operation to plan your mission. And so I'd work up to 18 hours, then land and then get on the computer and maybe put in another four hours maybe. So some days, some nights I slept maybe two hours and I'd fall asleep at my keyboard and I'd wake up and because I'd had my hand resting on a computer the screen would be full of Zs or whatever. So it was exhausting at first.

Editor:

And you say you started back in 1996.

Willie Crawford:

Yes.

Editor:

How quickly did you start to make money online once you actually committed to doing this?

Willie Crawford:

About a year. Yeah, it took about a year. At first, it was trying to figure out what to do, what to offer people. And I was told find something that you know, and then build an audience around that. And the only thing I really knew that I thought would be marketable was I had grown up on a farm in North Carolina where I'd learned to cook. And with my grandmother, she started teaching me at about age seven. And so I put together a website that was all around cooking or as the people in the UK say cookery and I started building an audience, and around 2000 my mailing list enjoyed my recipes so much they asked me if I had a cookbook and I said, "No, but if you want one I'll write one." And they said, "We'll buy it." And so I pretty sold about 200 copies before I even started writing the book and it's published in 2000 and it still sells to this day.

Editor:

Wow. And now here you are, as you say, you are about to hit your 61st birthday, did you say next month?

Willie Crawford:
Yes.

Editor:
So as a man in your 60s I guess what you're saying is that age isn't a barrier to this, that the internet is kind of levelled the playing field for everyone no matter what age you are.

Willie Crawford:
Yes, I've seen people as young as like 14 starting online businesses and I've seen many people in their 70s and even 80s. I used to attend a lot of seminars and conferences and I'd sit and talk to people in their 70s and 80s and they were very lucid first of all. And so we were all sharing the same experiences, the same dreams and hopes and so it was just a matter of figuring out what ... Putting all the pieces together. But anyone can do it though regardless of age.

Editor:
And obviously since you got started back in 1996 the internet has developed, it's evolved, it's changed massively from what it was then to what it is like today. Would you say it would be easier or harder to get started today?

Willie Crawford:
It's easier to get started because there's more tools, more training, more people who have experiences you can tap into, the problem though is knowing who to listen to because there are lots of people who when they first start, they do what we call fake it until you make it. And so there's a lot of training out there that's nothing but theory and so you have to be very careful who you listen to. But then at the same time, I look back at all the people that I've encountered over the past 24 years online and fully, 80% of those people are not in business online anymore. So I guess they burn out if they are disingenuous.

Editor:
Yeah, of course. I mean, you're absolutely right. And if you were starting out now today, what do you think maybe you would do differently to what you

did back then? I mean, as you say, there are more tools around these days, do you think that, that would make things easier for you?

Willie Crawford:

I would focus on a different market. I would focus on the one I'm focusing on now. When I first went into business online, I focused on teaching ordinary people to build a business, to take their knowledge, their skills and create information products and then sell those and build a mailing list and market their products and other people's products to their list. And so I've worked with a lot of people who had no, absolutely no business experience and many of them were unwilling to learn the skillset they needed to. And probably 90% of them never had any major success. And so today if I started over again, I would focus on business owners, which is what I'm focused on now anyway because they have experience running businesses, they have the pressures of running their business, they have to make decisions, tough decisions. And so they are more ... I enjoy working with them more, I guess I should say.

Editor:

Yeah, I mean I guess that's the benefit of hindsight is always wonderful isn't it?

Willie Crawford:

Yeah, it is.

Editor:

And I guess where you are now is somewhere where you're comfortable, you've got that lifestyle with you can work the hours you want to work, when you want to work them as opposed to the other way round. So in terms of the domain stuff that you're doing and the course that you're putting together, just could you walk us through that process? I mean, how long does that take you to do, somebody with your level of experience?

Willie Crawford:

Well, I was trained early on to record almost everything you do. And so I had people who noticed that I was working building websites, renting them or selling them, buying and selling them. And they asked me a lot of questions

about what I was doing. And so I said, "Well, why don't I train you?" And I said, "In fact, why don't I do like a six week course where during the six weeks we'll cover all the different aspects from how do you decide what markets to focus on, why do you buy the domains and how do you build the websites and how do you get them ranked high in the search engine and how do you find the renters or buyers. And with the renters, how do you collect the monthly rent, things like that."

Willie Crawford:

And so I decided to ... I just floated out and said, I'm going to do six weeks, each week I'll do one hour of teaching and at the end of the hour I'll reserve some time for questions and answer. And during those six weeks I'll be recording everything. And so at the end of six weeks I'll have probably by nine hours of training plus the questions and answers, start training, and questions and answers combined will be about nine hours of material. And then I was taught to, well if you're going to do a video, you may as well rip out the audio and have the audio offered too, and you may as well transcribe it and offer the PDFs. And so offer it in three different formats and that's what I'll be doing there. And so it's very easy actually because I'm going to spend an hour a week teaching and then I'll do the question and answer. And so I don't really have to do a lot of preparation in advance.

Willie Crawford:

I need to know what I'm going to teach each week, but all I really need is to get started is the first week's material. And then after the first week, then I can sit down and prepare for the second week, in between the two sessions. And so it's fairly easy to just get started and then if questions come up or problems, I can adjust to that. And coming from military background, I learned that you could have the most flawless plan and as soon as you got started executing the plan or you take off from an aeroplane and things start going wrong and the plan completely changes. And so, I've been taught you plan things out, you flow them out, but you don't plan on sticking completely to the plan. And so, with me it's a very difficult to [presell 00:12:19] me anymore because I've been through so many experiences while in the military, including seven conflicts. Well, four wars and a number of

insurgency operations. And so, there's very few things I can encounter now that would shake me up more than those things did.

Editor:

Yeah. You've got a lot of life experience to be able to cope with anything, as you say, that's thrown at you online. I guess off the back of that, I mean what you're saying is almost have a loose plan but also take on board other people's feedback so they can actually steer the way that this course that you're going to be putting together is going to actually evolve and become that six weeks worth of training, so that the people that are there on the live training, they get exactly what they need in order to be able to model what you're doing.

Willie Crawford:

Yes. And with most information products that are sold on the internet or even offline, fully, 90% of those people who purchase the products never used them, never execute all the way through to see the results. And so, one of my goals is to ratio that every student that's in my class if they are willing will at the end of the class be already buying and renting websites. And so my goal is for them to see results by the end of the training and then I can turn about and ask those people for testimonials and that'll be half of my copy on my website. People saying that we did what Willie taught us and we got results.

Editor:

Absolutely. I mean, I love the fact as well as you say that you can do this by effects of just planning the first week, the first one hour session. Obviously go to market with that, get the people signed up and give it a starting date. And then once you've done the first presentation, then weeks two, three, four, five and six they follow on thereafter. So effectively you're creating the product, you've sold it before you've actually created the product as opposed to the other way round, which I think a lot of people fall into that trap of wanting to create something amazing right out of the gate. And they'll go off and they'll make it perfect, then they'll go to market and try and sell it. But of course by that point they've done it the wrong way round.

Editor:

So it seems to me like you've got the idea and that's a great way of moving forward. In terms of where you are now and obviously you've been online for a long time. Can I ask, when you first started were your family and friends supportive of what you did or were they dismissive or how did that work out for you?

Willie Crawford:

They were supportive but they didn't fully understand what I was doing. They just knew that I had a part-time job I was doing on the computer. I didn't really explain it. And I was flying aeroplanes and so when I started I was actually '96, I would've been in Hawaii and I went from Hawaii to Alaska and then Alaska to Florida. And I've been to like 60 different countries while flying and learned a little 19 languages. So I was all over the world and I was often away from home for as long as three months at a time. So a lot of what I was doing was in isolation. In fact, when I first started my business online, they first ... I started in '96 and it wasn't until 2002 that I actually attended a seminar and met other people doing the same thing I was doing, until that time I was sort of a lone Wolf.

Willie Crawford:

And then I was invited to speak at a seminar, someone noticed that I had written a cookbook and it was doing quite well and they wanted me to speak at the seminar because they wanted at least one speaker there who was doing something other than teaching people how to make money by teaching people how to make money. They wanted someone with a real product. And so they invited me to speak and that was my first seminar. At that event I noticed that all the other speakers were very willing to share what they were doing and in fact all of them suggested working with each other. And I did projects with five of the speakers who were at that first event I attended. And that was very eyeopening because when you work alone in isolation you feel like your sort of ... It's you against the world. And then you realise when you start meeting people that it's not, you work together and you all teach each other what you're doing to succeed and it makes it easier for you.

Editor:

I think you're right. I think as well, when you work in isolation, you're insulated. When you get out there and you're working with other people, it's almost like there's a benefit for everybody involved.

Willie Crawford:
Yes.

Editor:
And it makes such a big difference Willie. I mean, if you were starting out now, what advice would you give to someone who is in the same boat, they're just starting out at the same time as you, what advice would you give to them?

Willie Crawford:
I would advise them first of all, to not try to figure everything out on their own. Because what happens is a lot of times that newbies tend to think that they don't have a lot of money to invest in training and things like that. And so they say, well, I'll just watch what the successful people are doing and I'll copy what they're doing. The thing is they don't see everything that the successful people are doing and so they're guessing and they're missing pieces of the puzzle. And even when they hire someone to train them, the person who teaches them often isn't aware of how the things they're doing, they have little nuances that make a difference and they don't recognise those things. But I would advise them to get a coach and also once they decide that they're going to perhaps create their own products and things like that, then I would advise them to outsource as many tasks as they can.

Willie Crawford:
They may not feel like they can afford that either, but it makes life so much easier and it allows them to scale, to grow so much faster. When you're doing everything by yourself it's very challenging. And I also, you touched upon this, people creating huge products and spending months, years doing it and then rolling them out. And the mistake I see a lot of people making, people that I've mentored and coached is they don't survey the market first to confirm the market wants the product. My friend Marlin Sanders, who I think started out on the internet in 1994, he teaches, you come up with an idea, a product idea, and you survey your audience and ask them if they

want that already or you ask them ... He does a 12 question survey where he'll say, well, what do you want me to cover next?

Willie Crawford:

And he'll give them 10 choices or whatever, and then they tell him what they want and then he will create a small version of the product. And he typically, he advises just doing an audio and you test market that, see if the market actually buys it. If they don't buy it, then you go do something else. But you don't sit down and create a 20 module course with all these things, all these parts and pieces not knowing that the market really will want and will buy it. So it's letting your customers tell you what they want. And I see a lot of beginners making the mistake of not doing that, and then they fall in love with their product. The idea of their product and so they keep trying to sell it to people who don't want it. And that doesn't work.

Editor:

It's true, isn't it? And it's really interesting that you stopped on that point in particular because I think a lot of people do start to chase down a rabbit hole and as you say, they get so enamoured by their own product that they want to try and turn it into this product that people are going to buy and it then becomes a frustration, which is people aren't buying this so therefore I'm not going to do anything else because they've kind of convinced themselves that trying to sell things online doesn't work. So it's almost like that self fulfilling prophecy in a way. You mentioned Marlin Sanders name just a second ago and I guess he's one of your mentors.

Willie Crawford:

He's a close friend and he is, I wouldn't call him a mentor. My first mentor was Jim Daniels, he started in 1995 and the first information product that I purchased was a book he wrote on how to start a business online. He took his income tax refund check to purchase a used computer and started his business back in '96 too, I think. Maybe '95 and he was the person that I modelled and I bought his materials and I copied what he did. And so I would call him my first mentor and we talked yesterday actually, so we're very close. But I bet I've had numerous mentors though, some who were

formal mentors and some who were just people who gave me advice, we actually exchanged advice.

Willie Crawford:

People like Rich Schefren if you know who he is. We talked back and forth a lot in the early days and he was trying to figure out what his expertise was and what he wants to be when he grew up. And he finally figured out coaching and mentoring and steering business owners in the right direction and he does a marvellous job still today. So I've had lots of mentors over the years. A lot of them who we didn't have a formal relationship but they were teaching me and I was teaching them some things too.

Editor:

I mean, that's great. I remember first discovering you Willie on the warrior forum back in the day where you soon got a very, very strong reputation as being one of the most genuine people on there. And as I say, one of the most respected figures on there. That's why I was really excited about talking with you today so we could get some insight from you. I mean, what's next for you Willie? You've done so much and as you say, you want to take a slight step back. But I can imagine you're the kind of person that might take a step back, but then will continue doing what you do because you love it so much.

Willie Crawford:

I will probably continue teaching even though I ... I probably won't do that much one-on-one coaching except with, I'll do consultant with business owners, brick and mortar business owners. But I'm a trained platform speaker, I went through John Shelter's training and I know how to give a presentation on stage and manipulate the audience or control them psychologically and all those things. I know NLP, but I don't use that when I give presentations most of the time. But I enjoyed speaking, I've probably spoken at like 40 or 50 seminars in the US, the UK, Singapore and Malaysia, all over. And so I can see myself doing that as I do more travel anyway, but so consulting and renting my website.

Editor:

I was going to say which is a great income stream as well, I guess.

Willie Crawford:

It is, it is. You can put the domainers who go out and they purchase domains and they hold on to them as an investment or they sell them, if you buy the right ones you can get them for as little as like $10. And a day or two later, sell them for a couple of hundred dollars. I mean, it's that easy if you know what you're doing, but it's better to have an income stream by building them out, getting them ranked in the search engines and then renting them out to business owners who, every business needs more customers. They need more leads, more people coming through their doors, whether it's online or offline. And so all I'm doing is figuring out where their customers are, who their customers are, and then building a website. They get their attention and then turning around and saying, I have your customer's attention, why don't you rent this website from me?

Willie Crawford:

And if I go into a niche like I don't know, say a lawyers and I have a website that targets ... Made for a specific type of lawyer in a specific city, then I approach someone and rent them my website. And if they ever decide they don't want to rent it from me, I just turn around and rent it to one of their competitors. They know I will do that, so whether you're a dentist or a chiropractor or a contractor, whatever, if you don't continue renting my site, then I just find your competitor or someone else in the same city and I rent it to them. So it's once you get the site rented, or get it ranked in the search engines, it's fairly dependable. It'll continue for years and years, probably decades.

Editor:

Love that model. It's a great model.

Willie Crawford:

Yes it is.

Editor:

Willie, which do you enjoy the most? Creating a product or speaking on stage these days?

Willie Crawford:

Speaking on stage.

Editor:

Why is that? Is it because of the interaction with the audience?

Willie Crawford:

It is. And I guess it's ... They often say that people fear public speaking more than even death. And yet I'm so accustomed to speaking in front of audiences, in the military I was forced to get on stage and even have politicians and generals in the audience. And my job was to explain portions of the mission, the flight we were doing and things like that. And so, I grew very accustomed to just standing up in front of people and explaining things and teaching people. And so it's something that ... Well, I enjoy teaching in the first place. I'm a martial artist and for a while I taught karate to students and I got 40 years experience in the martial arts. So I enjoyed teaching there too. And what I discovered is when you teach anything that forces you to really learn your topic too. But I enjoy it. I just enjoy speaking. Yes. You have the podium power, they call it, you're in front of the room and everybody's focused on you and they have to listen to you.

Editor:

That's true. And I guess the great thing with the live speaking is as I say that interaction, the fact that you can look out and you get an instant reaction from the audience as opposed to when you create a product or do something online where you're just creating it and sending it out later. So it must be nice to have that, that human interaction as well. Because this can be a lonely game otherwise, can't it?

Willie Crawford:

It can be. I do a lot of webinars and I also do a lot of Facebook lives lately and you get the interaction there because I can bring other people on camera but at a minimums you'll have them chatting with me in the chat window over Facebook or YouTube or several other platforms. And so you get the interaction there and it's a very powerful way of marketing to, because people feel like they are interacting with you. It's not like you're standoffish, you're the teacher and the guru or you know more than they do or feel like you are better than they are. They get to interact with you and feel like ...

You have to actually communicate with them and it's not just one way communication, it's two way communication.

Editor:

It's not like back in the days where you would send out a DVD and people would watch that DVD at home. But that was very much a one way conversation. As you say these days with YouTube and with Facebook live you do have that, that two way communication. But still, those people are welcoming you into their homes as well and into their lives. So it does create that human bond, which is great. And also I would say necessary for what we're trying to do in our businesses.

Willie Crawford:

It is. People need to feel that they know you and that you care for them and when they can see you and they can read your body language, they get a feel for who you really are. And even in like email marketing, I was trained that when you're writing, you pretend that your avatar or your typical customer is sitting right across the table from you and you're writing to not a list of people, you're writing to one person. So when I get emails that say you guys instead of you, I say this person doesn't know what they're doing because they need to make the person that is reading the email feel they're talking specifically to them and not to a group of people, so they don't get it. So it's really human to human interaction.

Editor:

Absolutely. And as the old saying goes, people buy from people they don't buy from businesses. So you have to have that personality and that connection as you say. I mean Willie, how can we find out more about you? If our listeners and our readers want to find out more about you, how do they do that?

Willie Crawford:

They can visit my website at williecrawford.org, it's williecrawford.org or I'm very visible on social media, so if they just go to Facebook or Twitter or LinkedIn and just type in my name, I use the same photo everywhere so once they learn what my face looks like they would find me. But on Facebook, which is where I'm most active, they would just go to

facebook.com/williecrawford1, Willie Crawford, the number one, I guess there's another Willie Crawford who beat me to just the plain Willie Crawford.

Editor:

And that's Willie Crawford, that's W-I-L-L-I-E isn't it?

Willie Crawford:

Yes.

Editor:

Great. Perfect. Willie, it's been a real pleasure chatting with you today. I really do appreciate you taking the time to do this, and I wish you all the success with what you're about to achieve. And of course, kudos to you for everything that you have achieved so far online. It's great to hear your story.

Willie Crawford:

Thank you. Thank you very much.

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