Social Media for Culture Makers
Module 7: The Problem-Aware Post

KELLY: Welcome, Culture Makers. Welcome, feminist social media makers to module seven of the Social Media for Culture Makers Certification Program. This week, I'm going to walk you through a model for creating a problem-aware post. Before I get started doing that, though, I want to note that I live and work on the traditional and unceded territories, past and present, of the Stó:lō Nations. By now, you know that I say that so that we are grounded in our reality. None of us have been born into a culture of justice, and we don't have to cosign that. We don't have to let that flow or replicate through our bodies or our bodies of work, and part of what we're here to do as culture-making social media makers is to interrupt that unjust flow and create flourishing new realities for ourselves in our businesses and in our wider culture, and the media that we create influences those norms.

So I also want to note that this module owes an influence, owes a debt to Dr. Michelle Mazur of The Three-Word Rebellion for the very concept and language. I learned the language of problem-aware from Michelle. In this post, particularly, she maps out how important it is to help your client understand what they're actually up against and how important it is for you in terms of actually selling. So naming something and helping your clients be problem-aware helps them, then, be able to take conscious, deliberate, chosen action rather than subconsciously-triggered action which is exactly what we're rallying against.

So in the module, we have five things we're gonna take on. So, first, we're gonna talk about the difference between being problem-aware and pressing on pain points. Then, we're gonna talk about the strategic and culture-making benefits of problem-aware posts. I'm gonna show you a whole bunch of problem-aware posts, and then I'm gonna map it out in a model for how to create a problem-aware post so that you can use this model to quickly and easily generate social media content anytime, and then we're going to figure out how to extend that one piece of content across different channels.

PART ONE: "PROBLEM-AWARE" VS. PAIN POINT

Okay, so I have a moral objection to pain-point marketing. So what I think happens is it actually activates shame and, indeed, in various copywriting models, that's sort of the first step. There's the PAS model which is problem, agitate, solve. So there's a piece that we're gonna do. We're gonna help people be problem-aware and we're gonna help people solve it. What we're not gonna do is agitate personal shame because that is profoundly disempowering and subconsciously triggering, and we're gonna avoid doing that.

Now, what I mean when I'm saying problem-aware is that we're going to name something that people were experiencing but didn't have language for. When we name that thing, they are going to realize that they are not the problem, and that is exactly the opposite of pain-point marketing which makes them feel like they are the problem. So being problem-aware makes them realize they're not the problem, but they can do something about it. So while pain-point marketing makes them feel like they are the problem and activates shame, we're doing the opposite. We're naming a problem then making them realize it's not them but they can do something about it. So, now, we're moving them into power instead of shame. So being problem-aware dissolves shame and activates power. So that is a big culture-making move.

PART TWO: THE STRATEGIC & CULTURE-MAKING BENEFITS OF PROBLEM-AWARE POSTS

So let's talk about the benefits in your business. So there are strategic benefits for your business and then there's a culture-making benefit for creating problem-aware posts.

So the first thing is it's strategic because it serves both your culture-making and your business objectives. So you're moving two levers at once which is just always a good strategy. A problem-aware post raises consciousness and seeds change. So what I mean by that is, again, what you're doing is usually showing a client that there is a bigger factor at work. There's a circumstance or a material barrier to their progress and the problem has never been them. So, often, we're raising consciousness about social issues that are impacting our clients or industry issues that are impacting our clients, and what we do when we name them and put language to it is it implicitly answers a question in the client's head about why you - not why the client, but why you the professional. The fact that you put language to something that they were

experiencing helps them see that, oh, okay, this person really gets it, and this person, in particular, has a solution to this problem. Now, if this is a problem that you're naming in a particularly unique and interesting way, there might not be anyone else approaching the work in that particular way. So really naming the problem in a very specific and interesting way from your unique perspective makes it so that there isn't actually any competition for you. So naming the problem helps sort of build a unique following around the solutions you propose. Who else can solve a problem that you named?

So, again, we're dissolving shame and we're getting people out of their heads and into action, and what that means is now they're in their power and they're deliberately, consciously choosing to take action, potentially, with you. In other words, problem-aware posts sell, and that is the main point of us doing this social media for our businesses anyway is to sell. So this is the kind of post that actually sells. They're really useful in launches, and problem-aware posts also highlight your work, your ideas, your practices, your solutions, and your thoughts rather than your lifestyle, looks, privilege, or personality. So, again, these are culture-making posts that are diverging from the models that ask us to leverage privilege in order to sell. Instead, we're going to name an actual problem that does not disempower your client (that actually empowers them because they move out of shame and into power), and we're gonna show them what solutions we have so they can take conscious, deliberate action. So it's literally the opposite of pain-point marketing again, and it has the positive outcome of shifting norms, raising consciousness about socio-economic and socio-political issues, and that is the kind of work that we want to do. We want to create bodies of work that move our businesses forward and that move our culture forward that actually work.

PART THREE: EXAMPLES OF PROBLEM-AWARE POSTS

So here are some examples of problem-aware posts. This is a post that I wrote about The Female Lifestyle Empowerment Brand, and when I name The Female Lifestyle Empowerment Brand, I am naming a problem. I am giving language to something that people have experienced but didn't have language to describe. So here's what I wrote: "The Female Lifestyle Empowerment Brand looks inspiring and safe like a lighthouse, but it's really, really not. FLEB is a cultural identity and a business blueprint that requires women entrepreneurs to embody privilege to rise. In other words, be white, pretty, thin, straight, cis, able-bodied, uber-positive, smiley, and show it." So, then, I walk through what Female Lifestyle Empowerment Brand stands for,

and I say, "FLEB often looks like playing big because we see huge businesses using this formula, but it's actually a form of playing small. We have to shear off our edges and fit ourselves into a box in order to perform socially acceptable caricatures of ourselves. Most of us can't fit our identities into that box in the first place so this formula is fundamentally exclusive and oppressive."

So, then, I end with a little bit of call-to-action like, "Let's do it differently." So this, what I'm doing here, is I'm saying, look, there's a problem, and it's not you. There's an industry norm and a cultural norm that is limiting how we express ourselves, and when we're limiting how we express ourselves, we're holding ourselves back from communicating and marketing, and that is going to limit our business. So here's a problem, and we need to solve it.

Then, in July 2019, I went through a ten-day series of all the tactics of that success strategy, The Female Lifestyle Empowerment Brand, and I named the various pieces of the problem. So I named that social triggers are a problem. I named that safe status quo imagery is a problem. I named that reinforcing the gender binary and patriarchy is a problem. I named all of these problems, and what that helped people do was really get free of the limits of The Female Lifestyle Empowerment Brand and get free of having to perform it in their business, and now, they're willing to choose a different strategy. Now, they're willing to choose feminist marketing. So the problem-aware post gets them free of those limits and potentially puts me in front of them as, "Here's a different way to do things. Do you want to do things like this, and if so, who else are you gonna train with?"

So here's some other examples of problem-aware posts from me. I say, "Does your revenue match your reputation?" That's a common problem that many of my best-selling authors have where they have really big names, they're really established in their field, but their revenue doesn't match that excellent reputation. So I'm naming an actual problem and letting them see that it's not uniquely them, it's a really common problem and there are specific steps we need to take to build the back-end of your business out so that you are actually generating the kind of revenue that goes with this reputation that you just secured for yourself.

Another problem that I might talk about is how is accessibility baked into your business? A lot of us feel our prices are based on what feels appropriate to charge. Money and justice are non-negotiable. Are you coachable? Have you have your "fuck-it" moment? In all of these posts, I'm naming problems.

Here's a post by Toi Smith, and on the image it says, "Motherhood is one of the strongest single predictors of, both, bankruptcy and poverty in The US, by Lisa Wade," and then she goes through and talks about the mothering penalty, and she says, "This is the intersection of capitalism and patriarchy." She tells a personal story, and then at the end she says, "Well, what if we look at the historical context and ask a question about, like, what if we looked at this differently," and then there's a hemline. "Okay, come join Textures of Motherhood," right? So she's named a problem, and she's helped people realize what you're navigating isn't specific to you. There is a cultural circumstance at work here. There are institutional factors at work here, and we can do something differently.

So here's another problem-aware post that I wrote. So I wrote about Ta-Nehisi Coates and David Carr collaborating to make sure Ta-Nehisi Coates, early in his career, could pay his rent. Then, I went through to say this is what we need to do. We need to support each other, and we need to make vulnerable asks of each other, and we need to hire people on the way up before their brands are tight, before their careers are established. We need to provide those first opportunities, and that's why money is a feminist issue.

Here are some examples from Dr. Michelle Mazur. Michelle does a brilliant, brilliant way of mapping out what Bro Marketing is and why it's harmful. When you realize what Bro Marketing is, who else are you gonna work with except Michelle, right? If you want to do it differently, she's got a really good handle on this problem that's been limiting you. Here's a really great post that she put out. It's a problem-aware post 101.

So here are some other examples, and the slides are attached so you can go through them carefully and closely or you can scan these people's feeds, but Helena wrote: "Loneliness in Academia." So, immediately, we know what the problem is, and that's actually a really important thing. You want to mine the jewel. So from your post, the words that stand out the most, you want to put that on the image. For Instagram, for Facebook, for Pinterest - if you're using a visual medium, you want to put the best words from your caption on the image. There are two things we scan for when we're looking at images. We scan for words and we scan for faces. Mostly, we scan for faces, but words are what gets shared so if you can put your best words on your image, then people will share that, and it increases the likelihood that other people are gonna read the caption. Again, part of what's important in your problem-aware post is having a hemline or a call-to-action.

Here's from Jamie Greenwood where she's mapping out power over versus power within, and this is a problem that her clients face in her coaching. They are often grappling with power over and the way it's impacting their lives, and they need to get more rooted in their power within so that they can build lives that they actually want to live and sovereign, self-determining lives. Again, a hemline.

This is Mary Diaz. There are two fabulous posts here from Mary Diaz, and she talks about how leveraging shame and playing into people's insecurities is no way to run a business, and she goes through this, and she quotes me, and that's not why I'm sharing it, but I appreciate the quote. Mary Diaz, in this post, talks about GAB: Generically Aggressive Babble. She talks about how that plagues online copywriting and goes through what's wrong with it, and then, at the end, says, "Hi, I'm Mary Diaz. I'm a copywriter. Subscribe to my newsletter."

What all of these problem-aware posts do is raise consciousness, often, about a social or institutional issue that is limiting people's lives, and then gives us a different way of doing it.

So Desiree Adaway was speaking to it was Basecamp, I think, that made a rule that nobody could talk politics at work anymore, and she wrote, "It's not a failure to have, when difficult conversations are, in fact, difficult. What's a failure is shutting it down." So when we name the problem, now people can activate to do something differently. So we're not pressing on a pain point. We are raising consciousness, and it's totally different. When we press on a pain point, we activate people's personal shame. When we name a problem, we activate people's personal power to do something different, right? That's what Desiree's doing here. She's activating our personal power to do something different, to make a choice, and to take a different action.

Of course, that has culture-making consequences. The more we have people in their power, making deliberate choices to do things differently, the more we create change, and the more, in our personal lives, we consciously, deliberately decide to do things differently, the more we create different outcomes in our lives. That's also true in our businesses, right? So there's three levels of strategy that these kinds of posts facilitate for us, as entrepreneurs, and for our clients, and then for our wider readership and culture.

PART FOUR: THE PROBLEM AWARE MODEL (PAM) FOR CREATING CULTURE-MAKING SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT THAT SELLS

So, now, let's actually take a look at the model for creating content like this. I want you to see that it actually can be easy to create this kind of content. It's thinking content, it's body-of-work content, you know, and so, it can look like it's hard to create. So I want to show you what the anatomy of it is so that you have a model that you can replicate over and over again so that you can just have this model pinned up beside your computer on the wall and just work through it when you need to create a post.

So before we work through that model, though, one of the things that's really useful to do is if there's a problem in your industry or in our culture that is limiting your clients' lives and you want to raise consciousness about that so that they can get free of it and choose different action, then you need to give that problem actual language. You need to give that problem a proper name. It's name is Susan or Jorge or The Female Lifestyle Empowerment Brand or mansplaining. You need to give the problem a proper name because when it has a name, now it's an actual thing that can be avoided.

So Hustle Culture is naming a problem. White Feminism is naming a problem. The Female Lifestyle Empowerment Brand is naming a problem. Bro Marketing by Dr. Michelle Mazur (who we've talked about repeatedly in this module) is naming a problem. The Culture of Relentless Productivity (Ije Ude) is naming a problem. Generically Aggressive Babble, Mary Diaz (that post we just saw) is naming a problem. So you want to name something so that people see that it's a real thing and that they are not the problem. If that, then, activates in you, like, "Who am I to name a thing," I give to you, Mr. Theodore Omarion Diels Rostant and Duffy. No one doubts the authority of a kid to name their stuffed animal. This is Theo with his teddy bear, Duffy. Why should we doubt your authority to name your own work? You absolutely have the right to name a problem that you witness and have solutions for.

So come up with a name for the industry or cultural problem that is plaguing your client and making them feel like they're the problem. You're going to raise consciousness that they're not the problem so you have to give them language for it. So after you've named it, let's go through the six or seven elements of the problem-aware post. So, first, you want to story-tell/observe the pattern. Then, you want to call the problem by its actual name. Then, you want to explain concretely (hopefully in bullet-points) how it shows up in

people's lives so they recognize it. Then, you want to reassure your readers that it's not unusual, it's not just them. It's routine and it's circumstance/system/part of the process. Then, you want to establish hope and rally cry so they know they can do it differently. Then, you want to give them a hemline call-to-action. What's the next step to do it differently? Then, if you have an image, and you don't always have to have an image. You could post this on Facebook with no image. You could post this on LinkedIn with no image, but you are going to have more success with eyeballs if you do post an image. So on the image, you want to mine the jewel. So you want to run through that caption that you just wrote using those six elements, and you want to find the most beautiful jewel-like phrase in the whole piece and put that on the image to get attention.

So, here, I showed you that post that I wrote about Ta-Nehisi Coates and David Carr and how Money is a Feminist Issue, and "money is a feminist issue" was the most stellar jewel of a phrase in the whole piece so I put that on the image.

THE MODEL

So walking through the model, right? I did it in orange, green, blue, purple, black, and turquoise, and I want to show you how that maps to the model.

So the first element is orange. We story-tell/observe the pattern. So I told you this story about Ta-Nehisi Coates and David Carr. Then, I want to call the problem by its name. That's step two in green, so that's where I had said, "That's why money is a feminist and culture-making issue." I could also easily have said, "So, now, let's talk about Bro Marketing," or, "Now, let's talk about The Female Lifestyle Empowerment Brand, and how this is an example of that," right? So you could use the name that you've given it or you can describe what's actually going on.

Then, element number three (in blue) I explained in concrete terms in bullet-points how this shows up in people's lives.

Then, for step four (in purple) I reassure people that it's not unusual and it's not just them. It's routine.

Then, for number five, I establish hope and a rally cry.

Number six, a call-to-action. In this case, the call-to-action is to go read this blog post.

Then, the seventh item, I mined the jewel for the short phrase to put on the image.

So you can see how this maps out. There's the "money is a feminist issue" - that's the jewel. Then, that's the image that I created from that jewel. So you work through this model to create these posts, and it actually gets faster and faster once you have written a couple. It just becomes like muscle memory, but it's useful to print out the anatomy of the problem-aware post, put it up beside your computer or on your desk, and just work through it when it's time to create a post. The good thing about having a model like this is you literally are getting prompts. Every line is a prompt. Okay, first, I've got to story-tell. What's going on? Okay, now I've got to name the actual problem. Okay, now, I've got to explain how it shows up in your life. Okay, now, I've got to reassure people it's not unusual. Now, I've got to reassure -- I've got to establish hope (give them a positive outcome to aim for), and then I've got to give them a hemline (call-to-action), then I've got mine the jewel, right? So, now, instead of sitting and wondering, "What do I write today," and having writer's block, you actually have every line, every element of this post is a prompt for content.

PART FIVE: APPLYING IT ON DIFFERENT CHANNELS

Now, once you've written that content, you can expand it or contract it like an accordion, and we can extend it across different channels. That's really important to me because I don't want us to constantly be having to create new and more material. I want us to reuse as much as possible, and I want us to extend it across different channels. So here's how we extend it across different channels.

First, we use the problem-aware model to generate Instagram and Facebook posts. You know, either or, so choose which one. I usually start with Instagram because I like Instagram best. So whatever I put on Instagram can also be put on Facebook. Whatever I put on Facebook (as long as it has an image) can usually go to Instagram as well. If I, then, wanted to take this and create a LinkedIn post out of it, I would basically cut the Instagram caption in half because the Instagram caption is 2,200 characters maximum, and LinkedIn is maximum 1,300 characters. So whatever I just wrote for Instagram, I'm gonna

just edit and trim it down to 1,300 characters or less. Then, I'm gonna mine the jewel for the short phrase for Twitter. So even though we mined the jewel for the image, well, that same jewel can be a little declarative statement on Twitter. So to turn this problem-aware post into a LinkedIn post, we cut it down into half. To turn it into a Twitter post, we just use the mine the jewel and maybe a little extenuating circumstance.

If you wanted to extend it into a video, you could record a video and put that video in IG stories and also put it on a YouTube channel. So you could just read the post out or editorialize on the post you just wrote. You can use your IG caption for the YouTube description and the IG image for the thumbnail. So everything you just created for Instagram can help you populate a YouTube channel as well when you add the YouTube video. You can resize the image that you created for Instagram so that it fits Pinterest, and then you can cut the caption to 500 characters. So you could go and take that LinkedIn caption that you just created that was 1,300 characters and cut that just slightly over half as well and, now, you have media for all channels, and you didn't create any new post. You simply edited down and extended and created a video so that the same content can go across many different channels, and you don't have to post all that same content on the same day. You can mix it up.

So maybe one post goes out on IG around how money is a feminist issue, and next week, a post goes up on YouTube about how money is a feminist issue. It doesn't have to all be in the same day. You can put it all in the same day. So I'm just showing you across different channels. So here's what it was. "Money is a feminist issue." Here's how it looked for Instagram, and then here's how it looked for LinkedIn, and then here's how it looked on Pinterest, and I just want you to see what that actually looks like. So on LinkedIn, I just wrote: "If you're early in your career or business, please take the risk to ask your network for opportunities and gigs. Explicitly tell us you need to make rent, for example. As a feminist ecosystem, we need to hire our emerging artists, activists, entrepreneurs when they need it most, early, before their brand is tight, before their sites are hot, and before any recognition precedes them. Money is a feminist issue," and then there's a call-to-action. It's a blog post. Here's what it looks like on Pinterest. So, if you want, you could go through my LinkedIn, Pinterest, IG and see these posts in the background.

Now, when you're extending, you're not actually required to extend. If you have one channel and you like one channel, excellent, right - focus. But if you do want to post to all channels, it's not a big deal to post simultaneously to all the channels or, yes, like I just said, you can split up the rotation. You get to do

this on your terms. You get to find the rhythm that works for you. Canva allows you to easily resize images for different platforms. So once you create an image, you can resize it to fit the different platforms.

It is important to know what your character counts are. So if you're posting to Instagram and then to LinkedIn, you want to know what your character counts are so you can trim down those captions appropriately. Then, this is just a teeny, tiny thing that you probably wouldn't have thought of, but let me remind you. If you first post to IG and then you're just pushing the material over to Facebook, you're gonna have to make sure that you fix up the "link in profile" text because in IG we always say "link in profile," but in Facebook, we don't have to say that because we can just embed a hyperlink. So you just want to watch for those details. If you're posting to Facebook, a hyperlink is not gonna work if you, then, move it over to IG. You've gotta change it. If you're posting to IG and then you're moving to Facebook, "link in profile" is useless. You need a hyperlink. So just remember that detail when you're posting to both of those channels -- the same content to both of those channels.

HOMEWORK

So, now, homework. Here's your assignment for this module. I want you to walk through the model that I just laid out for you and create a problem-aware post. Here's a little pre-work that can help you get started. I want you to think about what things are happening in your industry. Here's something that you see a lot of. A lot of your clients experience this. Here are some prompts, right?

Something I see a lot of in my business is best-selling or well-known authors struggling to build thriving livelihoods. Here are the factors. Okay, so the prompt is, "Something I see a lot of is...," then fill in the blank or, "Here's something that happens in our industry." So I could say, like, "Here's something that happens in our industry: we learn the problem/agitate/solution model of copywriting that asks us to leverage people's shame to get them to buy stuff, and here's why that's a problem." Another thing I could say is, "A lot of my clients do this." So, "A lot of my clients feel like they're playing small, and here's what's actually going on. They're not actually playing small. This is what's happening." Prompt: "Over and over again, here's what happens," or prompt: "Recently, I saw/watched/read this, and it got me thinking." So that's what I did with the Ta-Nehisi Coates and the

David Carr story, right? I'm like, "Okay, I saw this thing happen. I heard Ta-Nehisi Coates reflect on this, and it got me thinking about how money is a feminist issue."

So here are some prompts that can help you generate ideas for the model, and, now, let's go through the model. So you might want to do this in two steps. You might want to give yourself, like, five minutes of pre-writing on one of these prompts just to open the channel on what you see happening, what problems you see that you're going to, then, raise awareness for. You should think about your client. Literally envision the person in your head, and think about what is getting in their way, and then do a little just pre-writing or pre-thinking before we get into the model.

And, now, we go through those elements, those six elements and then the mine the jewel element, right? So you're gonna story-tell/observe the pattern. So story-tell doesn't have to be like, "Once upon a time," and like a huge preamble. You can story-tell in one sentence, observe the pattern, then call it by its name, then explain concretely in bullet-points or with emojis (and those are especially useful on Instagram because it slows people's eyes down, and they stop scanning and start reading), and then you want to reassure people it's not unusual. This is where you dissolve shame and get people into their power, and then the establishing the hope and the rally cry. Again, you're activating people's power. The hemline is the call to the next step so that is the call-to-action. That could be, "Sign up to my *Love Letter*." That could be, "Read this blog post." That could be, "Take a look at this workshop that's going live tomorrow." So, then, you can actually take some of the hemlines you've already created and drop them in at the bottom. That's also totally useful.

Then, the last step, if you have an image, you want to mine the jewel for the short phrase. This is why I do this specifically on Instagram. I have seen clients' accounts completely blow up, and it's almost always when they're posting nothing except memes. So images with words on it (that's what I mean by a meme), and they are wildly shareable. So mine the jewel for that short phrase to put on the image. So here's a template for that. You can print that out, and actually, below the video, there's a download where you can print off the template so you can handwrite it out if that helps you get in your creative flow. You know, there's also a Word template that -- there's not also. It's the same thing. The Word template so that you could actually type into it live.

So your next steps are to download the homework assignment. So download that Word doc template for the PAM post. Write your post out, tag me so that

I'll see it and/or use the hashtag #problemaware #lblc (Little Birds and Layer Cakes) so that I see it if you're on Instagram. If you're not on Instagram, go ahead and post it in our Mighty Networks group using the hashtag #problemaware so I can start seeing people's examples and we can see each other's examples and learn from how other people are completing this model.

RECAP

So to recap, we talked about how being problem-aware is the polar opposite of pressing on pain points because pain points are about activating shame; problem-aware is about activating power and dissolving shame. We talked about the strategic and culture-making benefits of problem-aware posts because they move multiple levers. They shift cultural norms, they raise consciousness about industry-wide or cultural-level issues, and they get people into their power and likely to choose you as the solution. So it has multiple benefits here. We talked about examples of problem-aware posts, and I included these slides as a download so that you can go a little slower than I did through and read the problem-aware post or go to those people's feeds and scan for those problem-aware posts and really dig into them.

Then, I mapped out that there's a model (the PAM model, the Problem-Aware Model) for creating problem-aware posts, and I wanted you to have a model so that you could just quickly use every element of the model as a prompt to quickly and easily generate content. Then, because we don't reinvent the wheel, we are going to apply that one post across different channels. We extend it across different channels if we have different channels.

So I referred to several people in this workshop. I referred to Dr. Michelle Mazur who is the person I learned the language problem-aware from, and then I went and developed this model so that I could systematically recreate this kind of content for myself regularly and easily, especially in launches. I quoted Toi Smith, Dr. Helena Liu, Jamie Greenwood, Ije Ude, Desiree Adaway all as examples of putting problem-aware posts out and coming up with names for the problems that are getting in our way. Here are also some posts that I mentioned if you want to follow up on them.

So thank you for being here. I so appreciate your time, and I look forward to seeing your homework in the Mighty Networks group and out in the wild on

social media. Thanks for being here. Thanks for being a Culture Maker and feminist social media maker.