Twitter Thread by Ross Elder



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For years, people would ask me how I do my research. Online and in radio interviews I always gave basic, vague answers because I was trying to protect my small market share. I didn't want to create my own competition because I was being selfish. It was a mistake. [Today's thread]

Market share is not the right term, really. I never received a dime for my years of conspiracy debunking and putting out truth to combat the world of lies people encounter online. Perhaps it is better to call it my niche.

I did it for free, in my spare time, while working two jobs and writing novels when the urge struck me. I did it because I was extraordinarily concerned with people being manipulating by the BS the find online.

So people often asked how I figured it out. How did you dig that up? Why wasn't that in the article I read? I've never seen that before! WHY haven't I seen that before?

I would give answers like..

You didn't look in the right places.
Or,
You need to double-check your sources.

Those sorts of answers.

"It's just a thing I do. I probably couldn't even show you how to do it."

I did write a humorous little book titled, Just Stop. In it, I tried to help people understand how conspiracy theorists design their scam, how to spot it, and how to avoid being a victim of it, but I didn't really show them how to "do their own research" to do it themselves.

Me and others doing that - protecting our "thing"- was a bad idea, I think. We should have been teaching people how to navigate the labyrinthine chaos of the worldwide web. We should have shown them how to check their confirmation bias at the keyboard and find actual answers.

I even went so far as occasionally portraying myself as knowing far less about technology than I did.

"I'm a gray-haired old man on the innerwebs. I'm just an old gumshoe."

It wasn't true.

Even some friends would be shocked when they recommend I try a new system or program and I'd tell them I did that and also added this other thing &.... "Wow, I thought this would be harder for you!"

"Bitch, I was running PCs from command prompt before your parents met!"

But...I didnt tell people that. Now, I'm no tech genius and tech advances faster than I can keep up but I can hold my own for what I need to do.

I type over 90 wpm, which scares people sometimes when they see a balding grumpy guy tapping away on the keys.

Still, I was always downplaying everything and shrugging and being coy.

How many people could I have saved from the conspiracy theory rabbit hole if I had taught people how to do it? Instead, I let them rely on going to my website for MY stuff.

I wrote a novel titled, Patriot Deception. In it, I described various vague things about online activity and various programs. When IT people told me I did a good job of describing things clearly, I would literally deflect and say I had to do a lot of research about it.

No, I didn't! It was stuff I was doing every damn day. LoL I sort of really got into my online persona of a relatively technology challenged old investigator, struggling to uncover the great mystery.

In most cases, the job took me about 15 minutes.

I still never taught anyone how to do it.

I saw basically no other examples of researchers teaching people HOW to properly research the "news" the absorbed constantly.

So I didn't either.